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ICT Devices and Applications in Online Learning: Examples Taken from Beginner Indonesian Course

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1. Introduction

From the academic year of 2017, the author has been put in charge of teaching Indonesian to Japanese learners in university course, public seminars and occasionally to elementary school students. The use of ICT devices and applications in teaching a new language has been a great help in not only teaching the language itself, but also in introducing Indonesian culture as well. As it is physically impossible to transport the learners from their learning environment directly to Indonesia, bringing the culture to them has been made possible by showing the learners videos, online pictures and online video calls with Indonesian native speakers into the classroom. In this paper, the author will show an example of the ICT devices and applications used to enhance the learning experience, as well as the benefits of using ICT devices in these classes.

2. ICT devices and applications

Before the COVID-19 pandemic took place, both the university classes and the public seminars took place in a physical classroom where learners and teaching staffs were allowed to communicate directly. ICT devices and applications already had a big role in helping learners to look at different resources and helping the teaching staffs to collect assignments. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, the learning environments took a shift from physical classroom to online classrooms, making ICT devices and applications even more crucial in the learning process. In both situations, the ICT devices that both the

learners and teaching staffs used were not specified so learners and teaching staffs could use their own devices without having to worry about purchasing new gadgets to attend the classes. Learners could easily access the lesson materials, submit their assignments and ask questions through their own smartphone or computer.

Below is an example of the applications and web tools the author has utilized.

1. ZOOM (main platform for online classes)
2. LoiLoNote School ¹ (an application used to share materials, take attendance and share materials between the students and teachers)
3. Book Creator² (an application mainly used to create original teaching materials)
4. Google Translate (mainly used as a supporting application for checking student's pronunciation accuracy)

3. Conducting the classes

3.1 University course

Starting from the academic year of 2018, the author and a group of teaching team were given the opportunity to conduct a foreign language course in Aino University. The course is divided into three different languages; German, Korean and Indonesian. The students would learn these languages in the span of 15 weeks, with the first week being an orientation, and 4 weeks for each language. The goal of the class is for the students to learn basic greetings and simple phrases within the 4 weeks period. Indonesian

¹ <https://loilonote.app/>

² <https://bookcreator.com/>

pronunciation is fairly similar to that of Japanese, so by showing the phrases and greetings through text, most of the students could learn to pronounce them accurately. By showing the similarity of Indonesian pronunciation to that of Romaji's, the author also aims to cultivate the students' interests and confidence in learning the target language.

At the beginning of each lesson, the author will dictate 2 or 3 sentences that the students have to spell using alphabet. The students then would be asked to send their result through LoiLoNote School. By doing this, the author could see what are the sounds that are easy for the students to hear, and what are the sounds that are easily mistaken or missed. After this assignment, the students would then be assigned to try saying the same sentences and reciting them on Google Translate. With the help of Google Translate voice-to-text feature, students could assess their own pronunciation accuracy.

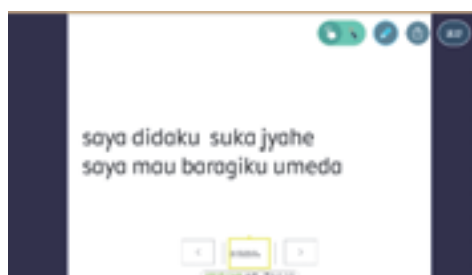


Fig.1 Example of submitted listening assignment

As seen on Fig. 1 above, the author recited 2 different sentences; “Saya tidak suka jahe” and “Saya mau pergi ke Umeda”. By looking at the submitted results, the author could tell that most students heard the sound “t” in Indonesian as the voiced alveolar stop “d” in the word “tidak” in the first sentence and the sound “p” was heard as the voiced bilabial sound “b” in the word “pergi” in the second sentence. By looking at these

results, the author then could approach the mistakes and explain them further during the lessons.

Group assignments and lesson materials were mainly distributed using LoiLoNote School, allowing the students to access the materials even when they were not in the classroom.

After the major shift from physical classroom to online classes, ZOOM played an important role as the main platform for the weekly classes. By integrating the screen sharing feature, the author was also able to introduce different aspects of Indonesian cultures to the students in the hope that more people could learn and gain more interests in Indonesia. The author also invited an Indonesian native speaker a few times, to let the students try and see whether they could actually communicate in simple sentences or phrases after taking the Indonesian course.

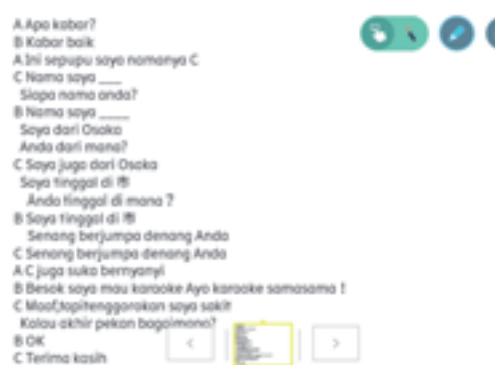


Fig.2 A sample of student's final assignment scenario

3.2 Public seminars

Since 2017, Osaka University Cybermedia Center and Osaka University Graduate School of Language and Culture have organized public foreign language seminars³. The participants came from many different backgrounds ranging from children to senior citizens. Every year, multiple languages are introduced during the seminars, with the participants randomly

³ <https://www.g.les.cmc.osaka-u.ac.jp/2021-online>

assigned to at least two foreign languages per session. Before the pandemic, the seminars were held in Osaka University while online seminars were held during the pandemic. Participants were encouraged to bring or use their own devices, and were briefed on how to use the applications beforehand.

In the public seminars, the contents of each language session might slightly differ to accommodate with what the participants want to learn or know about the language and/or country. The base materials for the seminars were prepared by each language speaker beforehand, following the format and the phrases given by the staff members. Each language speaker would then proceed to make their own mini book using Book Creator in the target language and with audio file to help the learners with their pronunciation attached next to the vocabulary or phrase. After the seminar, these books would then be handed out to the participants so they could review or re-learn the languages.



Fig.3 A page from the Indonesian mini book.

During each session, the participants were encouraged to try and memorize some sentences to introduce themselves through sound. The participants were asked not to take notes during these sessions as by using familiar sounds in Japanese to try and convert the pronunciation they heard in their target language might cause the participants to memorize the wrong pronunciation as some target languages contain sounds that are not present in the Japanese

language.

3.3 A detailed look on the implementation of applications and online tools used in online learning setting.

In both the online university course and public seminars, online tools and applications play important roles in helping learners learn different languages and providing them with motivations to continue their learning process without teaching staff present.

Book Creator has provided the author with a media to create original contents for the learners which students could easily access. By utilizing the features, the author could attach recordings of the target vocabulary or phrases to help learners memorize the correct pronunciation of the target language. Even though Indonesian pronunciation is quite similar to that of Japanese, the students might proceed and mispronounce some words and phrases if they were not given the chance to listen to the correct pronunciation. Another advantage of attaching voice recording is that the author of the book could easily adjust the speed of speech to provide the learners with a more natural pronunciation guide.



Fig.4 A sample of provided recording sample attached.

The speech-to-text function in Google Translate also plays an important role in helping learners assess their pronunciation accuracy. In the case of person-to-person verbal communication, mistakes in pronunciation can be compensated as the speakers might be able to guess the meaning

of the sentence through contexts, gestures, etc. In order to allow devices to detect our speech and convert it into text, a higher level of accuracy is needed as a slight difference in pronunciation might result in a completely different translation, or in some cases, the targeted vocabulary or phrases might go undetected completely.



Fig.5 An example of pronunciation mistake

Looking at the example above, the second sentence showed a mistake in pronunciation resulting in a completely different translation. The correct sentence dictated to the students in this case is “Saya suka jalan-jalan” which means I like to go for a stroll or I like to travel. The learner mispronounced the “J” sound as “C” sound and the translated result showed a sentence that has no meaning in Indonesian.

By showing examples on how to utilize the visual materials distributed and using speech-to-text features in translation or dictionary tools, the learners could listen to the correct pronunciation and try imitating the sound they heard to see whether or not their pronunciation is accurate. With this method, learners could pick up the habit of self-assessing the language they are learning when there aren’t any teachers present to help correct their pronunciation.

4. Conclusions

The use of ICT devices and applications in language courses has provided the learners with a more dynamic learning experience. By showing learners different cultural aspects or directly connecting them to native target

language speakers, they are given the chance of to understand the culture and language better. There are still many problems such as unstable Internet connection, troubleshooting and a slightly bigger amount of budget for both the teaching staff and learners to tackle. ICT devices and applications use in classroom has undeniably opened up more learning opportunities and teaching methodologies in the future.