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## Self-Access Centre (SAC) in English Language Learning

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### Abstract

Students of higher education in the global world need to have sufficient knowledge and skill in utilizing ICT (Information and Communication Technology) to face national and regional competition. To achieve this outcome, higher education (university) through its lower units - faculty and department can facilitate it through Self-Access Centre (SAC). English Department of *Universitas Negeri Semarang* is one of the state universities in Central Java, Indonesia which has SAC used for academic purposes. This study is aimed at 1) finding benefits of SAC in a course 'ICT in Language Learning', 2) reporting its benefits to promote independent learning, and 3) finding constraints faced in utilizing SAC. This study used qualitative approach employing SWOT analysis. The data is gained through three instruments: direct observation, interview, and study document. Two classes of ICT in Language Learning were taken as the objects of the study. The results showed that the students of the English Department gain benefits of SAC as they are facilitated with lots of facilities both software and hardware. Then, the students can also produce their own teaching media through utilizing available media independently. It can be seen from how the students can use free available online products such as Edmodo, Moodle, Skype, Wikispaces, Pbwork, and Tumblr with their creativities and modifications for learning objectives. Furthermore, SAC needs to have good management which involves not only from the department but also from faculty and university.

**Keywords:** Self-Access Centre, independent learning, ICT in Language Learning

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### Introduction

In 2015, the English Department of *Universitas Negeri Semarang* (UNNES) has already built a learning facility called Self-Access Centre (SAC) which had been planned for years. This facility is funded by student-parent collaborative committee (in Indonesia: *Badan Kerja Sama Orang Tua Mahasiswa*). It is placed on the 3rd floor of B3 building.

*SAC (Self-Access Centre)* has been widely known in some Asian countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Hongkong, but it is something new in Indonesia. Most facilities are in the form of language centres. This relates to a research finding by Suriaman (2015) that less concern is addressed to the availability of SAC in Indonesia. It is hoped that SAC becomes a pilot project similar to

those used by many international universities and it will be a learning centre for the students of English.

One of the reasons why SAC should be facilitated in the higher education is due to the changing of learning methodologies which affects how the students learn English from teacher-learning centre into student-learning centre. This type of learning focuses on students, as the learning subject will also promote independent learning. For decades, most learning processes were held in the learning class focusing the teachers as the model or source of information (one-way learning). It is due to a very strong influence of Behaviorism theory by Skinner. This theory proposes that the learning achievement must be affected by the input given by the teachers to the students. Today, live has changed including the development of technology which affects how the teachers and students deal with learning process.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there has been a change for learning from Behaviorism to Constructivism ((Dewey, 1916; Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978; and Brunner, 1990). The learners develop not only from the input given by the teachers but also from the context leading to how the students adapt to the available technology.

The description above has become one pedagogical reason why the English teachers must be adaptive to this change including technology. Hence, higher education or university needs to facilitate this change by providing facilities to support the language learning. In this case, the facility is realized through Self-Access Centre. Furthermore, it needs a research to describe this facility as it is a new one even though this SAC has been supported with software and hardware as well as a technician.

In this study, we were interested in doing a research related to the utilization of SAC in the learning process. The writers conducted this study to answer three research questions: (1) what are the benefits of SAC in ICT Language Learning class?, (2) How do SAC support students' independent learning in ICT in Language Learning class, and (3) what are the constraints found in ICT in Language Learning class?

### *Self-Access Centre*

Self-access centre (SAC) firstly appeared in the University of Nancy, France with its name CRAPEL (Gremmo & Riley, 1995) which then spread to USA, Europe and Asia. Its first objectives were to accommodate language learning outside of the classroom (Keating & Gabb, 2005: 6), to promote independent learning (Benson & Voller, 1997), to motivate students' language learning (Benson & Voller, 1997), to improve students' confidence (Lai, 2001) and to provide a wider room compared to conventional classrooms (Kwan & Lyons, 2001). According to Cooker (2008) SAC should have four principles: 1) SAC is self-access, 2) SAC providers need to collaborate with SAC users, 3) SAC should be fun and 4) SAC should be one of the main media the students rely on.

### *SAC in the English Department of UNNES*

To facilitate the students' language learning, the English department needs to collaborate with others as it is not easy to get funding. In 2015 funded by student-parent collaborative committee in the faculty, the English department established SAC (Self-Access Centre). Many facilities are provided here such as computers installed with many software applications, printed books, Wi-Fi access, active speakers, air conditioner,

reading room, multimedia room, discussion room, sofa, and free mineral water. It is designed to be a comfortable place for the

students to have their academic activities independently. The followings are some pictures of SAC.



*Figure 1. Reading Room*



*Figure 2. Facilities for Students*



*Figure 3. Independent Learning*

The concept of SAC relates to the position of UNNES which proclaims to be a conservation university. Based on the regulation of Rector Number 27 Year 2012 Article 1, Conservation University, in handling education, research and community service, is based on conservation principles – protection, preservation, natural utilization for natural resources, environment, arts and cultures. One of the conservation programs is implemented into a paperless policy (article 7) by using ICT in language learning. Here, SAC is related to the university policy as language learning that can be facilitated through the implementation of SAC. Of course this is related to some other studies such as those conducted by Suriaman (2015), Harji & Vafaepor (2015), and Ferguson (2016).

In addition, SAC has also become a facility that motivates the students as this does not promote competition so that the learning process will encourage confidence, respect, safety, and welcome from other students (Lai, 2001). Then, learning process at SAC will give broader learning class compared to conventional class (Kwan & Lyons, 2001).

#### ***Principles of Self-Access Centre***

According to Cooker (2008), there are some principles on how to use SAC as the learning facility:

- a. SAC is Self-Access. All SAC users must understand how to use SAC after the socialization and guidance. They should

know that SAC is not only as the learning facility but also as the source of language learning;

- b. It needs collaboration between SAC provider and users. The students will not only use SAC for language learning but also give idea and opinion on how SAC is used for varied benefits.
- c. SAC is as a fun learning facility. This should be equipped with fun media such as music, film and teleconference.
- d. SAC should be a learning centre for the students.

Based on those principles, SAC can be used to support students' learning independence by using the available abilities especially for ICT in Language Learning class.

#### ***ICT in Language Learning***

ICT in Language Learning is a class that must be taken by the students in the 6<sup>th</sup> semester. This class has been prepared by the department as the basic skill before the students go to school doing teaching practice. They must be literate in utilizing technology as the learning media. As the result, creativity, ideas and opinions are demanded. In doing so, the students need to be facilitated with facilities such as available mobile devices, comfortable learning classes, good internet connection, comfort and cleanliness facilitated in SAC. The following is the description of ICT in Language Learning.

*Table 1. Course Description of ICT in Language Learning*

Learning Outcome	The students are expected to understand types of technology used in language teaching, particularly for teaching English at schools ranging from Elementary School to High School and being able to use all in the classroom as teaching tools or media for improving students' English mastery in the global world.
Class Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students understand the utilization of technology in the global world</li> <li>• The students are able to produce and use available technology to teach English in every level of education</li> </ul>
Course Description	This subject introduces the students of English Education of how technology has been integrated in the teaching learning process in the global world. Global teachers are challenged to emerge technology in the teaching and learning process started from elementary until high school levels.

(Source: Learning Plan of ICT in Language Learning 2016)

It can be seen from the table that the students are demanded to acknowledge technology and its products started from elementary school to high school levels. The development of technology in the global era should be supported by the development of students' literacy in technology.

### ***Constructivism***

Constructivism, as the learning theory was used as the theoretical background of this study. The theorists proposing this theory were Dewey (1916), Piaget (1972), Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1990). The constructivism emphasizes on the learning process of the students. Piaget stated that knowledge is constructed by the concept of assimilation and accommodation. Related to this theory, learning process by utilizing internet correspond to it. The learning process basing on the constructivism will lead to its success depends on three main factors – learners, learning environment, and teacher. The factors are as follow:

1. Learning Environment
  - a. Complex, relevant, realistic context;
  - b. Learning source and idea of knowledge;
  - c. Factual and available data

2. Students
  - a. Social interaction;
  - b. Responsibility;
  - c. Independence;
  - d. Development of knowledge;
  - e. Sense of belonging toward the learning process
3. Teachers
  - a. Facilitator
  - b. Scaffolding
  - c. Available supporting facility

### ***Seven Pillars of Conservation***

*Universitas Negeri Semarang* is one state university in Central Java, Indonesia. The university has proclaimed as a conservation university since 2012. Based on the regulation of Universitas Negeri Semarang No. 27 Year 2012 Article 1, conservation university is meant as the vision and mission which actualizes the education, research and community service based on the conservation principles (protection, preservation, and sustainable use) to natural resources, environment, arts and cultures.

One conservation program is actualized into a paperless policy (article 7) by optimizing the use of technology. In

doing so, the department has responsibility to implement, develop, manage, observe and evaluate this paperless policy. In addition, the department also needs to facilitate supporting facilities, so SAC is in line with the policy.

### ***Previous Studies***

Researches related to this study have already been conducted by many researchers from Indonesia and international universities. For example, the first study was conducted by Suriaman (2015) who did a research in an effort how to develop independent learning through Self-Access Centre. She is a lecturer of Civil Engineering in Tadulako, Palu. The research objectives are to find out the effectiveness of SAC and the strategy in utilizing SAC for learning process. The findings show that SAC gives significant contributions toward learning even though it needs strategy and good implementation in Tadulako University.

The next research was a collaboration between Harji from Multimedia University of Malaysia and Vafaepor from the University of Azad, Iran (2015). Their research was how to integrate reading materials through internet (internet-based material). Its objective was to integrate authentic materials from the internet in a reading class. The research used constructivism theory underlying it. Then, another research related was conducted by Ferguson (2015) from the University of

Mahidol, Thailand. It focused on the benefits of SAC as the independent learning facility for the students. This is a new one in Thailand. Ferguson stated that most students in Thailand relied on the teacher so that he introduced SAC as a new learning facility without excluding local wisdom since it is a main part in Thailand. The study shows that the students were enthusiastic in using SAC, and they could communicate with the other students globally from other countries. The previous studies are related to this study as they focused on the use of SAC and internet-based learning. In Tadulako, SAC are used for both internal users such as university and external users or stakeholders. It can be seen that SAC had a collaboration with BBC, so it is open for public purposes. Technology will always improve that demands it users to adapt and use it for academic purposes when they go to working world.

### **Methodology**

This is a qualitative study using SWOT analysis. Two classes of ICT in language learning were used as the sample (non-random sampling). To get the data, three techniques of collecting data (direct observation, interview, and study document) were used. It is hoped that by using three different techniques of collecting data, the result will be more valid and comprehensive. The design can be seen from Figure 4.

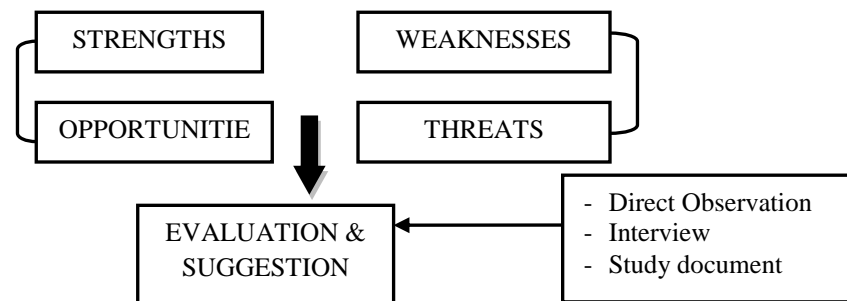


Figure 4. Model SWOT (Suriaman, 2015)

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to 1) find the benefits of SAC in ICT Language Learning class, 2) to identify the role of SAC in promoting independent learning in ICT language learning, and 3) to find constraints in the utilization of SAC in Language Learning class.

### **Research Site**

The research was conducted in ICT Language Learning class in the English department of Universitas Negeri Semarang.

### **Technique of Data Collection**

To collect the data, the researcher used direct observation, interview, and document. The observation was used to see the learning process in ICT Language Learning. It is used to observe directly the benefits of SAC to the students in the learning process. Besides, the observation was also used to identify independent learning of the students and the constraints faced by the students in the learning process. Then, interview was used to get direct information about what the students did in the learning process, the students' independent learning, and constraints faced by the students. The last was document used to see the product produced and used by the students in ICT language learning. By using

three different instruments, the data would be more valid and reliable.

### **Results and Discussion**

Referring to the research questions, three research findings are described covering the benefits of SAC toward ICT in language learning, SAC support toward students' independent learning and constraints found in SAC use in ICT language learning.

### **Benefits of SAC toward ICT in language learning**

The students are benefited from the use of SAC in ICT language learning class based on three data – observation, questionnaire and interview. The students responded that SAC has provides main advantages for their learning process as the followings.

- a. SAC is a convenient learning facility for ICT in language learning process due to its facilities such as free wifi, available computers, printed book references, and available subscribed online journals;
- b. SAC enables students learning process on ICT in language learning as it provides software and hardware;
- c. SAC has been located in a very appropriate place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of B3 building so that the students are able to have ICT learning process well.

### ***SAC support toward students' independent learning***

Referring to the result finding, SAC has promoted students' independent learning. All students responded that SAC provide its positive contribution for students' independent learning even though one student said that SAC should be in the form of booth not room. The students' responses can be categorized into the followings.

- a. SAC promotes independent learning as facilitated by free wifi and computers;
- b. SAC helps the students finish their assignment;
- c. SAC enables the students to get any information/ references freely;
- d. SAC benefits the students to read available books due to the integration of SAC and library;
- e. SAC becomes one of the most convenient learning facilities in the English department to do academic activities.

It can be concluded that SAC has promoted students' independent learning because the facilities help the students to do many academic activities such as searching online information and completing assignment. Also, the students need to have freedom to find references.

### ***Constraints found in SAC use in ICT language learning***

Even though SAC gives benefits to learning process, it also faces some constraints identified as the following.

- a. Unstable internet access;
- b. Unstable electricity;
- c. SAC needs more space as at particular time, many students from different classes use it;
- d. Not all students focus on the academic activities as it can be found that many students open social media for non-academic purposes
- e. SAC needs to have more staffs to handle many activities and give better service to the students.

### **Conclusion**

Language learning has changed since 21<sup>st</sup> century from behaviorism which emphasized on teachers' input into constructivism in which the students need to be given opportunities to improve his language learning by adapting available learning ways and techniques. One of which is by utilizing technology in their language learning which include language learning facilities such as SAC (self-access centre). It has been identified by some researches and also this research that SAC gives benefits to the students' learning process for its available facilities and independent learning even though improvement needs to be always done for a better management utilization. SAC also meets the university conservation program. Later, SAC needs support from faculty and university so that it can be used for wider purposes not only to be used by the students of English department but also the students in the university.

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