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A Conceptual Framework for Teaching English in TVET Environment

Mohd Shafeirul Zaman Bin Abd Majid

Centre for Modern Languages and Human Sciences, Universiti
Malaysia Pahang

E-mail: shafeirul@ump.edu.my

Azwin Arif Bin Abd Rahim

Centre for Modern Languages and Human Sciences, Universiti
Malaysia Pahang

E-mail: ariftesl@ump.edu.my

Razmi Bin Ab Rahman

Engineering Department, Kolej Poly-Tech MARA Kuantan

E-mail: razmi@gapps.kptm.edu.my

Zetti Adela Binti Zolkepli

General Studies Department, Kolej Poly-Tech MARA Kuantan

E-mail: zeti@gapps.kptm.edu.my

Abstract

TVET that has been highlighted in the Tenth Malaysia Plan aims to enhance the job opportunities for skilled employees. With the surplus amount of graduates today, the ability to master technical, vocational education and training is known to be an added value for individuals. In ensuring a ceaseless effort in promoting, doing intake and producing graduates under TVET, there must be a solid framework that can be used in the teaching and learning processes as the methodology in delivering the knowledge and information may be different from other mainstream. The new era of teaching and learning is through integration of ICT, which means that the centre of learning is on the students through acquiring the information on their own and presenting it in a discussion with the others. This digital classroom approach can be applied in the sense of teaching English language in TVET context. Students will be exploring for more knowledge and teachers will guide them in the learning process by introducing e-learning platforms that can help to ease the flow through an interactive and engaging places to give and share ideas, thoughts, visual aids, and also discussions. Learning is no longer restricted to classroom but it goes beyond the expected environment where students can still interact with their teachers effectively after the normal learning session, not only with their educators but also with learners from over the world. This has somehow supports the globalized online learning principle that is to engage learners in a diverse learning environment.

Keywords: Digital Classroom, E-Learning

1. Introduction

When we are discussing about skills training, we cannot set ourselves apart from the thoughts of knowing the idea behind it. Wang (2010) stated that “The primary goal of skills training is to provide youth with practical techniques and skills based on professional knowledge rather than manufacture well-trained basic operators” (p.47). This means that TVET in general education reform is focusing on training the students to be a skilled worker with a professional knowledge that can be used in real time situation.

The question now is how can we implement the knowledge delivery process in TVET context and why this is really important? To answer these questions, let us have a look at the current education system in our country.

In the 21st century classroom, the usage of ICT has been widely implemented across teaching and learning processes and it is known as one of the twelve potential areas for ICT applications in TVET (UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), 2005) (pg. 14). Additionally, in the Malaysia Education Blueprint launched quite recently, one of the shifts introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education to boost the education sector is through Globalized Online Learning.

This can be seen as an approach to enhance the teaching and learning process especially in TVET context because it is believed that with a combination of skilled trainers and introduction of digital classroom, the delivery of knowledge to the trainees will be easier and faster compared to the traditional chalk-and-talk method. Besides, the theory of constructivism promotes an ongoing learning experience by assimilating the learning environment with the current trends in teaching and learning and this is said to help better in acquiring the knowledge among students.

2. Scope

The focus of this paper is on teaching English language in TVET context, particularly with the usage of ICT approach in the classroom. ICT integration earmarks a feasible focus of learning that centralizes on learners’ active engagement in the ever-expanding ‘technological society’ at higher institutions (Saltmarsh, Sutherland-Smith & Kitto, 2008). This shows how much ICT helps to make teaching and learning more interesting especially for students who are already exposed to the modern living where technology is the central of everything for them.

In order to make the students to stay engaged and alert with the learning process, ICT comes in and helps the teacher in the smooth flow of the conducted classroom. ICT-TPCK, which is originated from TPCK (Technological, Pedagogical, Content and Knowledge) has been put into interest and being described as “ways knowledge about tools and their affordances, pedagogy, content, learners, and context are synthesized into an understanding of how particular topics that are difficult to be understood by learners or difficult to be represented by teachers can be transformed and taught more effectively with technology in ways that signify its added value” (Angeli & Valanides, 2009). All of these require a more structured learning material and environment specifically in the sense that makes teaching and learning interactive as teachers and

students' engagement is really important to maintain the continuity of the knowledge delivering process. In addition, this also in shapes with the principle that pedagogical activities should be responsive to learners' needs and their learning style (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987 & Eslami, 2010)

This concept paper aims to promote the usage of e-learning platform in teaching and learning particularly pertaining to TVET context since that there is no much different between it and the general education model. Such approach is crucial in the 21st century classroom because learners learn mostly through technology and on the teachers' part, Students Learning Time (SLT) of the language in specific can be hugely influenced also by technology usage, for example through social media, visual aids and other e-learning platforms.

This initiative of using e-learning approach is relevant to language educators as it serves as a valid measurement of students' outside classroom learning time spent according to the teaching plan provided to, approved and accredited by Malaysian Quality Agency (MQA).

On the foreground, this framework is to replace the traditional method of only using book and module and the centre of learning is on the teachers (sage of the stage) to a more interactive and curated learning environment that meet the learning style for a more evocative language learning among TVET students (student centred learning; teachers-guide-by-the-side).

Since English language has been widely used and recognized in all higher learning institutions, the same goes to TVET context as the learning materials, delivery of knowledge and assessments are also in the language. This is important as to make sure that the students are not left behind from the stream of general practices in other countries. TVET can be for community colleges or polytechnic but it is also not restricted to that institutions because more and more training centres are providing similar courses and this is the reason why English language usage should be enriched especially in the context of interactive language learning.

Besides, using e-learning platform in teaching and learning the language offers a more individualistic approach on the language (try-and-error) that is quite difficult to be achieved if it is to be conducted in a traditional method when there is a larger pool of learners in classroom.

3. Background

The educational framework in the country has been optimized recently with the introduction of Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025) where three main objectives are being reviewed, which are understanding the current performance and challenges, establishing a clear vision and aspirations and outlining a comprehensive transformation programme for the system, including key changes to the ministry (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013).

One of the key shifts in the Malaysia Education Blueprint is on Globalized Online Learning as the learning environment is no longer in a small scope but has reached a massive audience (students). This is in-line with one of the main objectives of the blueprint, which is on outlining a comprehensive transformation programme for the system.

In relating this with TVET context, the learning environment caters the core courses as well as the skill courses because apart of producing

graduates who are competent in the specific field for instance medical, education, human resource management and such, it also focuses on skilled future employee. These are the essential things to move the economy of the country as the two groups come in hands when we are dealing on the issue of development of a society.

4. Theoretical Model and Learning Styles

In general, the theoretical aspects that come behind all of these transformation can be said in the form of constructivism and cognitivist. Existing knowledge gained by the learners together with the added facilitation by the teachers will help them to become better equipped in the working world.

For cognitivism that is said to dominate second language acquisition (SLA), the principle is in line with the mental schemata concept proposed by Roger Schank (1977) as it utilizes the concept of learning that hypothesizes mental activity level in order to understand human social action especially to achieve meaningful learning. In this theory, the emphasis is on the learners' perception of the learning process, the interpretation, and store and memorise of the information (Atkinson, 2010).

Constructivism on the other hand, can be said as the strongest theory that supports student centred learning approach as it proposes human being constant construction of knowledge by interacting with their surroundings (Hoic-Bozic, Mornar & Boticki, 2009). The construction of knowledge can be through various activities or experience by accommodating and assimilating the new knowledge with the one existed in their mind. This theory helps the students to discover new things on their own and relate its importance with their learning environment and learning needs.

Teaching English language for example is no longer on the basis of chalk and talk even though among those who are doing TVET courses because the learning environment nowadays has evolved with the emphasis on the usage of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT).

To further elaborate on this matter, the framework Technological, Pedagogical, Attitude, Content & Knowledge or also known as TPACK can be used because it accommodates the learning environment for both teachers and students. Pedagogically, the learning contents together with the assessments will follow the current move, which is by integrating the element of using technology in delivering the information and also to measure students' engagement in the feedback process based on what they have learned. It also applies for instilling good moral values among students if the learning approach or platform used can embed the element of appreciating each other opinion or appraising the different points of view in the sense of enriching the teaching and learning contents.

On looking at the learning styles, the challenge is in accommodating the students with a proper learning approach as stated by Finelli, Klinger and Budny (2001) that "it is a biologically and developmentally imposed set of personal characteristics that make some teaching and learning methods effective for certain students but ineffective for others" and this has led to several learning styles models such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), Kolb's Learning Style Model (Kolb,

1981 & 1984) and Honey and Munford Four Dimensionalities of Learning Styles (Honey & Munford, 1992).

Realising the importance of student centred learning especially among TVET students, these practitioners have within their domains embedded a learning style model that promotes effective learning where the activities appeal to the learners' learning style. Therefore, this is the reason why there must be a framework for teaching English language among TVET students so that the learning objectives can be achieved and students are able to be proficient in the language.

In line with the theories and learning style, it is believed that the usage of e-learning platform is eligible in promoting a learning environment that is conducive for English language among TVET students besides knowledge construction that encourages individual exploration of the learning contents. All can be done by integrating e-learning platforms in the classroom (Arif, 2006).

5. Conclusion

As a conclusion, trainers or teachers who are involved in teaching English language for TVET students should be open and creative in creating an engaged learning environment with the learners.

With the advancement of technology, e-learning platforms are seen as a good tools to be implemented its usage in the classroom as it helps to instil student centred learning approach. Students can create their own learning environment and teachers are able to monitor, directly engaged or be an observer of the learning process.

There are a vast varieties of e-learning platform that can be used in the teaching and learning processes such as social media for instance Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, media sharing like ScreenCasting, videos gallery like Youtube, mobile phones applications for example Whatsapp, Viber or Telegram, video conferencing such as Skype or Zoom and many more.

It depends on the suitability of the applications and its usage to cater the need and style of the learners so that the educators can decide on what basis they are going to use it. On the other hand, these applications will never replace the role of the educators as it is more on assisting the learning process towards an easier and faster grabbing of the knowledge.

Learners on one side will have a better and more quality learning contents, approaches and period of learning because everything is more flexible and follows their own pace. This should be the reason of an ability to produce a better graduate specifically in TVET environment and generally in all types of education.

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Appendix

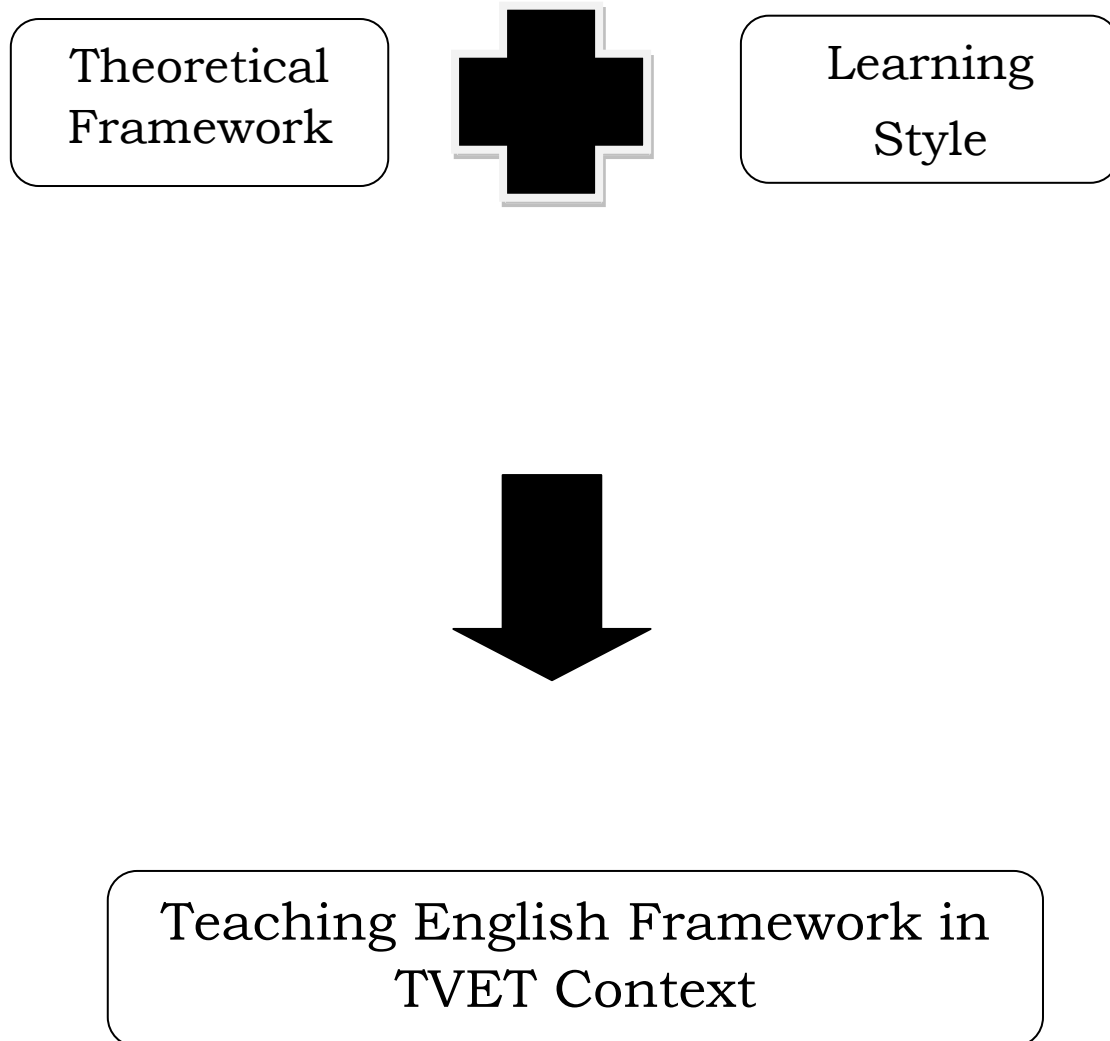


Diagram 1: Teaching English Framework in TVET Context From The Perspective of Theoretical Framework and Learning Style