SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING (SDL)-BASED LEARNING CENTER (LC): A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' TOEFL SCORE

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Abstract

This paper addresses two things, (1) development of Learning Center (LC) as a place to learn and practice TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and (2) a further plan to develop a computer-based LC to be a better self-directed learning (SDL) center. A conventional LC has been being developed and is about to reach its end. As a self-directed learning site, it is completed with a number of facilities, including ten learning and practice test modules, listening materials in form of CD, answer sheet, CD player, point card, membership card and directory sheet and SOP. The idea for development of LC was pursuant to the result of tracer study to see needs of assistance of students and lecturers in five universities in Bali in learning TOEFL. To be appropriate devices, the modules had been finalized through some validation including content, design, individual, and a small group test. They were required to fill in the questionnaires and give comment on the modules. The field test to see effectiveness of modules was done at the end. Thus, a group of student as sample group was given a self-directed learning for one session by using one of the modules and practice test at the end of the session. The result of the test was then compared with that of the test prior to the learning. The result showed that the mean of students' achievement between test 1 and test 2 were respectively 367.26 and 416.17. The mean of increase of both tests was 48.91 with percentage of increase 13.32. For further plan, the model will be designed in such a way that computer can be effectively used to support the LC program.

Key words: Computer assisted learning, Development, Learning Center, TOEFL

[1, 2, 3, 4] **Politeknik Negeri Bali**

I. Introduction

Implementation of self-directed learning (next SDL) has been widely energized in most parts of the world. The learning model is chosen since it gives salient benefits, such as it can promotes the natural development of self-confidence, initiative, perseverance and life satisfaction and also decreases the probability that learners will suffer from the life-long wounds commonly produced by coercive schooling. In addition, SDL can provide opportunities to pursue a far wider range of interests than is possible in a typical school and reinforce collaboration, within and beyond the family.

SDL is a self-learning which meets almost all levels of each individual and every learning situation. It is resulted by the condition that SDL involves various activities and resources, such as self-directed reading, internship which is effective for teachers to lead in students' critical thinking (Hiemstra, 1994). This is a way how to insert information into one's life (Altuger-Genc, 2013). SDL also enables students to build their comprehension on learning by identifying an adult learners' learning method and to provide them with a view of process, challenge and adult learners' characteristic as well as to widen their insight on a formal learning (Caffarella, 1993). In addition, SDL, particularly for adult learners is more beneficial as it can trigger students to learn more effectively, creatively, initiatively, individually as well as more future oriented (Knowles, 1975; Gugilielmo, 1977; Tylor, 1981).

The model has been used as a basis for developing LC as a place to learn and practice TOEFL. TOEFL was chosen to be a measuring device in fostering Politeknik Negeri Bali students' English competence as the device is recognized as a standard testing device (Education Manual of Politeknik Negeri Bali, 2006, article 6). Referring to the statement and by determining the importance of the testing device, a number of learning models with SDL have been developed to facilitate students to improve their academic achievement (Widanta, 2008; Widanta, 2012).

LC is developed in Politenik Negeri Bali to provide students with a place where they are able to learn knowledge, like grammar, structure of English language as well as strategies to answer and practice working out TOEFL. In developing LC, there are a number of stages that have been undertaken, such as analyzing needs of users, developing learning modules, and measuring effectiveness of the modules.

The developed model is still conventional as it is still done with a simple and manual method and with learning materials in the form of book. Pursuant to the rapid development of technology, LC is hoped to be computer assisted that it is going to be more interesting and triggering.

There have been a number of endeavors conducted to use computer to support self-directed learning. O'Donell (2006) reviewed the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) for English as Second Language classes in Korea. K. Lee (2000) suggests that network-based technology can be appropriate for ESL learners as it gives an experiential learning that can raise students' learning motivation and enhance their achievement. Kanna and MacKnish (2000) stated that in order for students to practice their skills and to expose themselves to computer and provide themselves with peer and alternative learning environment, they have to use the online learning. The model of learning is able to reduce students' anxiety, especially when it is offered in the multimedia lab the opportunity to aid students' visualization of the situation can be largely enhanced (Huang & Liu, 2000). The learning model is also beneficial in many general education situations because of the immediacy of feedback as delay in giving feedback to students can be a serious issue (Atikson & Davies, 2005).

II. Methodology, Result, and Discussion

2.1 Empirical Studies

The development of LC for TOEFL was based on the result of tracer study undertaken in five universities and colleges in Bali, including Udayana University, Ganesha University of Education, Foreign Language Institute of Saraswati Denpasar, Warmadesa University, and Politeknik Negeri Bali (Widanta, 2013). The study was focused on four major activities including (1) to recognize basic competency of students in those five places; (2) to know responses of deans and department heads on development of LC; (3) to know response of English lecturers on development of LC; and (4) to know response and hope of students in the five universities and colleges on learning TOEFL. As the result of each component positive, development of LC program for students to learn and practice TOEFL as a proper decision was then realized.

2.2 Recent Development

There were a number of stages carried out to realize LC. There were: (1) designing TOEFL modules, (2) designing instruments for validation, (3) validating modules, (4) giving pretest, (5) implementing the learning with the developed module, and (6) giving posttest.

As an internationally-standardized testing device, TOEFL is recognized world widely. The TOEFL tests and TOEFL books providing exercises are published prior to some stages of test, including content validation, languages standardization, as well as prove reading. The perfect screening stages made TOEFL a reliable ready-used English competence testing device. Thus, development of TOEFL modules and tests form LC program in this case did not include creating new TOEFL and exercise booklet. Tests and exercises were made by compiling materials from a number of resources. The focus of attention was on making graded exercise books and tests in order for learners to work out the TOEFL easily. In its realization, modules are graded from the first until the tenth pursuant to the level of difficulty. Participants are required to work out the modules hierarchically from module 1until 10. Each module consists of learning materials, such as strategy to work out each section (listening, structure & written expression, reading), strategies for listening and reading, grammar knowledge, trends of problems usually raised in each section, scoring, difficulties test takers have in answering each section, and some other tips to successfully do TOEFL (Manke & Duffy: 1996, Phillips: 1996, 2001, Sukur: 2013, Priyasudiarja: 2014, Rizka, Furqon, Hidayati: 2015).

Reliability of module and test parts was undertaken through validating process. Thus, there were some validating stages endeavored prior to its establishment. Validating instruments was prepared upon the completion of modules. There were five kinds of instrument prepared for the validation, including content validating instrument, design validating instrument, individual try out, small group try out, and field or big group try out instrument. Each instrument consists of questionnaire for judges or students (in individual and small group try out) to score and to comment on the modules.

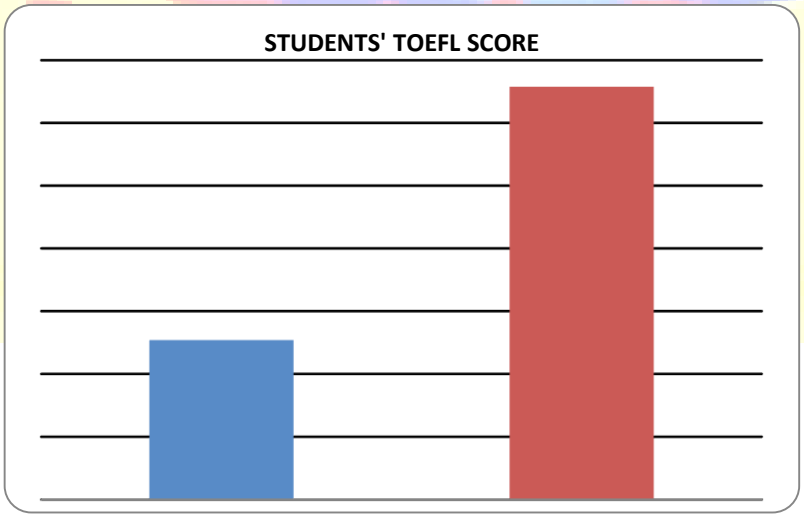
Validating was conducted upon the completion of instruments. Content of the modules was validated by a senior lecturer from Ganesha University of Education whose home base was English education. All of the statements in questionnaire were marked good and very good, that there was no part of the module to be revised. Design validation was done by a senior lecturer who has been intensively conducting research and is expert in research and development. As the

result, only one part, book design, was commented lest sufficient. Based on his comment, the revision was done by adding color and some pictures on some parts of the book.

Individual try out, small group try out and field or big group try out were conducted by inviting students to judge the modules. A student who was from any level of proficiency was assigned to give an individual judgment. Three students from low, middle and high level of proficiency were invited to give judgment on the modules. Any comment and suggestion given by judges and students during validation and try out were compiled and used as bases for revising the modules. It was done to have fixed modules.

2.3 Implementation, Test, Result

Up on the revision, the final modules were used for try out. The group of students in one class who was given pretest was involved as participant. They were given time to learn TOEFL material on their own. Self-directed learning was given once before the participants were given posttest. Taking for about 90 minutes, SDL was conducted by instructor of the class concerned. The posttest by using TOEFL test prepared was administered to the participant upon their SDL activity. The test was started with listening (part A), structure and written expression (part B) and reading comprehension (part C). To see effectiveness of the module, both results of the test were graded and analyzed by using descriptive statistic. The analysis result was focused on comparing participants' first test and post test result. The statistical analysis drew result as follows.



	pre-test	post-test
Means	367.26	416.17
Means of progress	-	48.91
Percentage of progress	-	13.32
Median	363.00	420.00
Standard of deviation	31.04	45.29
Variants	963.66	2050.88

III. Discussion

It is drawn clearly that means of pretest score is 367.26 and means of post test score is 416.17. The increase in percentage from the first to the second test was 48.91. The increase is considered significant considering that TOEFL learning was given in a relatively limited time. The slight improvement in students' score was resulted by two things. First they have limited learning hour. Students' learning duration was only 2 hours. However, the learning duration seemed to contribute to satisfactory result. Second they leaning atmosphere was a bit inconvenient. They learned TOEFL in the class room massively. During the learning, most of them did not feel relaxed, were disturbed by friends and the presence of their lecturer in front of class, and were timely-bound because of their lecturer keeping the time. The increase in means between pretest and posttest is a reliable and feasible information that LC with SDL model of learning for TOEFL is effective.

In its implementation, LC will be opened a lot more intensively that learners will be able to have a lot more time to practice on their own. By doing so, they will certainly be able to increase their TOEFL score significantly. Even though LC was done conventionally, which excludes the use of computer technology it is triggering and motivating students to learn. And, although students were taught in a relatively short time, they were considered able to show good achievement. Besides, students were seen to be motivated to learn and work out the test as they found a clear path to do so.

IV. Conclusion

The conventional LC model works sufficiently to increase students TOEFL score. Even though it was tried for one session of 2 hours, in class room, and done conventionally (not computer-assisted), it was a sufficiently effective model of learning. The real LC center that will be designed after this research is a proper place for students to learn TOEFL as it is self-directed

system, more convenient as learners are not timely-bound, has more conducive learning situation, foster learners' privacy. By doing SDL students found that experiencing the way to solve problem on their own is very beneficial.

However, an attempt for a better learning device should continuously be planned. The developed LC will be of much trigger and motivation if it is presented with computer technology. Students will benefit as they will learn TOEFL and be able to improve their computer knowhow at once. Thus, for further work, computer-based LC for learning TOEFL will be the priority.

For further development, academicians, researchers, instructors or teachers who intensively deal with SDL for learning TOEFL should try to develop more trendy learning models. Development can be enhanced by choosing other test tools, participants involved in the research, learning model, or others. The most chased issue is the use of computer system to support its perfectness. For this case, modules can be saved in computer that students will be able to learn and work out the test efficiently.

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