

Teachers' Perceptions on Using E-Books for English Language Teaching

Hera Nopiyanti

Master Program of English Education Department, Sebelas Maret University,
Jalan Ir. Sutami No. 36A, Jebres, Kota Surakarta, Jawa Tengah 57126
heranopiyanti2509@gmail.com

Abstract

The development of information technology and computer in digital society offers a favorable external environment for English language teaching. Internet technology has integrated into the process of EFL teaching and let us innovate the way we teach English. In the modern era, information technology furnishes learners with abundant teaching materials of English, which also provides multiple possibilities for teachers to change their pedagogical strategies so as to improve the efficiency of teaching and learning. This is a research about perceptions held by teachers on using e-books for teaching EFL. The aim of this research is to identify, describe, and analyze the teachers' perceptions on using e-books as the paper textbooks in teaching English language for Indonesian students of secondary schools. A survey was conducted on thirty teachers who use e-books as textbooks in lower and higher secondary education classrooms of private or government school in Indonesia. The majority of the teachers have been teaching for at least five years. The results showed that a majority of these teachers had good perceptions on the use of e-books. The use of electronic books, or e-books, offers teachers a different fun way of learning since there are various types of e-Books available to suit students' knowledge, characteristics, abilities, and interests. E-books will not displace print books in the future, but they will become perfect complement to print books. However, the teachers had little challenges using the devices. It can be overcome with some strategies and a suggested framework.

Keywords: E-books, perception, teacher, English language teaching

Introduction

Nowadays, we witness that the printed resources have been replaced with electronic resources and the habits related to newspaper, magazines, course material and book reading have undergone changes. Among modern-age college students in particular who were born as digital-natives to the 21st century, these habits demonstrate even further variance. One of the most noteworthy concepts that emerged within this context has been e-book. A common definition of e-book was suggested by Armstrong, Edwards, and Lonsdale (2002) as: [...] any pieces of electronic text regardless of size or composition (a digital object), but excluding journal publications, made available electronically (or optically) for any device (handheld or desk-bound) that includes a screen.

Easy internet access to resources have all together contributed to the spread of e-book use. Despite the fact that reading from a screen appears to be disadvantageous at first sight, the counter-part advantages such as mobility, saving physical space, convenience, saving time and money, ease-of-use are the primary motivations in preparing e-books (Rosso, 2009). The effect of this transformation from printed material to e-books on our reading habits is also a subject worthy of deeper analysis.

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In digital environment, the reading electronic documents are commonly associated with e-book. The e-books can be read by using the tablets which have many advantages due to their mobility, ability to store a large number of books, and its convenience for reading anytime anywhere. There are common file types that can be used for e-book reading, such as PDF. The old books are required to be converted to e-book format as the new books in such format.

The electronic books, or e-books, have increasingly grown in popularity. They offer students, teacher and schools an additional medium or tool of instruction supporting and enhancing the process of learning. The use of e-books as text books in the classroom at schools is a new paradigm especially in developing country (Embong et al., 2012). As stated by Fojtik (2015), e-books become mainstream and percentage of study materials available as e-books is growing rapidly. A large group of students and teachers use e-books since they offer many advantages, as follows:

1. Easier distribution and purchase
2. Simple backup and storage
3. The ability to adjust font size
4. Add text to multimedia
5. Read on different devices
6. The ability to have a large number of devices in electronic books.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to analyze teachers' perception on using e-books in learning process. It is hoped that the result of this study can help to determine the strategies for the implementation of e-books for the teachers.

Research Questions

1. What are perceptions of teacher on the use of e-books instead of paper textbooks in learning process?
2. What are the strategies to implement e-books for teaching and learning in classroom?

Methodology

The participants of this study included 30 English teachers chosen randomly teaching in high school of Lampung province in Indonesia. Most of the teachers have more than 5 years teaching experience. The teachers accessed 25 questionnaire online designed specifically for this study. It addressed usage, emotions, lifespan and assistance towards using e-books in teaching EFL. The rate of response was 100%.

Literature Review

With electronic books becoming widespread, various studies have begun to be carried out about reading habits, digital catalogs, and e-book device. As stated by Mischo, et.al (2007) and Shelburne (2009), e-books became widespread at first in academic libraries for emergence of electronic journals. In those studies, the main discussion topics have been the ratio of preference in comparison to printed materials

Project Gutenberg was started by Michael Hart in 1971 who used computer to store, retrieve, and search information. It was named as e-books or electronic versions of print books. Since that, this Project Gutenberg creates thousands of free texts and copies of books which can be downloaded or accessed online. The key definition of e-book varies due to its nature and extent. Armstrong, et.al (2002) comes up with the definition used by many scholars as "any piece of electronic text regardless of size or composition (a

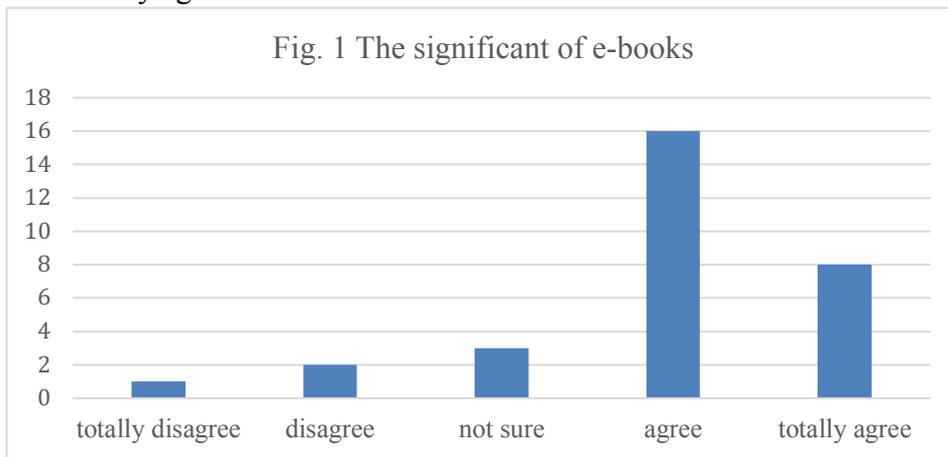
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digital object), but excluding journal publications, made available electronically (or optically) for any device (handheld or desk-bound) that includes a screen.”

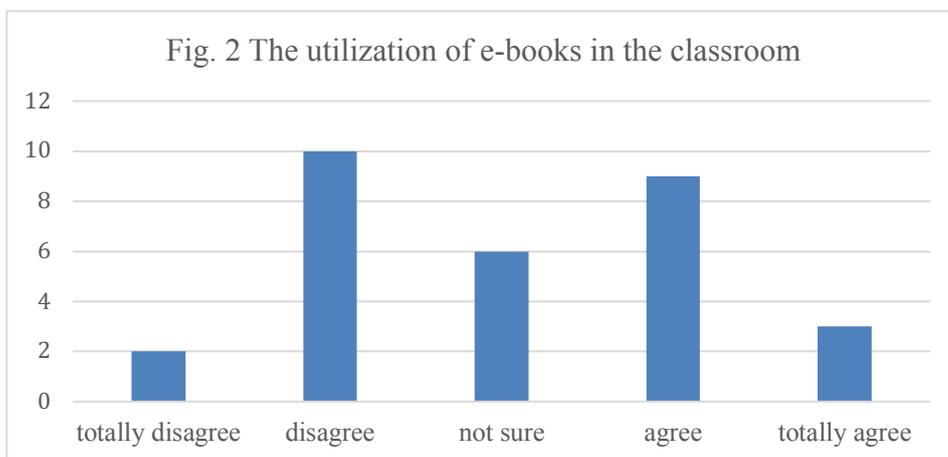
There are three basic components of e-books: hardware or reader, software and the e-book files. Hardware-based e-book readers are portable electronic devices designed mainly for the mean of reading e-books or any forms of publications. In term of capacity, e-book readers can store certain number of books worth of content, which can be accessed virtually from any location (Wilson, 2001). Software-based are programs that display data of an e-book on the device (Pereus, 2000). Software book readers allow the access on personal computers or any latest computer technologies. A file type is a file which contains an embedded signature. It notifies the operating system how to manage that file.

Findings

The result are presented in the graph below. For every graph, there are five scales at horizontal axis namely 1 for totally disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for not sure, 4 for agree and 5 for totally agree.

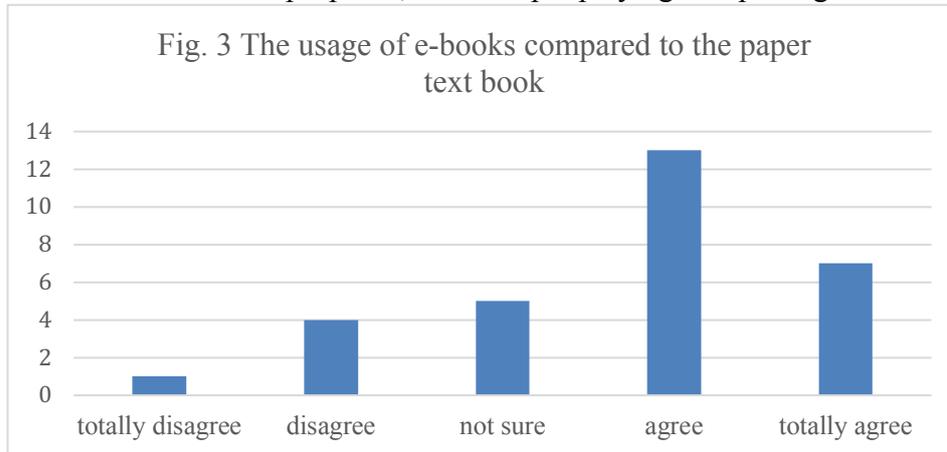


Most of the teachers do agree that e-books are significant to the student. Majority of 53 % or 16 teachers agreed that e-books are significant while 6.7 % or 2 teachers were disagree and another 10 % not sure with the statement. Only 3 % totally disagree about significant of e-books.

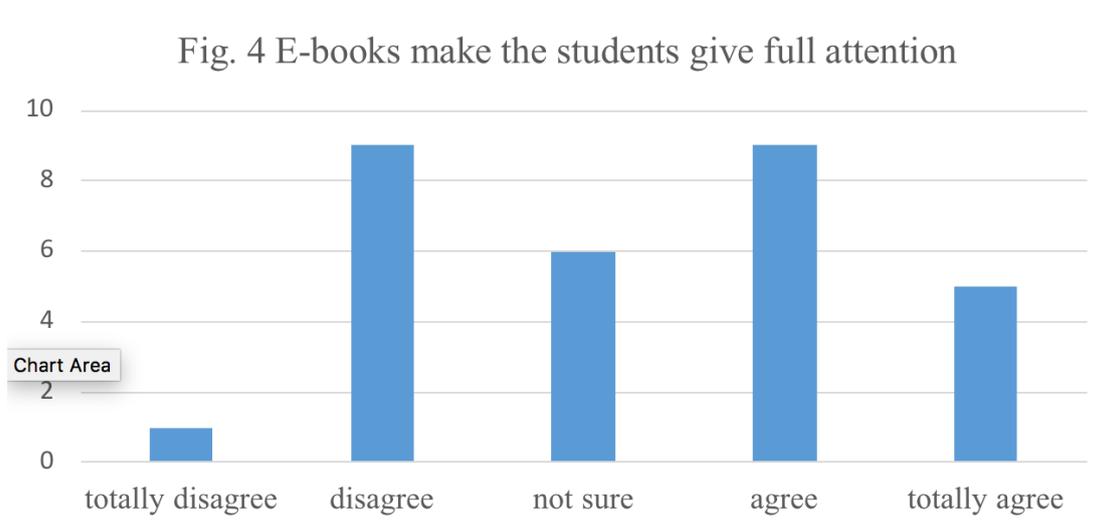


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According to the result in Fig. 2, the usage of the e-books is moderate. Only 30 % agreed that e-books were fully utilized in the classroom while 33 % did not agree about it. 20 % of the teachers were not sure about it. This describes how it helps teachers in the class. This is because e-books have some limitations. There are cases where students use e-books for other purposes, for example playing computer games.



Most teachers or 43 % of them agrees that e-books have replaced the usage of paper text book in the learning process. While only a few or 13 % did not agree and 16 % was not sure with the statement. This is because new gadget is nothing new in this era of technology and most students are exposed to it.



The result shows that most teachers slightly agreed that e-books cause students to give attentions during learning and teaching process. 30 % agreed about it, 30 % did not agree and another 20 % was not sure about it. This involves the quite big number of students in a class, which can reach up to 30 pupils, and it makes the teachers feel difficult to control the students individually.

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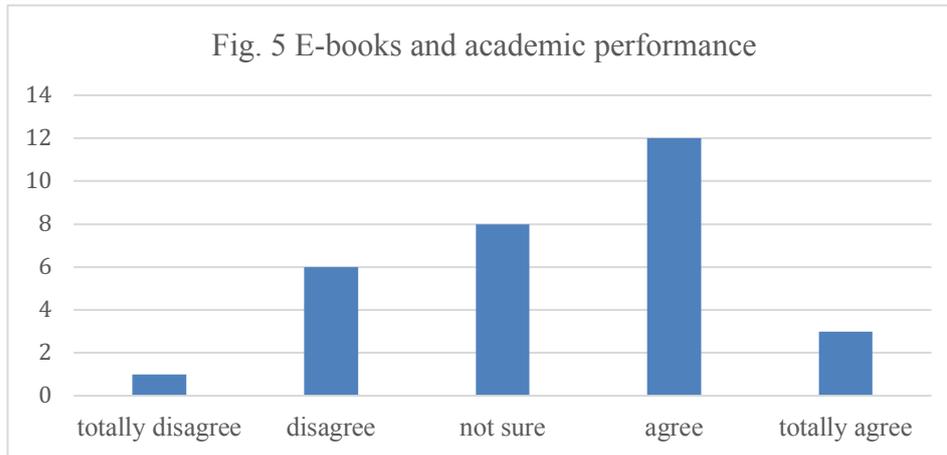
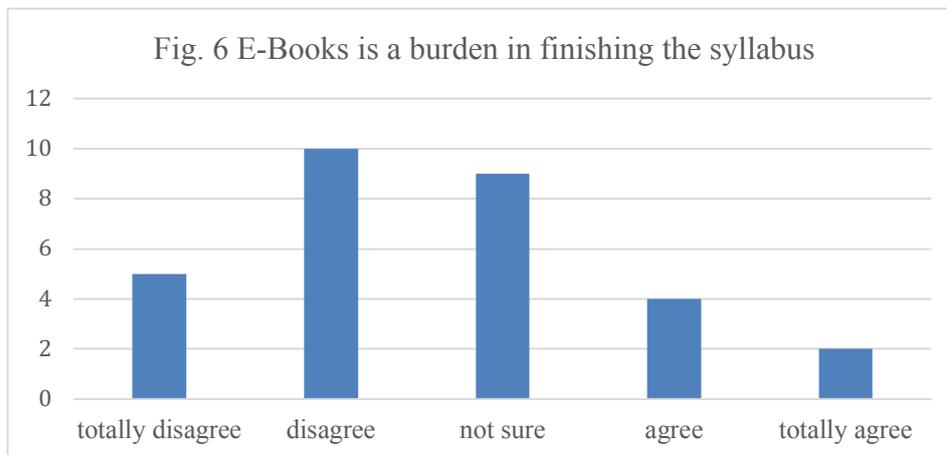
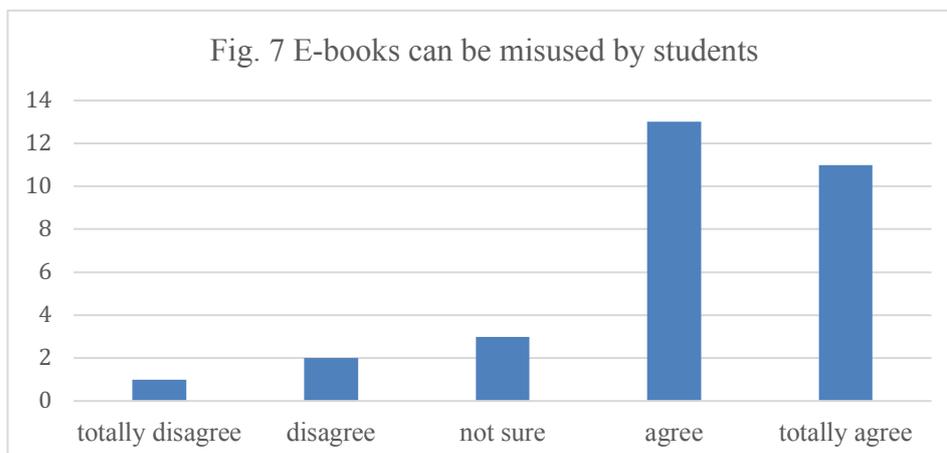


Fig. 5 above shows that 12 or 40 % of the teacher agreed that e-books have improved the students' academic performance. Again, it shows the use of e-books by teachers in a way that it helps students to do better. Somehow, 20 % of the teachers did not agree that e-books improve the students' performance while 27 % of them had no ideas pertaining the issue.

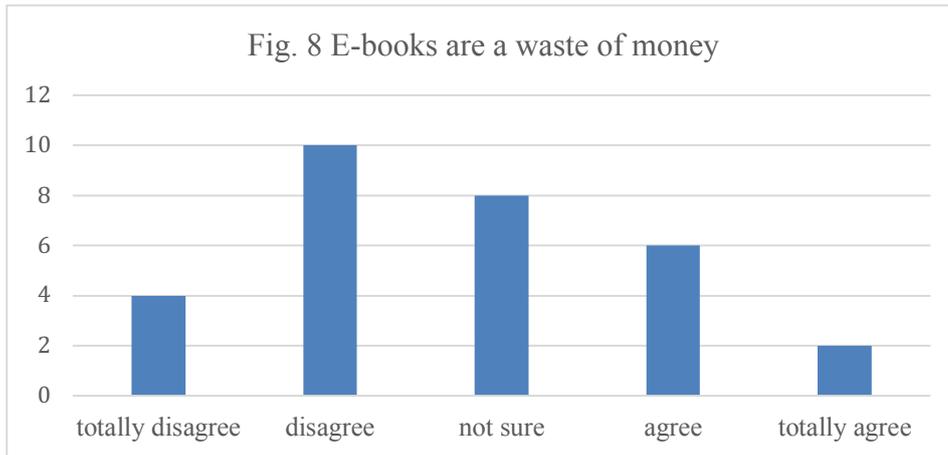


Only 13 % agreed that e-books is a burden in finishing the entire syllabus while almost half of the teachers disagreed that e-books can be a burden. 30 % had no ideas about this.

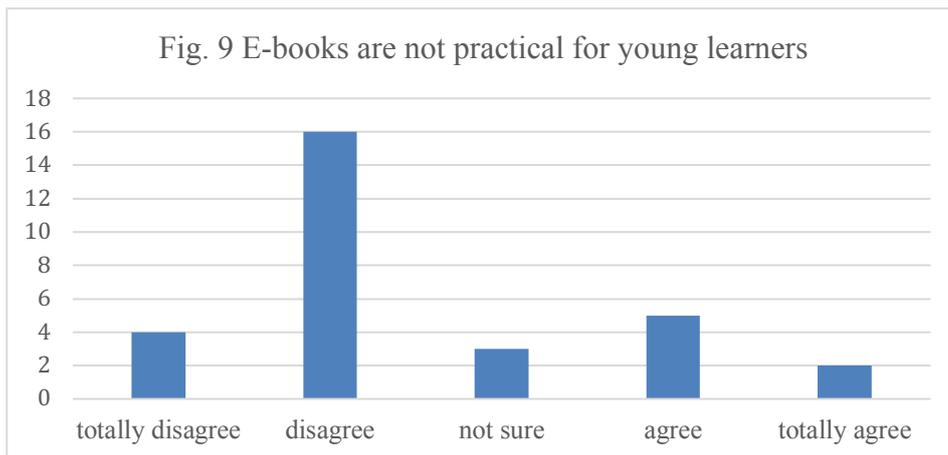


A strong opinion from 13 or 43 % of the teachers admitted that e-books can be wrongly used by the students while only a few numbers (2) denied it. Another 10 % was not sure about it.

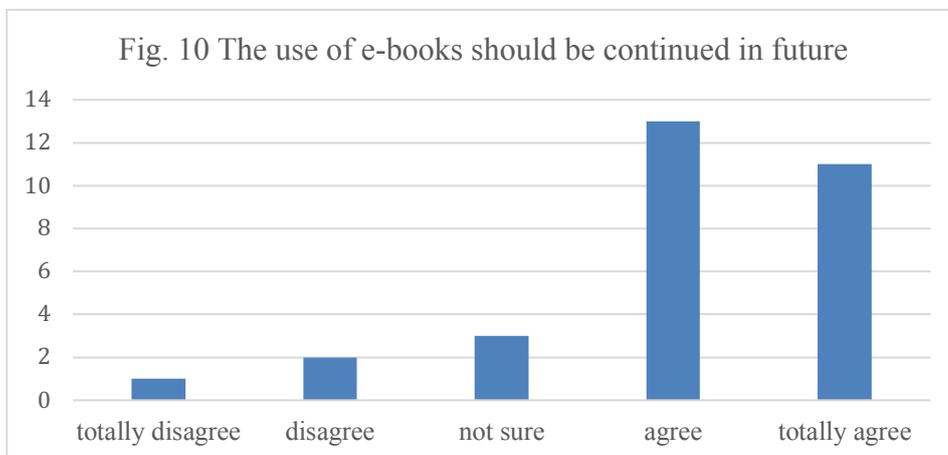
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33 % of the teachers refused that e-books is a waste and it should not be used for other purposes. Only 20 % of them agreed about this and another 27 % was not sure.



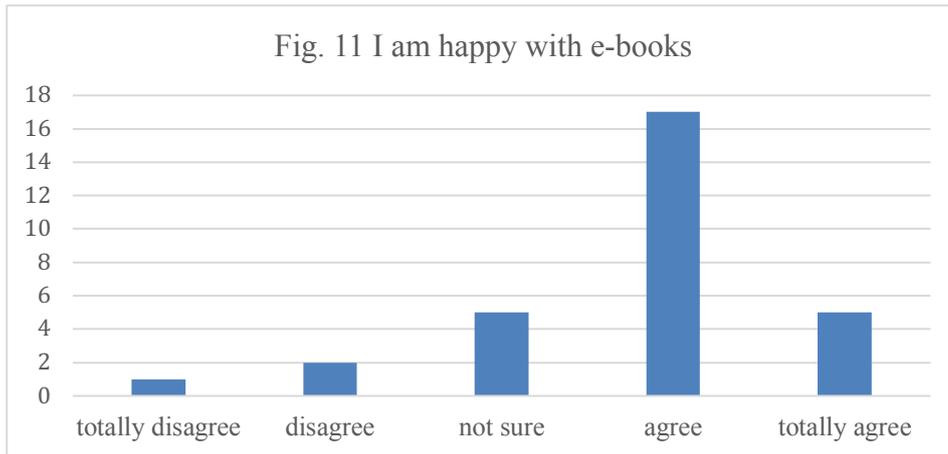
A strong of 53 % of the teachers disagree that e-books is not practical for the young standard 5 students. This is because young kids nowadays are exposed to technological devices. They learn very fast and even the younger one can access e-books at home. 17 % of them agreed about e-books were not for the youngsters while 10 % of them had not any idea about it.



A majority or 43 % of the teachers agreed that e-book should be continuously used for the next few years. However, % did not agree about this and 7 % was not sure whether it should be continued or not. The price of the e-books was expected to

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be reduced and more e-books might be produced in a mass scale. It may contribute to the use of e-books in future.



Overall, 57 % of the teachers met agreed that they were happy with the e-books while 7 % or 2 of them were not happy and another 5 teachers or % was not sure whether they were happy or not with the presence of e-books in the classroom. It indicates that as a whole, teachers met in the survey had a positive attitude towards the use of e-books in the classroom compared to a paper text book.

Findings of this research showed that perceptions of teachers on the use of e-books instead of paper textbooks are positive since e-books help teachers very much in learning process. Teachers could fully utilize e-books to attract students' attention during learning and teaching process. As the result, students' academic performances had been improved. Since kids are strongly exposed to technology devices nowadays, e-books are very practical for young learners. Finally, majority of teachers agreed that e-books should be continuously used for the next few years.

Discussion

Strategies of Using E-books

Limitations of Using e-Books in the Classroom

Together with the change of times and the evolution of technology, there has been a rampant outbreak of e-book readers in the market. However, what has truly awed the market is the invention of the e-books readers which enable readers to read books or small mobile devices. Anyhow, these awesome devices still have flaws and limitations (Donadio, 2011 & Rosso, 2009).

Based on the research conducted among the teachers who use e-books in the classroom, there exist some of the limitations which are specific below:

- There is a limited storage capacity on the hardware itself.
- There are limited power outlets in a classroom to ensure uninterrupted use of e-books in the classroom. Those who do not bring the e-books or fail to charge the power supply earlier may disturb the class. Teachers also have difficulty to monitor student regarding the using of e-book during the process of teaching and learning.
- Teachers and educators may not be adequately trained to conduct lessons with an e-book.

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- Insufficient supply of e-books at schools could be overcome through sharing as conveniently practice with textbooks. The size of e-books is too small and it is not comfortable to be shared.
- Some teachers may find e-books do not offer the same pleasure of reading compared to reading a traditional book. The screen of e-books is too small for display.
- Some e-books readers discourage text annotation. Students cannot write in text, underline, circle, or even comment in the margins to help them understand and analyze the text.
- Stringent DRM (Digital Rights Management) often prevents e-books from being shifted from one device to another.

Recommendation

Drawing from the limitations given by teachers when using e-books as textbooks, the following guidelines may give a rudiment concept for them or school administrators upon implementing the use of this portable electronic device:

- The use of e-books in the classroom involved few parties: teachers, school administrators, and technology specialists. Is there any collaboration among them to give the content presentations of the syllabi with the e-books readers?
- The prerequisite of introducing e-books in class is the technology. Schools must equip the technology of e-books if they would like to use them as learning materials.
- How do schools provide instructions and manuals to students who are not IT savvy, are ESL students, or are with special needs? How can e-books support teachers in helping these groups of students?
- Parents must adapt themselves to e-books technology when e-books replace the traditional textbooks. How can teachers help parents to monitor their children using e-books both at school and at home?
- E-books may not have a long shelf life if not regularly and properly maintained. Is the maintenance of e-books properly planned and implemented? If there is, who is responsible for it? Will the service be readily available? Teachers must aware of these and act necessary.

A Framework of Using E-books as Textbook

E-books have the potential to provide teachers with a teaching tool that can help them to effectively deliver their lessons to their students. Nevertheless, this paper acknowledges that e-books can never replace teachers. This paper outlines a framework on how e-books can support teachers in the learning process based on the findings from the questionnaires.

E-books can present any type of auditory or visual materials – including speech, text, music, animations, photographs, or videos. As stated by Casey (1994), e-books can link different types of representations such as pictures with sounds, oral readings with written text, videos with subtitles, or any other reading combinations that could reinforce teaching and teach.

The capability of presenting information and activities in various formats also means that e-books can accept a variety of inputs from students, ranging from mouse clicks to written text to spoken words. It can be programmed to check a students' work. E-books can serve as convenient recording and reporting devices for teachers, helping them track students' progress far more conveniently than other means of data collection (Casey, 1994).

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Besides interactive instructions, e-books should also provide flexible supports for students' learning process. Most e-book programs provide the ability to highlight text sections, and take notes. Some even add the ability to create drawings within the book. All of these features can increase students' comprehension and attention to a given work.

Furthermore, the display offered through e-books programs and devices can provide reading scaffolds for many students through their ability to change the displayed text size. The reason for using large print is not necessarily because these children have visual difficulties. Larger font sizes and spacing actually cause the eyes to move more slowly while reading, allowing students to tract their reading more easily and giving them more processing time (Grabe, C. & Grabe, M., 1996). All students, especially those susceptible to visual stress, were found to make more errors when using smaller text sizes than with larger text (Cavanaugh, 2006). For most e-books programs, creating a large text format is just a matter of sliding a text size bar to a larger setting.

Providing scaffolds for the learning process should also be supported by fostering sustained development of knowledge and learnt society. E-books can contribute to this continuous effort through maximizing the availability of knowledge while reducing the numbers of trees cut down to produce printed books. In 2007, Green Press Initiative (2011) reports that every year about 200,000 tons of paper are produced from 4 million trees for the publication of textbooks. The shift to using e-books as textbooks would not only reduce the usage of approximately 1 billion sheets of paper which translates into 120000 trees being saved every year but also ensure sustainable resources of knowledge ("Conserve a Tree," 2012).

Conclusion

The emergence of e-books as textbooks among the school children requires teachers to think how to adapt themselves in using e-book. While e-books will not replace print books in the near future, it will definitely be used to complement print books. It appears that teachers give a positive perception on the use of e-books as a text book. In classrooms, teachers and students will start to value the convenience and accessibility of e-books. It is one of the latest development in education technology. Indeed, the introduction of e-book in education could be a jump-start in promoting highly literate society. The suggested framework above may also need to suit a country's policy. With a proper study and plan, the integration of e-books as part of technology application in Indonesian schools will become a reality.

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