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## WEBSITE GOES INTO CLASSROOM: MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT USING AN AUTHORING TOOL 'LESSON WRITER'

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### **Abstract**

*With the development of Information and Computer Technology (ICT), life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has provided us with easy access to print as well as digital information. This development has brought about challenges to education system in general. In language education the challenges have to be responded with innovative ways to teach and learn languages. In ELT, especially in an EFL context such as that in Indonesia, English teachers must be able to acquire and possess a range of skills to utilize information, media, and education technology in teaching. One educational tool that can be used is an authoring software called Lesson Writer. This tool can be used to create lessons to develop the four language skills integratively using authentic texts about current world news on education, economy, health, etc. with audio and/or video files accessible through internet websites such as the Voice of America.com. This presentation will begin with a brief discussion about using technology in language teaching, then, follows an introduction of Lesson Writer and step by step procedure to use its facilities to create exercises for language and skills development. By the end of the presentation, the participants are introduced with a model lesson created with Lesson Writer.*

**Keywords:** *Information and Computer Technology, Lesson Writer, critical thinking, collaboration*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This paper aims to promote teachers' capacity to develop materials using an authoring tool called *Lesson Writer*. The materials for the workshop is based on my articles (Astika, 2013, 2015) published in *The International Journal of Innovation in English Language Teaching & Research (IJIELTR)* and in *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*. This paper begins with a theoretical discussion about the need for language teachers to always keep up with the current issues in English language teaching and the use of educational technology in language teaching and learning. The second half of the paper presents some steps of using *Lesson Writer* in developing a lesson from an authentic text available in a website such as that on <http://www.learningenglish.voanews.com>.

### **2. TEACHERS' LIFE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

This century has brought about many challenges for language teachers which have to be responded with innovations through capacity building programs. Capacity building was equated with training in which people learned a particular skill in order to do a job, but now capacity building may include improvement of organization (Wehmeier, 2000). Capacity building may take different forms such as pre-service training or in-service training (Arikawai and Pelesai, 2014). The capacity building program should aim to acquire skills and competencies which enable people to function effectively in their professional workplace. Among many issues in language education in Asia, educational

experts have identified development needs of English teachers, access to language education, and application of online education as most urgent problems that need our attention (Kimura, 2013). According to the report, the existing problems in foreign language proficiency among learners in many parts of Asia, including Indonesia, may have been caused by difficulties to get access to quality language education.

In order to alleviate this proficiency gap among learners, innovative solutions through capacity building and trainings for language teachers are needed. In particular, English language teachers will have a significant role to play do develop learners' language proficiency with necessary skills to communicate using English as an international lingua franca (House, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2010). Increased hours of instruction in English may help learners to become more proficient, but other skills such as intercultural communicative competence is necessary (Stroupe, 2013) that requires continuous educational efforts to develop students' understanding and empathy for others of different cultural groups.

There is an ever growing need for English teachers to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and training to design lessons that are useful and appropriate to their students with diverse linguistic ability and to integrate the lessons into English classes. One type of language learning which has gained popularity is blended language learning. This type of learning is now practiced in many educational institutions, integrating technology into English courses or used as a supplementary educational aid to regular English courses. Although the use of technology by language teachers is not yet widespread for various reasons, it can be expected that, in the future, technology in language classes will be widely used and become part of the language curriculum.

Teachers' life now is indulged with easy access to an abundance of information, print and digital, rapid development of technology devices (Information, Media and Technology Skills, 2014). This convenience necessitates language teachers to be able to acquire and possess a range of skills that are functional to utilize information, media, and technology in language teaching. In order to utilize information, teachers have to be information-literate, which means being able to access information quickly from a variety of sources and being able to evaluate information critically and being able to use the information to solve problems in teaching.

Similarly, academic life requires students to possess creativity, critical thinking skills, and collaboration skills (Learning and Innovation Skills 2014). Creativity refers to being able to use a wide range of ideas and techniques in dealing with problems. Critical thinking refers to being able to use different types of reasoning, inductive, deductive, which are appropriate to use in a particular situation. Collaboration skills refer to an ability to work effectively with other people with flexibility and respect.

To accommodate teachers' and students' needs in language learning, educational system should provide them with the facilities to promote creativity, critical thinking, and collaborations, the skills that are necessary to acquire in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ananiadou, K. and Claro, M. (2009). Students as well as teachers must be able to process and organize information and transform it to produce new ideas. In this regard, the use of ICT can not be overlooked since it is vital to exchange, evaluate, and present information. Dudeney and Hockly (2007, pp. 7-8) point out some reasons for using technology in language classrooms.

- Internet access – either in private homes or at Internet cafes – is becoming increasingly available to learners.
- Younger learners are growing up with technology, and it is a natural and integrated part of their lives. For these learners the use of technology is a way to bring the outside world into the classroom.

- The Internet has provided us with authentic tasks and materials, as well as ready-made ELT materials.
- The Internet provides means for collaboration and communication between learners.
- Learners expect teachers and schools to use technology into classroom activities.
- Technology provides new ways to practice language and evaluate language performance.
- Technology is becoming increasingly mobile. It can be used not only in the classroom, lecture hall, and computer room, but it can also be used at home, on the way to school and in Internet cafes.

The developments in technology, particularly the facilities offered by the Internet for language teaching and learning, do not, unfortunately, always run parallel to the attitude and motivation of many language teachers. Teachers may feel more comfortable with the conventional way of organizing language classes. On the other hand, today's learners are very quick to learn things through the Internet as they grow up using technology and are more accustomed to using it. They have become 'digital natives' while parents and / or language teachers may become 'digital immigrants' (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007), people who are wary of technology and are slow to learn technology. This can become a source of different expectations with regard to how English should be learned and taught at school.

One educational software that is useful to teachers and students is *Lesson Writer*. It is an authoring tool that provides teachers with conveniences that are not available in most conventional textbooks. By using the *Lesson Writer* software teachers can share their lessons and monitor what other teachers are teaching and instruction can be coordinated collaboratively. Multimedia contents such as videos from YouTube or teacher-made video clips can easily be embedded in the lesson and these media can be replaced and updated anytime. Students can take lessons online, communicate with teachers and collaborate with peers on tasks or projects. Exercises can be assessed by teachers online automatically. *Lesson Writer* also has the facility to create differentiated instructions appropriate to different levels of students' language ability.

The implementation of technology use in educational sector is in line with the needs of the students who have natural curiosity for technology. The students' quick familiarity and interest with new technology and their ease in which they use it should be regarded as a blessing and accommodated in schools through learning contents and curriculum activities. Students' natural interest in ICT and technology has the potential to promote their motivation and involvement in learning. Therefore, it can be expected that there is a shift from teacher-centered learning to more student-centered learning supported by technology.

With the advancement of the internet technology should follow new ways of teaching and learning in the classroom. The new modes of learning requires techno literacy (Walker, Huddleston, and Pullen, 2010) which refers to 'how literate one is with technology and how they use the technology to communicate'. In classroom contexts, students and teachers should have sufficient techno literacy skills to achieve the purpose of learning. Today's learners are surrounded with technology and they are growing up with digital tools such as cell phones, Ipads, iPhones, equipped with application facilities to access information from the internet websites. Learning experiences with such gadget should come to the attention of teachers and educators and channel those experiences through productive learning activities at school. Ignoring learners' experiences with technology would only increase discrepancy between formal learning at school and informal multiliteracy practices through technology (Ryu, 2011).

With an adequate support, students will learn to master these skills and will become confident with e-learning. With this perspective, teachers should have an open attitude towards IT because this could motivate learners to improve their online skills. As pointed out by Zhang and Goel (2011), “attitudes shapes actions, implying that if teachers show positive attitudes to IT, they will use technology in their work, and in turn will motivate learners to learn through technology such as use of computer skills and online learning mode. This technology development and learners’ familiarity with it and the changing modes of getting information and learning, many institutions have adopted and created e-learning to be integrated into their curriculum. This phenomena has changed the perspectives on the nature of learning, language learning and language teaching (Morley, 1991). Teachers now have the options of designing instructions, developing learning materials, assessment, and research plans.

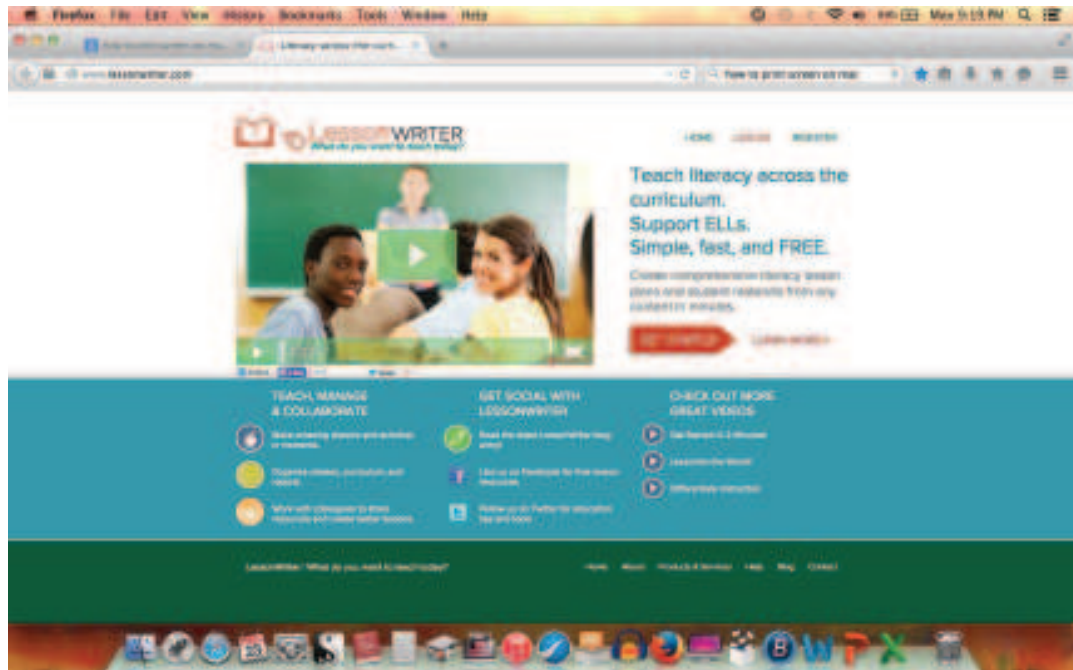
The development and widespread use of technologies such as mobile phones, personal computers, the internet and worldwide web has reached all sectors including the education sectors. With this development, there has been a growing need among language educators to adopt classroom practices that promote the use of such technological devices in order to develop learners’ language skills more efficiently.

It is a common scene at schools and universities that the students now have these technological equipment such as mobile phones and laptops that have the features for communication and connection to the internet for information. Today’s students have become technologically literate and use ICT in their everyday lives for social as well as educational purposes. As a result of the increase use of technological devices in society and by the students, language teachers have to re-evaluate their roles in teaching language to their students. This also necessitates re-evaluation of teacher-student relationship in the classroom and the roles of learning materials. The adoption of new role of the teacher and classroom learning culture requires the teachers to participate continuously in professional development and training (Walker, Huddleston, and Pullen, 2010) to increase/develop their knowledge and skills of new technology and how they can make use of the devices to support their current practice in the classroom.

Based on the discussion above, below is an example of material development for reading practice using *Lesson Writer* authoring tool. It is an online tool and can be accessed free at <http://www.lessonwriter.com>. It requires a login account to use it. The screen below will appear when you login to Lesson Writer.

*Lesson Writer* is a free website for teachers that creates lesson plans and instructional materials for teaching English language skills from any reading passage. *Lesson Writer* can analyze texts for vocabulary, grammar and usage, pronunciation and word roots and stems. It produces a standard-based lesson plan and teaching materials within minutes. *Lesson Writer* automatically creates lessons and materials from any text from any source. It can customize materials to make reading more manageable.

It can divide any text into shorter passages based on the number of vocabulary words in each passage. It can pre-teach vocabulary and create comprehension questions throughout a reading text. The following are some opening screens in *Lesson Writer* that serve as a guide to create a lesson.



Screen 1. First screen in Lesson Writer.



Screen 2. Log on page





Screen 3. What you want to do with *Lesson Writer*



Screen 4. What you want to teach



Screen 5. A blank space for a text

The following are the steps for teachers when creating a lesson from a reading text. These steps follow the tools that are available on the *Lesson Writer* template.

1. Copy and paste any text into the space in the template. In this example, *Farmers Use Creative Methods to Grow Crops* has been selected for the lesson. It has exercises on vocabulary, root and stems of words, grammar, and reading comprehension. It can also be extended to discussion or poster presentation. Lesson Writer allows 1500 words at the maximum. The screen below will appear once the text has been submitted to the program.



Screen 6. Text inserted in *Lesson Writer*.

When this screen appears, select 'Create from this text' button to select the type of lesson automatic



Screen 7. Options for lesson.

2. Select 'Vocabulary words you want to include' button on top screen to create a vocabulary exercise. The program automatically selects vocabulary items in the



text as can be seen in Screen 8 below. The first column is the 'Word and Definition' column with little boxes. Select the box if the word is to be used in the exercise. The second column is the 'Word in Context' column. It shows the sentence in the text where the word is used. The third column shows examples of sentences which use the selected words.



Screen 8. Vocabulary selected in *Lesson Writer*

3. Select 'A grammar point and the best example sentences for that point' on top screen. The program automatically selects the grammar item and the sentences used in the text, as can be seen in Screen 9.





Screen 10. Comprehension questions.

The four steps above produced a sample lesson that will be handed out separately. The reading exercises can be extended to speaking practice such as inviting students to comment on the text orally, or respond to the text by writing their opinions about creative methods to grow crops. A more cognitively demanding exercise which requires a higher level of thinking can be made such as creating a poster which shows how people grow crops in different parts of the country (Indonesia). To create such a poster the learners will have to use the information in the text, or they can be assigned to get additional information about growing crops from different sources or websites.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The availability and accessibility of computer and language program software technology have made it possible for language teachers to develop learning materials and teaching methodology in a way that is different from more conventional teaching. The development of educational technology points to the need for language teachers to reconsider their role as well as the role of students and materials in the learning process. However, it should be noted that technology is only a tool and the presence of teachers in the classroom cannot be completely replaced by technology. There are certain aspects of language learning that can only be taught and learned through social interaction between teachers and students in the classroom.

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