

## Integrating Internet-based applications in English language teaching: Teacher practices in a Thai university

**Mark B. Ulla, William F. Perales**

*Walailak University, Thailand*

**Veronico N. Tarrayo**

*University of Santo Tomas, Philippines*

This study was conducted to identify various Internet-based applications integrated in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. It explored how seven English language teachers utilised different applications in their English language teaching (ELT) in a university in Thailand. The methods used were classroom observations and follow-up individual interviews. Findings revealed that *Kahoot*, *Socrative*, *Google Form*, *QR code*, *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Quizizz* and *Quizlet* were among the Internet-based applications the teachers used in their classroom teaching. Moreover, the teachers responded positively to changes in the ELT landscape as they integrated these different applications in their classrooms. They seemed to be confident about the advantages these applications can bring into their teaching practices. Furthermore, their common responses as regards their reason for utilising Internet-based applications point to one evident perspective: Internet-based applications make their ELT classroom more convenient, exciting, and fluid. Implications for ELT are discussed in light of the findings, and recommendations for future research are offered.

### Introduction

Research on technology integration and utilisation in the English language teaching (ELT) classroom to enhance the teaching of English as second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL) has been popular in recent years because of its pedagogical contributions. Teachers, policy makers, and education scholars believe that technology integration supports both the teachers' pedagogical practices and the students' learning improvement (Costley, 2014; Parvin & Salam, 2015; Gilakjani, 2017). For example, English language learning becomes exciting and motivating (Andrade, 2014) as technology offers various engaging instructional materials teachers can adapt and use. Likewise, technology use in the classroom promotes students' active learning (Parvin & Salam, 2015); caters to their needs and interests, makes them more engaged in language learning (Gilakjani, 2017); and provides opportunities for students to work together with their classmates (Costley, 2014). Thus, there is no doubt that technology integration in ELT classrooms has now become a new, upward trend in language education.

Consequently, the impact of technology on language teaching has also brought the widespread use of different Internet-based applications ('apps') in ELT (Lin, Warschauer & Blake, 2016). Various social networking sites such as *Facebook*, *YouTube*, and other Internet-based applications are now utilised in ELT classrooms as they are assumed to offer a new platform for language teaching and learning (Kalasi, 2014; Sitthirak, 2013). In other words, these social networking sites and other Internet-based applications may be said to have become the new 'whiteboards' and 'classrooms' where the teaching and

learning of the English language takes place. These various technologies are transforming and influencing the pedagogical landscape in ELT classrooms.

In Thailand, where English is not widely used (Ulla, 2018) as it is considered as a foreign language, using Internet-based applications for language teaching and learning can be a great help for teachers and students. Using technology in the EFL classroom, especially mobile and Internet-based applications, may provide EFL students the opportunity to be exposed to different authentic activities where the target language is used. It can offer them opportunities in learning English at their own pace and in their own time. It can also provide them a safe space where they can practice using the language with classmates and friends. Furthermore, a number of studies (Andrade, 2014; Costley, 2014; Parvin & Salam, 2015; Gilakjani, 2017; Sitthirak, 2013) have presented some benefits of utilising technology and other learning applications in the classroom. However, despite the advantages of using different Internet-based applications for language teaching, only a few studies have explored this aspect in Thailand's language education and within the wider ASEAN region. Thus, this present study was conducted to identify various Internet-based applications for language teaching and explore teachers' pedagogical practices with regard to integrating these into their ELT classrooms in a Thai EFL context. It is hoped that the results of this study will not only bridge the gap in the literature but also provide a new lens on ways to integrate Internet-based applications in ELT.

### **Mobile-assisted language learning in ELT classrooms**

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) refers to the use of mobile devices in language learning (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). Such devices may include smartphones, tablets, *iPads*, and notebooks where students can access different applications to facilitate and enhance their language learning. As it has been used to offer alternative solutions to language learning issues, MALL's integration into ELT ranges from improving vocabulary to teaching grammar, writing, and speaking (Ali & Miraz, 2018). It has become a popular area of research in the field of education and English language teaching, especially in the context of EFL in recent years (Çakmak, 2019; Hegelheimer, Li & Dursun, 2018). Such popularity is often attributed to the fact that it contributes to the improvement of students' language learning (Botero, Questier & Zhu, 2019; Gafni, Aчитuv & Rachmani, 2017). However, while there may be a number of studies of MALL in language teaching, little is known about teacher practices when various Internet-based applications are integrated in the ELT classroom. Such a study on teacher practices may be deemed important as it focuses on both the use of MALL in language learning and of technology in education, and on teachers' pedagogical practices. Thus, this study concentrates on Internet-based applications in ELT and teacher practices in using these applications in the classroom.

Some studies have described negative effects of integrating Internet-based applications into the classroom teaching, including the absence of social interaction among learners (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014), a decrease in the role of the teacher in classroom teaching (Dina & Ciornei, 2013), failures of learners to comprehend the lesson (Yunus, Nordin, Salehi, Sun & Embi, 2013), and language lessons and activities that may be suitable only

for elementary students of English. However, most studies have found that incorporating Internet-based and mobile applications in the ELT classroom could have beneficial impacts on teaching and learning. For example, studies conducted by Calabrich (2016) in London, Liu and He (2015) in China, and Kim, Rueckert, Kim and Seo (2013) in the US revealed that students were positive about learning English when mobile applications and mobile technology were used in the classroom. Although these studies were conducted in varied contexts with different foci, the results may have an implication for future research in the field of mobile application and technology integration in language teaching. Recent studies (Botero, Questier & Zhu, 2019; Gafni, Achituv & Rachmani, 2017) have provided a strong focus on mobile applications when used in ELT classrooms.

## **Effectiveness of Internet-based applications in ELT**

There is no doubt that integration of Internet-based applications into language teaching and learning offers great advantages both for teachers and students. A review by Gangaiamaran and Pasupathi (2017) on the use of mobile applications for language learning revealed that learners achieve better listening abilities when using mobile apps in the classroom. Similarly, although in different contexts and skills focused upon, a review by Wenyuan (2017) emphasised that vocabulary is learnt better when mobile apps are used in the classroom. Although their reviews on the use of mobile applications were positive, they did not focus extensive attention upon how different mobile applications were integrated into the teaching of the language.

On the other hand, two recent, similar studies on MALL, using *Duolingo* to support students' language learning processes, were conducted by Gafni, Achituv and Rachmani (2017) in Israel, and Botero, Questier and Zhu (2019) in Belgium. Both studies reported that *Duolingo* use improved and encouraged both out-of-class and in-class learning as it is easy, fun, and convenient to use. Although both studies also reported some issues such as lack of motivation, and lack of human feedback, among others, the use of the *Duolingo* in language learning helps establish that mobile applications can deliver a positive effect on students' language learning. In other words, the use of mobile apps as a new learning approach is effective and efficient for students to improve their English proficiency (Liu & He, 2015). It may be right to say that because of the benefits of integrating these web-based and mobile applications into classroom teaching, the landscape of the ELT classroom has been changed.

In the ASEAN region context, relatively few studies have been conducted on teachers' practices for integrating Internet-based applications into language teaching. Most of these studies focused only on the effects and the use of different mobile learning applications in English language teaching. For example, in Thailand, Khampusaen (2015) conducted a survey on the role of *Google Apps* in improving students' writing abilities, comparing pre-test and post-test results. The study found that there was a significant improvement in students' writing fluency and accuracy when *Google Apps* was used in the classroom. Similarly, Suwatarathip and Orawiatnakul (2015) in their study on the use of short messaging service (SMS) in mobile devices for vocabulary skill development found that students who completed the vocabulary tasks through the use of their mobile phones

were able to better learn new vocabulary. Compared with students who did the vocabulary exercises on paper, those who did the exercises in their mobile devices held a positive attitude toward the use of MALL in vocabulary learning.

Undeniably, there are certain applications that play an indispensable part in students' language learning, particularly in the contemporary environment where almost every student possesses at least one electronic device. In some parts of the ASEAN region where English is considered as a foreign language, there is much pressure to improve the quality of language education and students' proficiency in English. However, while a number of studies have explored the use of different mobile applications in education, only a few empirical studies have been concerned with the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) tools into EFL classes. Therefore, this present study attempts to identify and describe teaching practices of EFL university teachers who seek to integrate various Internet-based applications into English language learning in Thailand. Although conducted in a local university in Thailand, this study may have more widespread implication for pedagogical practices as it addresses one of the most pressing issues on technology use in the classroom, the integration of mobile applications into language teaching. Thus, this study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are some of the mobile and Internet-based applications for English language learning that university teachers in Thailand use in their EFL classrooms?
2. How do these English language teachers use these applications in their EFL classes?

## **Method**

The present study was based on qualitative methods for classroom observations and follow-up individual interviews. It used purposive sampling, and was conducted in a higher education institution in Thailand between December 2018 and May 2019. The university, which is located in the south of Thailand, encourages its faculty members to utilise and integrate different technologies in their teaching. Thus in 2017, the University's Language Institute, responsible for teaching all general English courses, also promoted the use of different mobile applications in ELT classrooms. Use of these applications was strengthened when all the curricula for general English courses were revised to include the integration of a specific application or applications for language teaching.

## **Participants**

There were 27 English language teachers who were teaching at Walailak University's Language Institute at the time of the study, with seven teachers (three female, four male) volunteering to participate in this study (Table 1). The choice of the research setting was based on accessibility and practicality as two of the researchers were teaching in Walailak University with the participants. Likewise, the consideration of the participants for the study was guided by the following criteria: teaching English for more than three years at the time of the study; be using one or two Internet and mobile-based applications for English language teaching and learning; and the use of mobile applications should be reflected in their course syllabus and weekly lesson plans.

Table 1: Demographic profiles of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Nationality	Highest degree
Teacher 1	Male	30	Indonesian	MAED
Teacher 2	Male	43	Filipino	EdD
Teacher 3	Female	37	Thai	MA
Teacher 4	Female	40	Filipino	PhD
Teacher 5	Female	28	Vietnamese	MA
Teacher 6	Male	29	Ghana	MA
Teacher 7	Male	33	Filipino	MA

The participants' teaching experience ranged between four and 15 years, age from 28 to 43 years.

### Data collection and analysis

Since the participants were teaching in the same university with two of the researchers, at first, they were approached one by one and informed about the nature and purpose of the study. They were then asked if they were willing to participate in the study. After the participants agreed, a formal letter asking their consent was sent to them. It was made clear in the letter that their participation was voluntary and that all data they shared would be accorded high confidentiality.

After their confirmation, a classroom observation and an individual interview were scheduled at a convenient time. The participants were observed only once in their classroom teaching, for a period of two hours. The purpose of the classroom observation was to identify how the teachers integrate pedagogically the different Internet-based applications. The individual interview was conducted after the classroom observation, to ascertain the reasons for their choice in using Internet-based applications in their English language teaching. The interviews were conducted in English and lasted for 25 to 40 minutes.

Lastly, the classroom-observation and the follow-up-interview data were carefully transcribed and were repeatedly read and examined from the perspective of the questions posed for this study. For content analysis, interview transcripts were divided into smaller, meaningful parts and were condensed and categorised to formulate themes.

### Findings and discussion

The interview excerpts included in this section are identified by codes for the teacher-participants, T1 (teacher 1), T2 (teacher 2), etc., to preserve anonymity.

#### The use of mobile applications in the classroom

During the classroom observations which took place between March and May 2019, the teacher-participants used various applications to facilitate their teaching of the English language. Among the MALL used were *Kahoot*, *Socrative*, *Google Form* with a QR code,

*Facebook* group, *YouTube*, *Quizizz*, and *Quizlet* (Table 1). Most of these MALL had different functions, and the teacher-participants used them differently in each of their EFL classes. Moreover, it was observed that almost all of the teacher-participants used more than one applications in their ELT. For example, T1 had a QR code projected on the screen at the start of his lesson. The QR code was meant for the students to scan and log in for their attendance. After ten minutes, it was taken off, and the teacher proceeded to his daily lesson. At the later part, he launched another application, which was the *Quizlet*. It was used as his platform to check the students' understanding of the lesson.

Table 2: Different mobile applications and their uses in the ELT classroom

	Mobile application	Use in the ELT classroom
1.	<i>Kahoot</i> - <a href="https://kahoot.com">https://kahoot.com</a>	Vocabulary and grammar practices platform
2.	<i>Socrative</i> - <a href="https://socrative.com">https://socrative.com</a>	Vocabulary, reading, and listening assessments platform
3.	<i>Facebook</i> - <a href="https://www.facebook.com">https://www.facebook.com</a>	Class "whiteboard", video and writing submission platform
4.	<i>YouTube</i> - <a href="https://www.youtube.com">https://www.youtube.com</a>	Listening practices, videos for class motivation
5.	<i>Quizizz</i> - <a href="https://quizizz.com">https://quizizz.com</a>	Vocabulary and grammar practices platform
6.	<i>Quizlet</i> - <a href="https://quizlet.com/en-gb">https://quizlet.com/en-gb</a>	Vocabulary and grammar practices platform
7.	<i>Google Form</i> with QR code - <a href="https://gsuite.google.com/marketplace/app/qr_code_maker/300233408755">https://gsuite.google.com/marketplace/app/qr_code_maker/300233408755</a>	Reading assessment platform

T2 launched the *Socrative* application in the first 20 minutes of his lesson. He used it for vocabulary exercises and for checking students' attendance, as those who came in late were no longer allowed to participate in the *Socrative* quiz. Likewise, he used *YouTube* in the middle of his lesson to show sample videos about his discussion.

T3 used both *Facebook* and *Socrative* applications on the day her class was observed. She opened her *Facebook* account and clicked on to their class *Facebook* group. Then videos about students interviewing foreigners, which usually lasted for five to ten minutes, were individually played. After the fifth video, she instructed her students to comment on the video made by their classmates, focusing only on the questions asked in the interview and their responses to their interviewees' statements.

T4 used both *Kahoot* and *Facebook* in her class. The teacher launched *Kahoot* to reinforce her lesson. Thus, after every item answered by the students and before proceeding to the next item, the teacher would explain the correct answer. Likewise, *Facebook* was used as a reminder board where the teacher posted on their class *Facebook* page the activities the students have to do for their next session.

T5 played a video clip from *YouTube* at the start of the class. The video was projected on the screen, and all the students were asked to watch and listen attentively to the clip. After that, the teacher asked some students about the video clip, which led to her lesson discussion. In the middle of her lesson, she launched another application, the *Quizizz*. In

*Quizizz*, the students were made to join by entering the code generated by the application. The students answered 20 questions related to the topic discussed in class.

T6 only used one application; however, he used it twice in his lesson discussion. He used the *Socrative* app at the start of his lesson where the students answered 20 questions related to vocabulary learned the previous meeting. Likewise, he used it again at the later part of his lesson where the students read short articles and answered the comprehension questions that followed.

Lastly, T7 had only one application used in his ELT classroom. He used only *YouTube* to show a video clip from *TEDTalks* to his students. After the *TEDTalks* video, he distributed a test questionnaire and instructed his students to answer the questions related to the shown video clip.

From the classroom observations, it can be noted that the various Internet-based applications integrated into the ELT classroom were related to language skills that can be performed conveniently using the applications. For example, vocabulary was done mostly on platforms such as *Kaboot*, *Socrative*, *Quizizz* and *Quizlet*. Although the *Socrative* application was used mostly for vocabulary assessment, *Kaboot*, *Quizizz* and *Quizlet* were also employed for vocabulary practice and other grammar activities. Likewise, *Facebook* can be considered as the new 'whiteboard' in the class as it was used for homework reminders, class announcements, and a platform for video and writing activities in class. Teachers were observed to have used *Facebook* even for posting of in-class activity instructions. Additionally, *YouTube* was used mostly as a source for in-class listening practice and for class motivation. *TEDTalks* videos were the most common ones that teachers used via *YouTube*.

### **Teachers' attitudes toward mobile applications in the ELT classroom**

#### *Mobile applications for convenience in teaching*

I am using *Socrative* and *Facebook* applications in my ELT classroom because they give me convenience in my teaching. For instance, I use *Facebook* mainly for posting class announcements, course syllabus, and other homework reminders, so students can check on our class FB group if they missed my homework instruction or if they want to refer back to our course syllabus for the activities in the class. Students can also submit their writing homework on our *Facebook* page. For vocabulary practices, I use *Socrative* because it automatically generates scores of my students after the test. Thus, I don't need to mark the papers manually which saves my time. Both *Socrative* and *Facebook* are very important as they offer a new and a different way of doing classroom activities. (T3)

For me, since we are now living in the age of technology, I see the need to cope with its advancements, especially for language learning. It would be a shame to ignore a plethora of web applications available on the web, which can promote language learning and aid in the teaching of the English language. Furthermore,

using these web applications can do wonders both for us teachers and for our students. For example, I am using *YouTube* most of the time because there are plenty of good video clips that can help my students to get motivated in learning the English language. Therefore, I would say that gone are the days, which I had to think of ways how to motivate my students. Thanks to *YouTube*. (T5)

Integrating and utilising these available web applications in ELT classroom is a means of coping with the changing landscape of language education. We, teachers, need to see the benefits of all of these web applications not just for us but also for our students... I feel that using them in the classroom would bring a new light to classroom teaching. Students are more engaged, active, and participative because they feel that we have a different approach to language teaching. Using a QR code for checking their attendance and *Quizlet* for lesson reinforcement is something new to them and so they are very eager to take part of the class activities. (T1)

#### *Mobile applications enhancing student learning*

There is a significant impact on my teaching of the English language to my students when I use *YouTube* in my lesson. I feel that my students have become so motivated, especially if I wanted them to role-play a scene in some of the videos I have shown them. They seemed to learn also from the videos I played, especially on pronunciation as most of them tried to imitate the pronunciation of the people in the video. Thus, I can say that *YouTube* provides a good avenue for students to enhance their learning of the English language. (T7)

Integrating web-applications makes ELT fluid, unconventional, and exciting. Admittedly, I only tap these various web applications to reinforce my lesson and make my topic interesting so that students would not feel pressure in learning English. (T4)

I think integrating various mobile applications in our teaching of the English language especially here in Thailand is a big help not only for us teachers but also for our students. For example, I can easily connect with my students if they missed something in my class or if they have questions about our lessons. It is very convenient for me to check their writing whether they copied and pasted it from the Internet or they wrote it themselves. For vocabulary, it is easy for me to get their scores as *Socrative* does it for me. (T6)

These different mobile applications do an amazing job in my classroom. Although at first I found it difficult to use these applications as I'm a bit old, I enjoyed them eventually and found them useful. *YouTube* is very rich in listening practices. I always use it as my source for motivating videos and for any listening exercises in my class. Students learn the correct pronunciation of words and they are also exposed to materials that can provide them a model for language learning. (T2)

The interview transcripts revealed that teachers responded positively to changes in the ELT landscape as they integrated different Internet-based applications into their classrooms. They seemed to be confident about the advantages these applications can bring into their teaching practices. Moreover, their common responses as regards their reason for utilising these applications point to one evident perspective; that is, Internet-based applications make their ELT classroom activities more convenient, exciting, and fluid.

Generally, the teacher-participants used several Internet-based applications in their classrooms, including *Kahoot*, *Socrative*, *Google Form* with a QR code, *Facebook* group, *YouTube*, *Quizizz* and *Quizlet*. Moreover, all of these applications were integrated into ELT according to specific purposes and functions within a lesson. For example, because *YouTube* provides a vast number of popular videos, from music to travel and several other topics, it was observed to be a good platform for motivating students to learn English. In the present study, *YouTube* was used for class motivation where video clips were shown before the start of a lesson. It was also used for listening assessment as it is rich with videos that are informative and educational. Indeed, *YouTube* can be a good source for listening exercises where a teacher plays a presentation video and students answer the comprehension questions related to it. However, teachers may be challenged to choose an interesting and engaging video material relevant to the lesson's language topic. When choosing a video from *YouTube*, teachers should consider both the quality of the video and how it can enhance students' English language skills.

Facebook is another popular, social media application used in the ELT classrooms. The teacher-participants in the present study mentioned that *Facebook* has been used as an announcement board where they can post reminders for the class homework and any other activities. In this study, *Facebook* was used as a class 'whiteboard', where a teacher can post anything about the class activities, and it also served as a submission facility for students conducting other class activities, especially writing homework. Generally, the convenience *Facebook* offers to teachers, especially in marking writing assignments, may be the deciding factor why they integrated *Facebook* into their ELT. This may be true of other learning applications such as *Kahoot*, *Socrative*, *Quizizz* and *Quizlet*, where quizzes and other examinations can be done online; in this way, teachers can economise with their marking time as these applications can generate students' scores automatically. Although *Facebook* cannot generate scores for any type of test, it can still make the work of teachers easier, especially for writing tasks. In *Facebook*, teachers can easily copy text from any writing assignment and paste it into *Google* to find any matches and similarities from elsewhere. Likewise, they can give comments upon students' written work without using a paper copy, which can certainly save time.

Indeed, integrating different applications and other technologies into the classroom may really be of great help in enhancing lessons and activities, which can be beneficial for both teachers and students (Andrade, 2014; Gilakjani, 2017). In fact, the advantages of integrating technology into the classroom lesson have already been reported in previous studies (Calabrich, 2016; Liu & He, 2015; Kim et al., 2013). All these studies agreed that various applications provide a new teaching methodology platform where teachers can

conduct integrative lessons and exciting activities, and also develop the technology skills of teachers, making them responsive and adaptive to trends and current practices in language teaching. Furthermore, as various Internet-based applications encourage new teaching styles and strategies, and more exciting and engaging activities, exercises, and other supplemental lessons, the teachers believed that these applications can have a positive impact on ELT and to their students. For example, various applications can make EFL classroom teaching convenient as they can function as a platform for class motivation, vocabulary enhancement, writing exercises, objective type of assessments, and reinforcement for class discussions. Students may become more active language learners (Parvin & Salam, 2015) as they will have expanded opportunities to learn with and collaborate with their peers (Costley, 2014). Students may also improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension (Sato, Matsunuma & Suzuki, 2013), enhance their learning of the target language, establish their learning independence, boost their vocabulary-learning incentive in L2 (Sato, Murase & Burden, 2015), and study at their own speed anytime and anywhere (Bezircilioğlu, 2016). Further, the use of Internet-based applications in ELT, such as *Facebook* and *YouTube* where real-time communication can take place, offers students opportunities to interact online with speakers of English either as a native, second, or foreign language. In this way, the students can enhance their intercultural communication skills by using English as an international language or a lingua franca in understanding diverse cultures across the globe.

Although the present study explored some teaching practices of English language teachers in a university in Thailand with regard to integrating Internet-based applications into their classes, the findings could be relevant for educational institutions elsewhere in the world as they shed some light on the opportunities to use some English learning applications that enhance teaching and evaluation practices. Teachers' pedagogical practices with regard to integrating Internet-based applications into ELT as described in this study may demonstrate that such integration does not diminish the role of the teacher and limit the lessons and activities in the classroom. Integrating technology provides a more convenient way for teachers to monitor and assess their students; that could have an impact on their teaching. Thus, given the positive acceptance on the integration of various Internet-based applications into EFL classes as reported in this study, other EFL teachers may also consider the advantages that these applications may bring into their classrooms. Although there may be some things to consider, choosing appropriate Internet-based applications for language teaching may significantly affect teaching practices.

Lastly, although the present study attempted to explore teachers' pedagogical practices when integrating various applications into ELT, the findings cannot be representative of other ELT contexts in Thailand. Given the limited number of teacher-participants, this study suggests that future research should include EFL teachers from elsewhere in Thailand to yield a more comprehensive set of findings. Conducting studies in other nations in the ASEAN region, focusing on how teachers integrate different Internet-based applications into their classroom teaching, will also be a valuable research contribution.

## Conclusion

This present study addresses one of the most important issues in English language teaching, integration of different Internet-based applications into ELT, specifically in the EFL context. Thus, it presents the teaching practices of seven English language teachers when integrating various Internet-based applications into classroom teaching in a Thai university. Although there may be an abundance of studies about ICT integration into language teaching, specifically the impact of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) upon students' learning of English, this study offers a fresh perspective on ICT utilisation as it investigates EFL teachers' pedagogical practices. An emphasis on showcasing and disseminating best practices in ICT integration for EFL classrooms is timely and relevant, especially in this age of relatively rapid technological and pedagogical development.

Various mobile applications for English language teaching may be found to be effective in enhancing the teaching practices of English language teachers as these applications can offer new platforms for and enable new trends in language teaching. Integrating Internet-based applications into the classroom offers comfort, benefits, and assistance to teachers, and furthermore can increase students' active participation in their learning, improve their motivation in language learning, and foster learner independence and autonomy.

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**Mark B. Ulla** teaches English at Walailak University, Thailand. He completed his Master of Arts in English language teaching at Mindanao State University, Marawi City, Philippines, where he also obtained his Bachelor of Arts in English. His research interests are in teacher education, EFL teaching, language education and studies, and teacher training. He has been presenting papers both in local and international conferences. His latest research work is one of the recipients for the CamTESOL Regional ELT Research Grant 2018. He is currently pursuing his doctorate degree at the University of the Philippines.  
Email: mark.ulla1985@gmail.com

**William F. Perales** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English from Mindanao State University, General Santos City, Philippines. He is currently finishing his Master of Arts in English language teaching while teaching at the Language Institute of Walailak University, Thailand. His research interests are on language education, teacher education, technology in the classroom, and language teaching.  
Email: liamperales16@gmail.com

**Veronico N. Tarrayo** is an Assistant Professor of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Letters of the University of Santo Tomas, the Philippines. He obtained his PhD in English Language Studies degree (as cum laude) from the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School. He obtained both his Master of Arts in Language Teaching degree and Bachelor of Arts in English degree (as magna cum laude) from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines.  
Email: vntarrayo@ust.edu.ph

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