

ICT: A SWITCH OVER TO STUDENTS' CENTRIC LEARNING

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Technology has all along been a vital force in the development and advancement of mankind. The ongoing, unprecedented growth of information and communication technology (ICT), coupled with the globalization of the economy, has created a huge challenge for education. The implementation of ICT is in the forefront of education reforms locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Together e-learning practices and approaches have opened up a raft of different new and old learning theories to match against the more sophisticated learning contexts and audiences in our schools, colleges and universities. Flexible learning has been facilitated not so much by changes in curriculum and learning theories but through an array of different provisional methods and new tools that have arisen. Over time however substantial changes in curriculum and learning may become more notable. For teachers however the opportunities and merits of e-learning rather hoop the changes of expectations of learning in the 21st Century, offering us the chance to review and adapt learning and teaching practices, familiarizing ourselves for the decades of change that lie ahead of us as we adapt to globalization and all it means for our societies and cultures, communities and institutions. Of all the subjects, English has been proved to be the most suitable for the use of ICT. English teachers in our times have the privilege of using ICT for supplementing their class with interesting interactive exercises, audio-visual materials to arouse and sustain the interest of their learners, motivate the reluctant learners to explore the mode of learning through the multi-media which promises to be both useful and enjoyable. With the popularization of ICT, now people have the opportunity to learn from and learn with technology.

Key words: e-learning practices, ICT, globalization, teaching-learning practices, technological innovations

Introduction: The 21 century has witnessed the global changes in every field. English has become the Global language and technology and academics started walking hand in hand. Technology became handy to the teachers and the taught. We are in the 21st Century and in the past 20 yrs, the advancement that Technology has seen, was never witnessed before. In a standards-based curriculum, all students — particularly students face demanding academic and cognitive requirements across content areas and grade levels. Hence they need to acquire English Language Proficiency (ELP) and achieve academic success. Times have changed, teachers have evolved, and we now have a new variety of learning technologies. The classroom began to change itself- new technologies such as overhead projectors, interactive whiteboards, laptop computers and wireless internet have opened up the classroom to the outside world. Teachers who spent their lives managing with a textbook and a blackboard are now adept at using PowerPoint to present grammar, playing CDs to practice listening skills, pulling texts off the World Wide Web to introduce reading skills. The web based tools brought drastic change in learning process. Conceptualizing computer use in education: Introducing the computer practice framework (CPF). British Educational Research Journal, 28(1), 95-110.) When technology becomes an integral part of the classroom environment, it provides a tool for both teachers and students that can facilitate new roles and new instructional strategies (Mishra, 2008)^[1]

Education and Internet technology has made a deep impact on perspectives about teaching and learning. Technology, today, has revolutionized in such a way that the methodology use by educators to teach language has changed. In fact, the relationships between teachers and students have undergone a phenomenal change (Barad, 2009) ^[1]. ICT mainly acts as a visual tool to make learning more interesting. It deals with the pragmatic aspects of using ICT with the student community. The extensive use of web, internet, blogs, e-groups, SMSs, emails, socializing portals, e-dictionaries, e-encyclopedia, power point presentations, webcasting, and audio-video, as teaching tools have been made in the classroom. The student community was motivated to make use of internet resources and smart phones to interact with the teacher.

The role of the teacher: The paper tries to concentrate on two indicators in measuring the roles of ICT & technological innovations on teaching and learning, an indicator measuring whether ICT transforms rather than supports or extends the curriculum; and another indicator measuring the kinds of technological innovations used in classroom practices. When entering into the ideal transformation stage, the curriculum content and/or instructional process changes and they could not have been achieved without the use of ICT. The traditional teaching is also being useful but creates a passive environment in the classrooms. The teaching and learning becomes a mechanical process.

Objectives of ICT in academics:

Generally, three objectives are distinguished for the use of ICT in education

- (i) The use of ICT as object of study refers to learning about ICT, which enables students to use ICT in their daily life.
- (ii) The use of ICT as aspect of discipline or profession; refers to the development of ICT skills for professional or vocational purposes.
- (iii) The use of ICT as medium for teaching and learning; focuses on the use of ICT for the enhancement of the teaching and learning process

It is a fact that teachers are at the centre of curriculum change and they control the teaching and learning. In traditional language teaching methodologies, teachers depend more on books. The teachers are seen as the main source of knowledge. Students remain passive. The main of attending to class is not to participate in the learning process instead their attendance is made compulsory. Even today, the universities insist on attendance, but due to the evolution in the educational programmes, The teaching process has become learner centric. On the other hand, the new teaching methodologies focus on the teaching of strategies of deciding the information that is needed. The teachers have to achieve the learning objectives of the course. The teachers become facilitators to help learners to be skilled in selecting, accessing, evaluating, organizing and storing information. These strategies are important to manage vast amounts of information. The teachers also need to manage the time and courses and to construct knowledge autonomously in virtual learning communities. Besides performing this new role, the teacher is also the motivator of the whole learning process, and can facilitate intellectual group discussion. Technology or multimedia is not a teaching

method or theory, but rather it is a tool that aids educators by improving access to different types of media already in use. The language class prepares the learners for meeting all the communicative challenges in life. Effective communicators are successful in every walk of life.

Experiential Learning:

Experiential Learning implies learning from experience. This is a learning process, where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. The internet facility helps the students to browse instructional material without wasting much of their time. It enhances the students' motivation through the effective use of the familiar technology. ICT-based support works very well with **English** students - taking advantage of their usual and favorite hobbies - working on the computer, surfing the Internet, chatting, watching videos. At the same time, ICT respects their individual learning styles and needs as well as learners' own pace. A variety of skills and activities can be mixed and blended effectively via technological applications

The technology roles for experiential learning should:

- provide tools to support knowledge construction
- be the information driver to explore knowledge to support learning by constructing
- be the basis of learning by doing
- be the social medium to support learning by conversing
- support learning by reflecting

Teachers can guide the students in experiential teaching with the help of technology are:

- Incorporate social learning and interaction into online learning
- Make students complete specific assignments using technology
- Use technology that employs sensory input
- Use technology that employs sensory input
- Facilitate collaboration

Technology continues to be used for all sorts of specific language learning activities, such as oral practice and reading and writing skills development. However, ICT seem to be

particularly successful when integrated into project-based language learning (ProjBLL)1 (Beckett and Miller, 2006), where English can be acquired naturally through themed activities and different subject disciplines.

Technologies to support oral skills: Active Worlds and Open learners the possibility of ‘living’ within a 3D space, collaboratively developing content and interacting with peers through virtual experiences: debates, role play, exhibitions, performances and the like. Asynchronous tools like email, blogging and the collaborative development of wikis also have a significant role to play in simplifying the co-creation of content, where learners interact with peers by composing, editing and exchanging texts. These technologies offer learners the opportunity to engage in activities.

The learning Management Systems (LMS) are some of the innovations of E-learning, and their appearance was a result of an urgent need to organize E-learning content, as well as to follow the progress of students’ learning and management of teaching and learning processes according to specific guidelines and criteria.

Desire 2 Learn: In our university Majmaah, we, the teachers use D2l platform. **Desire 2 Learn** is a modern and robust learning management system, produced by a Canadian Company. It is designed to work on any modern web browser. The interface is also optimized for use on mobile devices

D2L Features:



There are several tools in D2L to optimize its use like the Discussions tool which supports open discussions by creating forums where all the students with active participation can discuss about various issues for which the use of ICT comes in handy. It creates an atmosphere that is open and positive. Helps students feel that they are valued members of a learning community. It also helps in frequent, early, positive feed-back that supports student's beliefs that they can do well.

Teachers can engage participants in focused discussions drawing from their experiences. Although there are compelling reasons to engage students in critical discussions of current events, frequently learners may lack the background knowledge to engage in such discussions. Teachers who do opt for discussions of contemporary or historical events should make sure that students are given access to multiple information sources and ample content preparation in order to discuss the topic in an informed manner. Participants can access articles, lectures, videos, and specialized websites on the Internet or other sources. At the same time, students do come to classrooms with a multitude of lived experiences. For example, a potential theme for discussion might focus on themes of the difference of the "choice of toys for sons and daughters" or "Is Tourism good or bad for the economy of a country?" With some thoughtful facilitation on the part of the teacher, participants can

choose what is personally most relevant to them while maintaining coherence with the curriculum.

As Hess (2002) notes, teachers should teach both “for and with” discussion. That is to say, it is not enough to teach English learners the form and function of the language. Therefore, the use of ICT comes in handy.

Drop-box tool: It is a very effective tool wherein students drop their assignments and presentations by using ICT effectively, whereby it ensures opportunities for students’ success by assigning tasks that are neither too difficult nor too easy. There are various opportunities for students to browse the net in searching answers to their questions. For example, a homework in finding out the meaning of Idioms, the students need to browse the net where the use of ICT is again recommended. Along with learning the implication of the Idiom, they learn to correlate

and improvises their communicative ability.

Similarly, the Rubrics tool, The D2L rubrics tool is an assessment tool used to evaluate an activity or grade item based on a predefined set of criteria. Using rubrics to grade student assignments helps to ensure that assignments are evaluated fairly and consistently. By using these tools, effective use of ICT can be ensured.

Desire 2 Learn is a really helpful tool for the teachers as well as students. It is easy for the students as well as teachers in a way that without wasting time, technology can be used for submission and evaluation. No need to see papers and files everywhere. An organizational forum is created where both teachers and students can communicate effectively. Since Information has been centralized under one database, it is equally good to evaluate teachers.

Use of Information and Communicative Technologies:

It is evident that the teacher is a constant learner. He/she has to browse many sources along with the prescribed lesson for information to decide the prerequisite of the class. The authors are very much helped by the following to plan lecture accordingly and introduced all those to our students to make use of them. The d2l notonly will help the teachers to evaluate but also will provide an opportunity to the students to browse various sources of ICT to post either their assignment or discussion for evaluation.

Give a glance to the following resources that are available for us:

From Word Processor to Web tools:

MS Word offers handy tools menu, which can be applied in improving writing skill. For example, spell check, Grammar check, Thesaurus Dictionary, Synonyms, etc help the teachers to teach the students to revise and reorganize their compositions which in turn affect the quality of writing.

Internet: Internet resources like

BLOGS encourages the students to share the information on any topic and they themselves can publish their opinions to be shared globally.

E groups like Google, Yahoo enhances the threaded Interaction which has dual benefit

Social Media: What's App, Facebook, Twitter, Google+ give immense opportunity to teachers to be in touch with the students to monitor the usage of language.

e-tools that facilitate language practice:

The following web links help the teachers to teach the Writing Skills to the students:

<http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section..>

<http://www.writng.engr.psu.edu>

1. **Using English.com:** On Using English.com, we'll find an incredible collection of tools and resources for learning and teaching English as a second language, including a grammar glossary, printables, and teacher handouts.
2. **Everything ESL** is an awesome place to find ESL teaching resources, from lesson plans to teaching tips and resources.
3. **Colorin Colorado:** Colorin Colorado is full of useful information, activities, and resources for ELL teachers, especially those at the Pre-K to third grade level. However, most activities can be adapted all the way up to high school, making this a diverse and useful website.

4. Easy World of English

easyworldofenglish.com

An attractive, user-friendly website including grammar, pronunciation, reading and listening practice and an interactive picture dictionary.

5. Many Things

manythings.org

This website includes matching quizzes, word games, word puzzles, proverbs, slang

www.ijellh.com

expressions, anagrams, a random-sentence generator and other computer-assisted language learning activities. The site also includes a special page on pronunciation, including practice with minimal pairs.

6. Dave's ESL Cafe

eslcafe.com

A forum for both ESL teachers and students around the world. Includes quizzes, grammar explanations, and discussion forums for students. For teachers, includes classroom ideas on all subjects as well as discussion forums.

7. The California Distance Learning Project

cdlponline.org

Read and listen to a news stories on topics including working, housing, money and health, then work on activities based on the stories including matching pairs, vocabulary, and quiz questions. Some stories also include videos.

8. BBC Learning English

bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish

An array of wonderful activities for practice, some relating to current events. Includes videos, quizzes, vocabulary practice, idioms, crosswords, and much more.

9. Activities for ESL Students

a4esl.org

Grammar and vocabulary practice for all levels, including many bilingual quizzes for beginners. Also includes a link for teachers, with conversation questions, games, and many other ideas to put to use in the classroom.

10. ABCY

abcya.com

The site includes educational games organized by grade level, from 1st to 5th, and is particularly good for spelling and phonics. There are games to practice vowels, uppercase and lowercase letters.

11. TV 411

tv411.org

This site includes videos with native speakers explaining key reading concepts like critical reading, summarizing and scanning, and key life skills like signing a lease and

reading a medicine label. Following each video is a comprehension quiz. Click on the blue tabs across the top lead for lessons on reading, writing, vocabulary and finance.

12. GCF Learn Free

gcflearnfree.org/everydaylife

A well-designed site with interactive tutorials for everything from operating an ATM machine to reading food labels. If you click on the main page icon and then click on reading, the site has resources for English language learners as well, including stories to listen to and read along, and picture dictionaries.

13. Language Guide

Languageguide.org/English: This is an online picture dictionary, with everything from the alphabet to parts of the body to farm animals.

14. Oxford University Press:

elt.oup.com/learning resources: This site from Oxford University Press has activities to practice spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and listening.

The development of oral competency naturally tends to precede a more specific focus on reading and writing. The interdependence of reading and writing cannot be over-emphasized; “reading makes the writer.”

Wordle (www.wordle.net) is a good example of a web-based tool that can help cement the interface between reading, writing and the significance of visual literacy in a 21st century world. The tool produces word clusters based on the frequency of words occurring in a sample of writing.

Digital texts and electronic books (e-books), particularly when accessed on cool, portable technologies, can inspire students to read. To teach communication skills, the authors have used the smart phones where the students are allowed to download certain apps like **audio books** which helps the listeners to improve their pronunciation, accentuation and intonation and they have also be given an opportunity to analyze and give the reviews. They are allowed to play the vocabulary games to enhance their vocabulary. Effective telephonic communication is a vital key to attain success in this highly competitive world. Through

recording facility learners can be asked to record their communication and later on they may be asked to listen and improve their weak areas. By attempting the tests and worksheets available on various topics help them to improve their comprehension skills. The record option helps them to record their voice to observe corrections. Now –a- days smart phone technologies revolutionize the students’ learning. The internet facility in those phones helps the students to browse instructional material without wasting much of their time. It enhances the students’ motivation through the effective use of the familiar technology.

TextHelp’s Fluency Tutor (www.texthelp.com/UK) is a sophisticated reading programme that records a user’s reading of a text and offers a quick quiz to test their understanding of what they have read. This enables a teacher to mark a learner’s efforts online against a range of indicators such as mispronunciation, hesitation, omission, substitution, repetition, transposition and self-correction.

Digital games, in particular, are proving popular because they can be successfully used to facilitate teachable moments: curriculum content, core skills and language acquisition. Such games can be highly engaging to the user, featuring strong narratives via a range of rich-media types such as text, audio, video and animation. They also tend to incorporate elements of problem solving that promote collaborative learning. When students work together to solve problems there are opportunities for teachers to develop well-structured language learning activities.

Research done so far shows that the most important achievements of ICT are as follows:

- Enhance the quality of learning
- Rapid and timely access to information in very little time .
- Reduction of some educational expenses
- Improve the quality, accuracy and scientific texts for academic disciplines
- Indirect creation of learning experiences
- Increase learning opportunities

ICT and English Language Learners

ICT can be used to integrate speaking, listening, reading and writing. It enhances interactive teaching and learning styles. It also extends pupils' ability to exercise choice, work independently and make connections between their work in English and in other subjects.

ICT helps English language learners by enabling them to communicate, edit, annotate and arrange text quickly and flexibly. Moreover, by using ICT learners can:

- use a wide range of strategies to explore contrasts, comparisons and connections dynamically
- see texts in alternative versions
- use a wide range of analytical and critical techniques
- sort and process text and data quickly and efficiently

Conclusion: Language and communication skills are recognized as the most important elements in the education of an engineer. The English language teachers teaching in engineering colleges should develop new and exciting means of integrating language in all aspects with innovative technologies. The integrated skill approach exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. Moreover, this approach stresses that English is not just an object of academic interest or merely a key to passing an examination. Instead, English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among people. Learning that is restricted to the four walls of a classroom cannot prove to be very effective. There is a need to connect classrooms to the world outside to realize the true prospective of learning and make it effective. Connecting our students to the world has great educational potential. Involving the students in the learning process is the demand of the day. If they are involved in the learning process, new horizons will open for them. Let the students experience the concept of learning.

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