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Technology and English language Learning

Abstract

For the past 20 years, technology has proved to be immensely involved in providing critical support for English learners through its various advancements. Technology-enriched English language learning classrooms have the aptitude to support student-centred, constructivist learning environments, which as the other side of the coin, may present advantages for the pupil learning in the secondary English classroom. It has the knack to prop up students' higher order thinking skills, motivation, and engagement when used constructively.

As pointed out by Bruce and Hogan (1998) significant changes can be noticed in attitude that the students have towards becoming a successful language user as technology becomes the standard and probable mode of education and communication. The tie up

between language in the contemporary world and technology is reflected in the field of not just English language teaching, but on applied linguistics as a whole.

This paper intends to study about the relevance and requirements of technology in effective English language learning. It further deals with the different methods or means followed by the teachers to make language learning more interesting or by an individual himself to enhance the knowledge and skills in English. It also specifically addresses the involvement of technology in fostering new ways of learning for the fresh learners in an institution named.

There have been a lot of attempts through numerous publications and events to envisage or foretell the amount of meaning that technology can add to the future living.

Technology and English

Technology has been observed to be profoundly embedded into the daily life of a human. Its impact can be evidently noticed in English language teaching. With the combination of English proficiency and Good internet connection, the populace has gained great benefits in being able to access vast information and knowledge and also open up their ideas to a large audience. A huge number of websites employ English for their platform. Internet is a self reinforcing cycle, which provides an arena with exposure to English language. According to agencies such as broadband subscriptions and the number of secure servers, higher English proficiency can be associated with higher levels of Internet access.

As most of the world's powerful technology companies use English as the language for programming, IT documentation and technology research, accessing key resources in their fields is difficult for tech workers with meagre English proficiency. Limited access to new research hinders the formation of a technically savvy professional class that can deploy the latest IT infrastructure and manage international e-commerce development. One can notice that Technology creates absolutely new sectors of exchange and does not just reinforce

the existing trade. . According to the WTO, exports of telecommunication, computer, and information services surpassed 1.421 trillion USD in 2016. Clearly, information and computer technology (ICT) service exports walk alongside with English proficiency, and so does industrialized value added in the technology industry. Budding economies dually require technology skills and an industry force capable of communicating in English with global clients in order to develop into these sectors.

Learning English Online

Technology is by now one of the most influential drivers of English language acquisition. Individual learners are rendered to a variety of reliable English sources and liberate them from a point- point approach to order via digital tools and platforms. In a lot of cases, we learn that high class English training is obtainable through technology than it is locally. People can customize their own learning experience and perk up their English language outside of official schooling with the accessibility of good internet connections and diversification of both public and private online English training. Further growth in the field of artificial intelligence, virtual reality and other sprouting techniques, could cater in building a new age of even better and pertinent digital training programs.

Games: A Pro or A Con?

Since games have always been a fun activity for the developing brains of young children, games related to language developing skills can actually prove to be beneficial to the child.

There are games specifically constructed to assist children to learn English. A great platform to start is the Cambridge Assessment English games and social media webpage. A lot of games can facilitate the child to work on it alone or with the help of parents or guardians. Some games enable the personnel to converse with other personnel throughout the globe. This can be a great means of developing language skills and other social interaction skills.

How are games a helping hand?

Games can provide numerous benefits for learning. Constance Steinkuehler, Professor in Education and Games at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has given some examples:

- Games can help children learn challenging material. The course is quite similar to what is taught in classrooms. The players learn to keep moving ahead even when its challenging and therefore get a sense of success and are motivated to continue on track.
- Games provide a regular source of English language. It helps a great deal in having genuine reasons for using English on a regular basis. These games can be challenging and enormously useful for people who consider English as a foreign language
- Games get children actively involved. Children can learn to handle crisis, make decisions and implement the learning through the adventure.
- Games can be a great source of motivation. Research has explored that, children who have trouble in reading at school, read at a better level and with much better understanding with the help of games. Even the most reluctant learners tend to enjoy learning when it involves games. Children tend to get more involved with activities that interest them and therefore games can be a great platform for learning.

Internet access either at homes or at Internet cafes is today available easily and therefore technology usage in classrooms is becoming very important and may become a part of ELT practice in the near future.

Technology has become immensely mobile. It can be used not just in classrooms and lecture halls, but also used at home or self-access centres. Speaking, listening, writing and reading skills can be learnt through the use of technology.

To answer the question as to how one can effectively use ICT in ones class if there is only one computer in the Institution by introducing a Rota or booking system for the computer with your colleagues will ensure equal use for all the teachers in the school.

- You will need to use the Internet mainly as a resource with your learners accessing the Internet to download and print out materials and use offline with classes.

Technology-based activities can be done by printing off materials that include :

- Website Usage and internet based project work, especially those that can be worked on offline.
- Teachers can join free online teacher development groups

If students have low skills when it comes to IT experience through questionnaires it can be tested and the simplest of technology can be used. For instance, basic email usage and browsing the internet can be taught.

Weak students can be paired up with the technically savvy students and learning can take place. Use of Websites in the classroom is one of the least stressful ways to get technology started in the classroom. It will help in the effective use of technology. There is a vast plethora of information and resources on the web that cover an array of topics ranging at different levels.

One can choose from authentic (written for Internet surfers in general) sources or Ell-specific sites (made by, and for, teachers), monolingual or multilingual sites, sites with multimedia, or just simple text, for those on slower connections. The web is a source of content which can be used as a window on the wider world outside your class, and is - of course - a readily available collection of authentic material. As such, it is a much larger repository of content than would previously have been readily available to you and your students.

Perhaps one of the best tips we can give you at this point is to work as a team with other teachers in your centre. Everybody has their favourite websites, and plenty of teachers will, at some point, have used websites in class, or taken material from the web and adapted it

for teaching purposes. Take the time to share sources of content with other teachers and organise regular get-togethers where you sit down and discuss what you have found on the Internet and how you have used it in class. Collaboration like this can help to reduce the time you spend searching for good materials and the time spent preparing activities or making worksheets. The technology needed to use the Internet for teaching is relatively limited and the chances of something going wrong are greatly reduced over more complex technology approaches such as attempting to carry out live chat or video-conferencing sessions. Another advantage of this tool is that you don't necessarily have to rely on a constant Internet connection if you bear in mind that it is possible to save local copies of websites on your computer.

There are three basic ways of searching on the Internet, and we will briefly describe them below, and look at ways of making searches more targeted and efficient.

Although there are a large variety of search engines, perhaps the most well-known is Google (www.google.com), which currently indexes over twelve billion web pages. A search engine is almost directly analogous to a telephone directory, or any other database of stored information. You search for a name or a title, and the directory gives you more information about that entry. But with over twelve billion pages to choose from, it's not quite as easy to use as a phone directory. So how do you find exactly what you want? The answer comes in knowing what kind of information Google actually has on each web page that it indexes. What Google knows about a page is generally the page address on the web, the page title, when it was last updated and a few keywords associated with the content itself. These keywords are defined by the designer of the page, and can reasonably be expected to accurately reflect the content of the page. The key to good searching in Google is to define your keywords properly.

If you have to look for the history of Elizabethan literature related to Shakespeare the best way to do so would be to specifically type Shakespeare instead of Elizabethan literature as the topic would be more specific in content and would narrow down and focus on the exact topic that you need.

The other way to find things quickly would be to use the 'phrase' search technique which is to wrap a part of a phrase in inverted commas, so that Google would look for the sentence in the order of the words cited, instead of looking for individual entities.

Thus, instead of searching for inexpensive restaurant in Mangalore, which can search for any or all of these words, in any position and order, on a page, try searching for "inexpensive restaurant in Mangalore" as part of a phrase you might expect to find on a web page. The ultimate trick with Google is to try to imagine the web page you are looking for, and then try to visualise the content that is on this ideal page. This technique will help you decide on exactly what to search for.

In our next example, one learner is doing a project on the singer, Jennifer Lopez, and needs some biographical information. Searching for Shakira on Google returns with millions of websites.

But how exactly would biographical information be presented on a website? Perhaps a search for "Jennifer Lopez was born in" would be more useful, since the only possible information which could follow such a phrase would be a location or a date. This search returns with fewer results, with the first few all leading to biographies of the singer.

Subject guides Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com) currently claims to index nearly twenty billion pages, and is still the search venue of choice for many people who remember when it was the only way of searching the Internet. The approach here is slightly different in. Yahoo! Was never intended as a keyword search engine, but rather as a way of browsing titles. A more familiar metaphor for Yahoo! would be that of the library, where users have a notion of

what they are looking for, but not necessarily the exact title. So, in that sense we are invited to browse, to wander around, rather than directly key in search terms or words we are interested in exploring.

Yahoo! derives its description of subject guide from the fact that it divides its content into subject areas, and subdivisions of those areas. Instead of a keyword search from the main page, users browse the section which best reflects their interests, and then search.

Mega Sites

The other option to search would be through mega search sites. These sites search more than one search engine at the same time which provides you with the opportunity to search yahoo or google from one page.

Examples of such mega search sites are:

- <http://www.dogpile.com/> - Dogpile
- <http://www.kartoo.com/> - KartOO
- <http://www.mamma.com/> - Mamma

A sense of balance is what one would get from a mega search engine as they will point to a wider range of sources and techniques to choose from.

One final hint: whenever you visit a search engine, be sure to click on the help link to see what hints and tips the site owners recommend for improving your search techniques.

“Virtual Reality” is a term that is involved in training, learning and education. They are referred to as MOOs (Multi- User Dimension Object Oriented) or simply as MUDs (Multi- User Dimension/Dungeon/Dialogue). MOOs came into existence through online gaming and they are networked environments that allow interaction among several people and virtual objects. They are also called MUVES (Multi-User Virtual Environments). The most famous

of these is Second Life which is inhabited by over three million people from around the globe. From the moment you enter the World you'll discover a vast digital continent, teeming with people, entertainment, experiences and opportunity.

Once you've explored a bit, perhaps you'll find a perfect parcel of land to build your house or business. You'll also be surrounded by the creations of your fellow residents. Because residents retain the rights to their digital creations, they can buy, sell and trade with other residents' (<http://secondlife.com/whatis/>). To use Second Life you will need to download the program from the Second Life website and register for a username and password. At the time of writing this is free. You will also need to upgrade your Quicktime Player to the latest version (<http://www.apple.com/quicktime/>) It is a strange virtual world peopled by the same curious mix as exists in real life, so don't be surprised if you see people fighting, flirting and doing all the other things you might expect to see outside in the street.

For educational purposes, Second Life provides an ideal and safe environment in which to work. Objects which react as they do in real life can be created, and in our research we came across plenty of training scenarios including a disaster relief training, first aid training and a heart murmur treatment simulation, among many others.

In our Institution, School of Social Work, Roshni Nilaya, technology in English language teaching has been implemented to a certain extent through these various methods:

Language Lab:

The Language Lab installed in the Institution has helped facilitate interactions, enthusiasm and classroom involvement through computer-based exercises and activities.

These labs provide an experience that is different compared to the traditional system of teaching and learning English. They are successful and reliable as they provide the opportunity for a teacher to create a more attractive learning environment. The Tense Buster

software available in the lab helps students acquire the 4 main language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

The Lab provides practice activities that are entertaining, informative and interactive in nature. The Language Lab is practical and there is a whole of lot of self-learning that takes place among our students as they progress in a self-guided but structure and progressive training to achieve the goals and objectives set by the Institution. Students are allowed to reinforce material learnt in the class by practicing them through interactive methods available in the software. We receive reports of the strengths and weaknesses of the students and are able to guide them to better adapt to the classroom activities.

Power – Point Presentations:

They can be effective tools that encourage student learning in the classroom set-up. In our class presentations they are used for projecting visuals of the theme chosen by the students. For example in a literature class if the Making of the English Nation is the topic through visual representation and slides the students are effectively able to describe the historical period and the literature produced during the era in an effective and graphic manner.

A single PowerPoint presentation could project images of questions which ask students about the topic, a chart of related statistics, and a mini quiz about what was just discussed that provides students with information that is visual, challenging and engaging. Every Semester the class is divided into groups of 5 or 6 students and they are asked to present topics through PPTs and questions based on their topic are put forth by the rest of the class.

Film Making:

Film Making was a new innovative method that has been inculcated in the extra-curricular activity as well as being implemented in the textual teaching of the syllabus. From the past three years, film making by students on various themes has been a part of their learning process.

Various workshops, seminars, film festivals have been organised for the students to train them in the art of film making. Screenwriting, cinematography, Digital Editing, Documentary Film making, photography courses have been offered for a short term period through workshops.

Silent Movie making Contests, Workshops on Film Studies, One Minute Film Making challenge have been introduced to the students and have been successful in cultivating a passion in them in the field of Films.

Annually, students are taken to movie theatres where movies with meaning that focus on social issues have been screened, after which, they are expected to have healthy discussions and debates and review the movie critically.

E-Mails and Mobiles for Education:

Use of Cell phones have also been encouraged for learning purposes as games such as KAHOOT and Hotpotatoes help students play quizzes and question rounds and even design their own quizzes and activities related to their texts. Assignments are sent through mails and Whatsapp groups and this allows for an easier access to study material. Educational links can also be shared easily in the Whatsapp study groups where the teachers and students are allowed access to the information available.

Blogging:

Freelance blogging is also encouraged and many of the students and faculty are active bloggers on social media and help share information and address many social and cultural issues of relevance.

Radio Shows:

Students regularly host show on All India Radio on issues of social relevance and prepare scripts to reach audiences everywhere on issues such as child labour, child abuse, mental health and other such burning issues.

Technology does have its share of pros and cons. A balanced view of the future should be developed through multiple perspectives including those offered by technically-minded people who base their vision on analysis of existing technologies and trends, by socially-minded analysts who consider the pragmatic human and social dimensions of technology use, and by the critically minded who question the ethical implications of technology. And through technology greater heights can be reached in not just the English language learning but also in the vast arena of education.

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