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TECHNOLOGY AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

The emergence computer technology has created new opportunities and challenges in the field of foreign language learning. Teaching English as a foreign language could not be isolated or separated from implementing technology tools such as blogs. As a result of conducting research on the use of technology tools for enhancing learners' reading and writing skills in English.

KEYWORDS

Technology, ICT, CALL, Grammar-translation method, Reading, writing, and technology, ESL;

INTRODUCTION

Technology is no longer foreign to the earth's citizens. Technology has played its role in multiple fields of work, particularly in education. During the last two decades, the implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language education has become a real topic of interest. The use of technology has become significant in the teaching and learning process in and out of class. Technology

opens a window of improvement in language learning. Not only that, technology allows teachers to enhance classroom activities and language learning process. This shows that there is a brand-new era which assigns challenging responsibilities for modern teachers. The traditional teaching method has been changed drastically with extraordinary access to technology. The implementation of technology has provided

options for a more interesting and productive teaching and learning sessions predominantly in language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Shyamlee and Phil, technology has provided significant drivers for both social and linguistic change. With English as an international language and its development around the world, English is used as a second language in a country such as India and Malaysia. To some people, English acts as their first language. English has become the language for instruction and curriculum in many countries. As the number of English learners increases, new teaching methods have been implemented to test the effectiveness of the teaching process. Language is one of the most substantial elements in communication. [1]

The use of ICT in the education field has been increasing. Educational technologies promised to change the way teachers teach and students learn forever the white canvas of language teaching and learning has experienced major creativity and changes over the decade with the emerging of a new era of education and technology. Technology has transformed the field of education, lower and higher education, which has a great impact on the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching. As time changed, teachings changed too.

The technology implementation is defined as “the process of determining which electronic tools and which methods from implementing them are the most appropriate responses to give classroom situations and problems”. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) has become normalized in the educational process. The key to a successful use of technology in teaching and learning session not only lies in hardware or software but also in our human ability as teachers

have to plan, design and implement effective educational activities. Educational multimedia is currently being used commonly in teaching and learning of English language. Another commonly used element in the digital era as part of technology would be social media. Social media augments the learning experience by allowing the learners and teachers to connect and interact in a more innovative and interesting way. Social media such as Facebook, Blog, Instagram, e-mail and Twitter provide a platform where users can interact and exchange ideas as well as to find answers through collaboration and discussion.[2]

With the help of technology, students’ view on learning has shifted. New and more advanced technologies are not only transforming the way the students’ view learning but also transforming the way “educators think about education and literacy”. These tools are also continuing to grow and transform literacy instruction” and they also helping students to “internalize lifelong skills needed for success in this global society. Technology will not substitute great teachers but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational.

Educational technologies are becoming increasingly important and promise to change the way students learn and teachers teach. However, technology has been around in language teaching for decades. For example, the blackboard, as a form of technology, has been used for centuries. Tape recorders, language labs and videos have been in use since the 1960s and 1970s, and are still used in classrooms around the world. The use of technology in the classroom is becoming increasingly important for the presentation of authentic materials and hopefully it will become a normal part of ELT practice in the coming years. Yet teacher training programs often ignore training in the

use of ICT, and teachers are often far less skilled than their own students when it comes to using current technology.

DISCUSSION

It is a good time to consider the power of current technological advances. Increasingly, communication and information technologies have become part of our everyday lives. The use of computers is increasing day by day, because they are used in many fields to make our lives easier. Computers can present crucial information and offer effective tutorial instruction. Computers also connect us with other people, store vast amounts of data, and provide us with access and entertainment. In the technology literature, learning theories have offered different views regarding the use of computer technology. For instance, behaviorism proposed that learning from technologies means using computers for drill and practice, because learning, according to this view, is a matter of imitation and practice. Thus, the behavioral view strongly advocated that the role of adults in learning is important, as they provide a model by which children learn through imitation; the adults also encourage children to continue using computer technology by providing them with positive reinforcement. In contrast to behaviorism, the socioconstructivist theory suggests that if the learner learns with computer technology, the role of the computer is to foster, scaffold, and enhance learning in meaningful ways. When learning with technology, a learner should be given many opportunities to create, test, and reverse their hypotheses. Therefore, teachers have a responsibility to provide learners with these experiences to promote their development. [3]

Technology in general is becoming increasingly important in our personal and professional lives. Dictionaries and scholars have offered a variety of

definitions. The Merriam -Webster dictionary, for example, defines technology as "the practical application of knowledge especially in a particular area". Technology is also considered as a body of knowledge used to create tools and develop skills, and as the combination of scientific method and material to meet an objective or solve a problem. Most of these definitions broadly define technology as the knowledge, skills, methods, and techniques used to accomplish specific practical tasks. Educational technologies, in this sense, promise to change forever the way students learn and teachers teach. However, technology in language teaching is not new. It has been around in language teaching for decades. For example, the blackboard, as a form of technology, has been used for centuries. Tape recorders, language labs and videos have been in use since the 1960s and 1970s, and are still used in classrooms around the world. [4]

In spite of the fact that the use of Information and communication Technology (ICT) by language teachers is still not widespread, the use of technology in the classroom is becoming increasingly important for the presentation of authentic materials and hopefully it will become a normal part of ELT practice in the coming years. Yet teacher training programs often ignore training in the use of ICT, and teachers are often far less skilled than their own students when it comes to using current technology.

Apart from the benefits of using technology in class, there should also be mentioned the motivation that it gives to learners. With the constant advancement of technology, many ESL teachers have adopted a more fun and interesting teaching techniques to ensure exciting lessons. Motivation is the key and has been known as one of the factors that influence success in second language learning.

According to Ng and Ng, motivation is known as a stimulant to achieve a specific target. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are the two types of motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be found within the individual and related to the sense of wellbeing whereas extrinsic motivation comes from outside the individual. [5]

Porter stated that the three important aspects related to motivation are what energizes human behavior, what directs or channels such behavior, and how this behavior is maintained or sustained. Nowadays, teachers are using technology to enrich and enhance the comprehension of the course content. Implementing multiple types of technology equipment provides ESL learners a sense of freedom, motivation, and encouragement they need for the learning process. Technology equipment such as videos provide the ability to present in both audio and visual, which is probably the reason why it is so popular as it can increase the learners' motivation in which they perceived the teaching and learning session as interesting.

Reading, writing, and technology - Over recent years, relationships between reading, writing and technology have played out in diverse and multiple ways. For some, work has focused on using new technologies to support the development of particular literacy skills whilst others have responded to new technologies by exploring the possibilities for new literacy practices. All this has implications for how we see reading and writing and consequently for literacy pedagogies. The collection of articles in this virtual issue demonstrates this diversity. Some provide precise insights into the impact of particular approaches or tools; others raise questions about possible continuities and discontinuities between literacy as practised and understood in educational establishments and in spaces outside academia. Reports of research which

focuses on spaces and practices beyond educational contexts help us see and understand uses of new technologies for meaning making in informal contexts, where learning often happens in less structured ways than in schools, for example. Graham's work explores how teachers' school-based uses of digital technologies are influenced by their biographies of learner, reflecting on how the varying contexts of these teachers' digital learning experiences have impacted on their practices in the classroom. Her reflections that teachers need time to consolidate their learning and to feel relaxed about using digital technologies would perhaps have benefited the teachers that Honan describes in her research. Honan finds that despite teachers' intentions there often remain seemingly insurmountable barriers to their employment of digital technologies in the classroom. Further she argues that often even where the technologies are used they are not used in ways which make the best use of the affordances of the technologies. Like Graham, she finds a link between those teachers who do not use technologies in their everyday lives, with this group encountering most barriers for embedding digital tools into their classroom practices. She argues that teachers need the space to develop their ideas about the relationship between new technologies and literacy learning; to see the benefits that technologies can bring; and how they represent a qualitative difference to the concept of literacy and 'being literate'.

In a report of a study following a group of learners and a group of preservice teachers working in a virtual environment, Gomez, Schieble, Curwood and Hasset argue that there are many advantages to be gained in terms of literacy development. They suggest students' critical literacy develops when they work in collaborative online contexts - and that this instigates

a ‘distributed cognition’ where individual achievement is less important than distributed cognition. They show how in a virtual space where collaboration is key, that learners are able to develop the skills to become more critical. Kendall’s work gives us, as literacy educators and researchers, insights into the reading lives of young adults between the ages of 16 and 19. In revealing to us the reading habits and interests of these young people, whose tastes in reading are often considered ‘low-brow’ or their choice of texts as ‘throw-away’. Kendall asks us to reflect on our own positions and that we critically reflect on our values as educators. In the same vein, Dowdall explores the ‘dissonance between the digitally created words of home and school’. Dowdall traces the home-based activities of a young girl, Clare, using an online social networking site and compares her text creation of these home based texts in the site, to texts Clare produces for school. While there are differences between the ways Clare’s home and school texts are structured and written, there are nevertheless continuities across them. Dowdall concludes that whilst we might see many differences between the texts that we as readers might be placing undue significance to these differences and that close reading shows similarities across the texts. Here Dowdall’s work echoes that of Kendall, that we as educators and researchers, might suppose there are more differences between home and school cultures, and that we need to reflect on ourselves as readers more closely.

More psychologically orientated work around technology and literacy has centered on the need to demonstrate the educational impact and efficacy of computer-mediated approaches to reading remediation. To examine this issue, studies have moved towards randomized control trial formats to ensure that the results presented are as unambiguous as possible. The results from such work to date have

yielded intriguing results. For example, Wild conducted a direct comparison of computer-based and paper-based phonological awareness exercises.

RESULT

The results showed that the use of the computer as a presentation format did appear to impact on the children’s attainment, albeit to a modest extent. However, they also showed that this benefit was greatest for the girls in the sample. Computers have been used to examine claims about the efficacy of analytic vs synthetic phonics approaches. The advantage here is that computers, it can be argued, offer a more standardized format for the delivery of such content, thereby offering a more stringent examination of such claims.

Research studies have emphasized the importance of learners’ literacy achievements vital later academic success. Teaching reading and writing should be an exciting and meaningful experience that captures learners’ interests and enriches their experiences. Fisher stated that because early literacy is so important, early childhood educators should discover the best ways to help children achieve a high level of literacy. These practices include creating a print-rich classroom environment through the use of genuine literature, establishing literacy centers, increasing opportunities for social collaboration among children, and providing extensive professional development for teachers. In addition, researchers have emphasized that technology, particularly computer-related technology, plays a fundamental role in improving teachers’ instructional practices and, therefore, developing children’s literacy skills. For example, Dodge et al. indicated that computer technology has a number of valuable advantages in terms of supporting learners reading and writing skills:



- expanding learners' vocabulary and language development by introducing them to software that associates vocabulary with pictures, written words, and spoken words;
- helping learners develop phonological awareness with interactive software that plays with language;
- increasing learner's understanding of books by exposing them to electronic books;
- enhancing learner's knowledge of print by recording their responses on a word processing / reading program;

Computers enhance and develop young learner's emergent reading and writing skills. This can be achieved when children are actively engaged in a range of electronic symbol-making activities containing conceptual processes, knowledge, and literacy strategies while using classroom computers that are equipped with multimedia word processing software.

Computer technology contributes to developing children's early writing through improving their ability to use a word processor, organize their thoughts, and make several drafts of their writing.

Various teaching methods, innovative technologies and practice are necessary to master these skills. The integration of Internet technology in the educational process is a promising direction in education. The Internet opens up tremendous opportunities for any information, including authentic materials. In addition to text information, Internet technologies allow the use of audio files, videos and graphics, which greatly stimulate the learners' activity.

Global network helps to organize discussions between learners and teachers not only within the university, but also attracts learners of other universities, regions and countries. Modern information and communication technologies (ICT) enable to enhance

training activities, promote communication and develop the culture of independent students' work. The need to use ICT is also due to the continual increase in the volume of information that must be studied and processed in the course of training. Moreover, the practice of ICT in teaching foreign languages contributes to the optimization of the teaching process and allows to:

- access and manipulate large amounts of information;
- form information culture;
- use information sites and authentic modern Internet resources;
- make learning differentiated and individual;
- provide training materials in print, graphic, charts, audio, video and animated form;
- Currently existing communication Internet technologies, which can be used in foreign language teaching, are divided into two groups:
 - synchronous (enabling to communicate in real time. e.g. chat, forum, video and audio conference, etc);
 - asynchronous (communication with a time delay. e.g. discussion forums, websites, blogs, etc.).

In light of the above discussion, it can be concluded that a teacher plays a

major role in providing learners with computer experience - or in excluding this tool from their classroom environment. Teachers are more likely to put their beliefs into actual instructional practice, because the current study has confirmed the congruence between the teachers' beliefs and their opinions of their instructional practices in teaching reading and writing. In addition, teachers using technology in teaching reading and writing in their EFL classes were found to hold stronger beliefs and

practices regarding the use of computer technology and are more likely to practice accordingly.

Conclusion. Our experiences in using classroom blogs have been overwhelmingly positive. While student acceptance of technology in the classroom requires its perceived usefulness and ease of use, students do tend to learn best when they need information that they can put to use immediately. Blogs are an effective and efficient method of allowing students to access information as it is needed and to make connections between explicit knowledge from textbooks and tacit knowledge gained as students see how others can and are using the knowledge being shared.

Blogs also introduce students to online learning communities so they can access and evaluate information, and construct new learning paradigms for themselves. Finally, effectively modeling ways to use blogs as a teaching and learning tool is a useful skill for our students to have as they embark on their journey of life-long learning.

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