

ICT: A Game Changer in Language Learning and Teaching

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Abstract

With the advent of ICT the task of a language teacher is simplified to a large extent. The phenomenal progress in this domain has also been directly proportional to the ease it has brought about in both teaching and learning a language. Since language learning is an active process a great deal of emphasis is laid upon the usage of authentic documents to make the language learning as authentic as possible. At the same time internet plays a major role in a language classroom as it is a treasure trove of resources where we can find resources such as online dictionaries, videos, audios, games, publishing platforms etc. With the advancement of technology smart boards appeared in classrooms and some of the language learning books come equipped with resources that can be used in accordance with a smart board. Having said this does the increasing use of technology bring about some drawbacks in its tow, which remains a domain to be explored. But technology is an integral element that has woven itself into the fibres of teaching efficiently and in the contemporary world its presence and utility cannot be shunned. To sum it up all these resources are at the disposal of the teacher and the students to render the language classroom lively, interesting and exciting.

Key Words: ICT, Language Learning, Teaching

In the contemporary world, technology has become an indispensable part of language learning around the globe across all levels. One cannot deny the fact that we teachers and our students live in a technologically evolving world that is changing and developing at a rapid pace. Visual aids are commonly used at the primary level and also find equal usage at the higher level as well. ICT tools come in varied forms such as radio, television, videos, audios and the list goes on. ICT plays a pivotal role in helping the student focus on the learning process. It can be used as a support material or as prompts to help students at various stages of language learning. Visual support renders the classroom interesting and lively. Visual aids act like a vehicle that could bring the real world to the four walls of the classroom. On the one hand,

these aids allow the teacher to showcase the real-world usage of the language being learnt, and on the other, they help the students to understand the authentic use of the language that they are learning i.e. to interact and carry on day-to-day conversations -- to sum it up communicating in the real world. ICT helps to bridge the gap between classrooms and day-to-day situations in which the language acts as a tool of communication. Furthermore, ICT tools do not have any limitation of use and can be used at any stage of the language process i.e. to introduce a topic, to practise the language or to evaluate learning. But at the same time, one need not forget that the aids used must be apt and suitable for the topic being covered and also must be chosen based on the target audience. Support materials used

must be clear and legible else they will defeat the whole purpose of using them as a support and render the whole process meaningless. ICT offers a plethora of teaching aids to choose from and they must be chosen wisely and when correctly chosen they maintain the students' attention on the topic being presented and facilitate comprehension of language and grammar, furthermore they help to motivate the students and demonstrate in what context what vocabulary must be used. They also incite active participation from the students and make the learning environment interactive and interesting.

ICT in a Language Classroom:

In a rapidly developing and modernised world such as ours ICT tools have become an indispensable part of a language classroom as the human demand for knowledge has been expanding its parameters. In this part of the paper, we are going to see how ICT can be effectively used in a language classroom as an aid in the language learning process irrespective of the stage. Education has become extremely convenient and accessible thanks to ICT as this intermediate has no restrictions on the amount of knowledge one can access and store. With ICT, the language classrooms have undergone significant transformations. Modern education is undergoing significant and regular change, in particular due to the constant development in the domain of technology. Today, it is not only the technology and tools that are transforming, but we are also seeing the emergence of new modes of use, in particular on the part of teachers and children. This contributes strongly to the improvement of pedagogical approaches, teaching methods and devices in the classroom. Thus, the classroom is also changing and becoming a

technologically advanced tool. So, what are these new technologies that, in 2018, are contributing to the transformation and digitisation of language classrooms?

Padlet:

Sometimes the simplest ideas are often the best. Thus, the implementation of using a Padlet as an educational tool that is simple, intuitive, and playful. Padlet is a web based means of organising ideas and collaborating online. Padlet allows you to edit and publish multimedia documents (images, texts, audio and video files) through a digital tool. Let us have a look at how Padlet can be used as an educational tool. The teacher may offer educational resources or to discuss and share professional practices, it can be used with students to carry out an educational project, to narrate the day to day activities of the class, as an extension of class work (by providing information, resources, activities, materials...) or to put in place a group work, to curate website links, or to sum it up to share information to an audience. Moreover, Padlet offers a myriad sharing options such as once the Padlet activity is completed it can be saved and exported in either Excel or PDF format which can be used as a record of the activity on the wall.

Facebook:

Using Facebook in the classroom, is without a doubt, something that many teachers know how to do today in an intuitive way. The question that we must all ask is: "how to use Facebook in class so that its use is correct and effective?" For new converts, it is to become confident with the use of this social network in their process of teaching and know how to put in place activities to enhance learning. I won't be exaggerating if I say that there's a strong chance that your students will have a profile on the most popular social network in the world. The learners, from kindergarten to university, are now what

are called "digital natives" and social networks like Facebook are an integral part of their daily lives. So, this is the reason why teachers can put this social media giant known as Facebook to good use in the classroom as an interactive learning tool. This - not only for the purpose of engaging students in their learning; but also, to empower them in their use of social networks. So how can Facebook be put to an educational use? Study groups can be created on Facebook for a class where they can express their views on specific topics, pedagogical content can be shared and also evaluated on this platform. Since Facebook is a social media platform it can also help the students and teachers to remain connected outside the confines of a traditional classroom. Specifically, in terms of language learning there are several pages on this platform that keep sharing content related to the use of the language such as grammar rules, vocabulary related to various day to day topics etc. which can be incorporated by the teacher in teaching.

MOOCs and Other Online Teaching Platforms:

Researchers and educators are convinced that education will no longer be conscripted to the formal space called class. In addition, there will be no more predefined annual programs or programs with an age limit for taking a course. These days, the diplomas and the academic level have lost their value because obtaining them does not guarantee a white-collar job. New technologies and the new digital tools make it easy for any interested student in the world to pursue a distance education in any of the countries by following massive on-line open courses or simply known as MOOC. Any person can enrol for courses offered by the best universities in the

world through the Massive Open Online Course platform from the comfort of his living room. The admission can be sought online and student who has enrolled for these courses has to follow a series of web lectures to complete the course. How does it differ from a conventional classroom course? The videos are of short duration and include pictures and diagrams so that the student does not lose interest. In today's world of cut throat competition these courses keep up the competitive edge by offering diverse courses on different topics and facilitating the learners to keep up with the currents trends and be at the top of their game in the professional field.

Teacher Training:

Increasingly the notion of digital education is invading the learning space. Teachers find themselves faced with ICT teaching tools that are highly sophisticated and can be adapted to any type of learning. A significant number of teachers have already taken the plunge by integrating these innovations into their teaching and learning strategies, however many are showing resistance to digitalising the classroom. Those who are averse to new technologies, for ideological reasons, for them education can only be conceived with chalk, pen and notebook, and in this, their point of view is respectable. Often, others are for reasons of "skills" and do not feel comfortable with the new tools to put into practice, it is the coaching and training that are to blame. Sometimes the reason is lack of motivation to use digital technology in the classroom, with teachers who don't see the interest or lack of time to implement learning activities using ICT tools. But as per a study conducted by Thierry Kansenti, a Canadian scientist, he proposes certain arguments to motivate teachers to use ICT tools in class, some of which are, the use

of technology can motivate teachers because it generates instant feedback, it allows to present concrete facts in class, it allows the teacher to be more creative and finally it allows collaboration amongst students at a much larger scale. But at the same time, we cannot forget that teachers also need to be trained on the usage of ICT tools in class. As experienced teachers often have a better understanding of the theoretical, it is always necessary to connect the technology to the pedagogy and to link the training to the learning theories and educational approaches. Being able to identify the problems that arise in the classroom and to provide evidence that technology can solve is very convincing for teachers, a priori, resistant to change. Once again, showing them what ICT brings to the collaborative work, even at a

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distance, and how these tools can make a course interactive.

Conclusion:

To conclude, of course, these various learning opportunities offered by new technologies disrupt our representation of the classroom as we know it, but the world evolves and changes and the education sector cannot escape, or risk creating a disconnect between what our children learn, and the world in which they live. It is certainly difficult to predict how the students will evolve and whether all the changes that we know can positively influence the teaching. But the things are such, that it is difficult to ignore the influence of new technologies on learning. The role of the teacher is to define how to get the most benefit for the success and benefit of the students.