Effective Use of Technology in Language Learning

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Abstract

Language instruction is best guided by language educators rather than solely delivered computer program. But it has its own benefits. This era is an era of computer. Technology plays a very important role in today's business world, movies, music, fitness etc. It equally plays a major role in education. The learners of today have an easy access to some type of technology be it computer, mobile device. So also it is not surprising to bring technology in classrooms and help the teaching method as a form of innovative technique. Technology integrated classroom system have become popular for language learning in the last few years. Virtual classrooms, recorded lectures, blended learning are a few examples of this new era of teaching methodology. These methods incorporate use of technology in learning a language. It strengthens learner's engagement, facilitate the instructor's role and provide a structure in learning experience for everyone involved in it. The most important or inspiring aspect of technology is its ability to audiences all over the world. It also helps when these learning courses offer a blended learning to cater to the needs of people. It is interactive which is crucial in learning a language. Technology helps to update the course content. The use of tech savvy educational methods in classrooms create a collaborative language learning environment where students can live in a world of learner's autonomy and learn from one another.

Key Words: Technology, Language Learning, Instruction

Introduction:

Technology has now become an important part of language learning. There are various e-learning technologies available for use nowadays in language learning classrooms. It does not mean to learn a language but it means doing things with language. The learner can't just learn the language based on input. Lam and Lawrence (2002) say that technology for learners provides them with regulation of their own learning process, with easy access to information that a teacher is most of the times unable to provide. Whenever one speaks or writes something, if others can't understand it then there is no point in learning a language. This paper tries to study the positive aspects of use of technology in Language Learning. It also will try to look into the negatives of learning a language through technology.

Advantages of Using Technology-

Technology in the form of Word Processor allows the learner to work on his language. Linking class to other classes around the world by using tools such as video conferencing, or virtual classroom can give a reason to ask a question and then try to understand the response given by the receiver. The paper serves as a point to start for all who are interested to learn language with the help of technology.

1.   Technology Assess and Shift in Teaching Learning:

The most inspiring aspect of technology is that it has the ability to reach a larger audience all over the world. Teachers can be hired locally and learners can have an access to the courses of Language Learning. These native teachers can ensure proper language learning and immersion without any bias or discrimination. The development of technology in the field of education has made a paradigm shift. This shift is more learner-oriented than teacher-centred. To meet the demands of all these digitally tech savvy learners, teachers have become now facilitators. Instead of just traditional bench-bound instructors, teachers now need to support and guide for the benefit of the learner (DEECD 2010).

2.   Unified Language Learning Courses:

A combination of in-class and online Language Learning is a great way to help learners learn a language and engage them with activities. Some researchers maintain that one of the benefits of using technology is that it increases student motivation (Dunkel 1990). Many fun games can be brought into classrooms (Lee 2000). Learners complete these games that help them to learn a language and then in the discussion that follows, the teacher, can focus on their weakness rather than simply teaching them the rules of the language.

3.   Collaborative Language Learning:

The best way to learn language is through interaction which can be achieved by technology. The environment created by technology makes this more specific which further helps in making the learner more interactive. For learners learning a language the key is to 'do' things with language rather than just learn about language from the teacher. According to Gillespie (2006), new technology has enabled students to collect information and interact with resources, like videos, images etc. Some learners feel more comfortable, less embarrassed and gain confidence to make less mistakes and learn from these mistakes in this model. Nowadays learners are extremely tech savvy and expert in the field of technology. Technology creates a bridge for a gap in language learning by creating an environment of like-minded learners who all have the same objective of learning a language. His interaction connects one learner to the other and helps in getting the resources he needs to succeed.

4.   Facing the Real World Through Technology:

Most of the learners find that a text book becomes outdated very fast. It has topics that are no longer relevant. Even pictures and charts look out of context. On the contrary, language learning, especially cloud-based learning is updated on a regular basis. Topics, notes, resources, format, new practices etc. Related to their learning are updated on a regular basis. All this is refreshed and re-uploaded so that the learners have the most up-to-date content or material available to them. Similarly, the interactive learning in a virtual classroom can mimic a real-world situation that is experienced in life. For example: the difference between American and British English.

5.   Best Teaching Aid for Teachers:

Using technology to teach lessons is advantageous for teachers in several ways.

Traditional education like chalk and talk is not so efficient anymore for today's generation and therefore teachers need to motivate their learners more than ever when presenting any material in the classroom. Books are also taking a back seat and new technology engagements means that the classes can be much richer in content and more participative than before. It equips the teacher with a complete manual on giving face-to-face English classes, with unlimited exercises and activities for all levels and lessons, with the objective that the learners become more active and involved in the classroom.

6.   Technology   in   Language Learning Stimulates Learners:

The use of technology in the classroom makes the learners feel much more motivated, using devices with which they can practise a language. For young learners it is much more stimulating to learn with a laptop or a smartphone than with a traditional textbook and its CD of practice exercises. Technology used in language learning transforms students from being a passive learner to an active learner. Learners can study their English course using a variety of comprehensive apps which are able to synchronise even without the internet.

7.   Easy to Monitor and Manage Learner:

Technology helps in creating and keeping lists of groups of learners, managing course content, evaluating learning with tests and exams, and many other tasks which are administrative in nature, can be managed. It also gives educational institutions the best and the most effective control over activities such as activating learners account, creating groups, sending out communications for activities, automatic notifications and many more. Technology can also perform important activities such as monitoring the progress of learners through specialised software. Therefore learning English in a classroom with the help of technology becomes much more effective.

8.   A   Unique   Experience   for Teacher and Learner:

 Learning English language in a classroom, along with technology complement each other. It is turning English language classrooms into an environment where sharing, debating, creating and forming opinions is nurtured – a creative and participatory space. English classes stop being boring with a teacher merely explaining something on a blackboard. Instead, it becomes more active in multiple senses. Every facet of our daily life is, in one way or another, saturated by the use of technology tools which have proven to enrich and make our lives a little easier every day.

9.   Lowering Stress Level:

One of the advantages of technology is its potential for lowering stress levels among learners. (Chapelle 2001; Levy1997). Learners here do not have to stand and say something in front of others, or even if this is so, receivers are not directly present in front of the learner. Many teachers agree that technology has lowered learner's language learning stress anxiety while giving them an opportunity to communicate. Consistent with such findings is Braul's (2006) study which showed that using computers in language classrooms have brought variety into the classroom teaching, made learners

interested in a particular language skill and increased learner independence.

10.   Self- Assessment:

Bringing technology into the classroom enables learners to assess their own work in a more meaningful way. The learner becomes more informed about the quality of his work and accepts feedback more willingly. It gives him a chance to undertake a more self-monitoring role, which thus leads to a higher chance of fulfilling all his tasks successfully. Teachers, on the other hand, can also evaluate learner's knowledge more accurately and with objectivity. The overall evaluation shift from teacher to self and peer evaluation (DEECD 2010) contributes to the development of learner independence which is the main focus of learning in the 21st century.

Limitations of Using Technology:

There are many advantages to language learning with the help of technology. At the same time it would be wrong to expect technology to transform both teacher and learner effortlessly without having some barriers. Here is a look at the limitations of technology in language learning process-

1.   Lack of Access to Technology:

Lack of access to technology resources is an obstacle. An internet connection is a major disadvantage for those learners who can hardly afford to gain access to a computer or an internet connection (Coghlan 2004). The initial start-up expenses (Warschauer & Meskill 2000) and the costs of both hardware and computer equipments are also an issue. Non- availability of technology and even low network can create a hindrance as well

as lack of expertise on the part of the teachers.

2.   Teachers' Attitude:

Research shows that teachers' attitude towards technology is a barrier. Some teachers think that the use of technology is a disruptive tool and they resist the change (McGrail 2005). Teachers lack confidence because their fear of failure in technological knowledge makes them feel anxious (see Beggs 2000)

3.   Students' Attitude:

Researchers have shown concern about the students' reaction on how to use technology in the classroom. If the shift is major and sudden and students feel the experience negatively, there may be resistance to such changes, which in turn will lead to poor performance in academics. Using technology means moving fast. In the bargain, grasping the subject sometimes becomes difficult.

4.   Inadequate Time and Technical Support:

Lack of time and technological and technical support (Jacoben & Lock 2005) could be the other reasons for teachers' disinclination toward using technology. Teachers' lack of preparation time with technology and its implementation is another major barrier.

Conclusion:

Thus, this paper has tried to discuss the advantages and limitations of using technology in today's language learning classrooms – thereby maximising its benefits for language teaching and learning. Looking at the benefits of technology in teaching language it can be advocated that it should be included in language teaching in the classroom.

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