

THE INEVITABLE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EFL/ESL CLASSROOM: EFFECTIVE OR AFFECTIVE

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Abstract

The use of technological aids like laptops and tablets has become a prominent feature in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. Teaching aids such as audio players, VCRs, and OHPs were used by some for effective teaching in their classrooms until some time ago. However, in the recent times, effective teaching strategies have shifted their focus to internet based learning. The implementation of technology-enabled strategies has become much easier to deal with as the usage of computers grown to the highest level. Uncertainty is unreachable to consider the fact that using the internet in the classroom for language teaching will hold the central role in ELT and it even influences learning for quite some time to come.

The 21st century generation is well aware of the latest technology and students of this generation use technology with much ease than their predecessors. The advent of technology has transformed people's abilities to obtain information including decode communication and it has had higher impact on students' learning capacities. There are various technological tools that could be used in classrooms not only to improve English language skills but also the technical skills of the students. This paper emphasizes on technology in English Language Teaching classroom and the relation between technology and authentic materials. It also focuses on the lack of technology usage in our educational institutions, reasons and requirements for appropriate usage of technology in general and the language centers in particular.

Key words: technology, authenticity, materials, advantages, attitudes, reasons

1.0 Introduction

Wang Li (2005) in his paper rightly asserts that the use of technology in English Language classrooms, especially for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, has many benefits. Students can enhance their communication skills such as listening, speaking reading and writing skills. It encourages students to interact with any individual or group his or her choice. Majority opines that one can communicate worldwide with the internet facility and can search for information online. It is also possible to use various softwares to learn specific skills and asses them. One can even publish one's work and find technology texts online that are very much

useful for reading. In addition, Wang highlights that integration of technology in ELT classrooms changes the learning approach of the students where behavioural learning approach is subsided by constructivist learning approach.

New technology was part of the social fabric at the turn of the century. So while we taught foreign language students to write essays and read magazines a generation ago, we must now teach them to write e-mail and conduct online research. Thus, integrating technology into language classrooms is inevitable. (Alex Roman et al, 3)

Technology in general by leaps and bounds is playing a key role in our personal and professional lives. The updated and upgraded Dictionaries and the scholars of the recent times offering a variety of definitions to every word or concept for a better understanding of the learner. The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica consider that Technology is “the application of scientific knowledge to the practical aims of human life or, as it is sometimes phrased, to the change and manipulation of the human environment.” It is also treated as a body of knowledge which can be used to create various tools or to develop multiple skills that are in need for every society. Most of the definitions available online and offline define technology as the knowledge, skills, methods, and techniques used to achieve specific tasks that more practical in nature.

Educational technologies, especially the ones developed and provided recently, assure to bring in change forever the way students and teachers approach classroom atmosphere. However, technology enabled language teaching or learning is not something new. It has been present for almost a decade and half in ELT classrooms. For example, the blackboard, as one such form of technological intervention, has been considered for centuries. Other such tools like tape recorders, language labs and videos have been used by the teachers since 1960s and are still considered in some parts of the world where the teachers have not been provided with latest technologies.

1.1 Technology in ELT Classroom

The utilization of technology in ELT classrooms is not solely dependent on hardware or infrastructure facilities. It is the human capacity, in the form of English teachers that works for the successful planning, designing and implementing of effective tools of technology in educational activities. This, of course, enhances the learning outcomes and also introduces everyone to the best that human and machines offer together. Even though the widespread usage of ICT by English language teachers is not on the expected lines, the introduction of technology in the classrooms is becoming an unavoidable feature according to many academicians and subject experts.

Technology, especially the presence of Internet in the classrooms enabled the teachers with new opportunities for conducting effective tasks and assessments, as well as an access to internet will provide a wealth of ready-to-use ELT materials or resources. The role of technology is has become significant as it is offering published materials online such as course books and resource books for teachers as well as learners. Learners in some places are expected to carry soft copies of the material to the classrooms and this caused language schools to integrate technology into teaching without any choice to defer. In terms of new ways for practicing language skills and assessing one’s own performance, technology use is very crucial. Of late, the usage of mobile phones not only helped the learners in the classrooms, language labs, but also at home, or on the way to college as much of the learning activity happening online.

The introduction of ICT in English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular and in education in general has faced big challenges since its early days. It occurred in an era

characterized by changes of paradigms. Similarly, ICT has always evolved rapidly because of technological non-stop, and even unpredictable, progress. (Bouziane, 02)

1.2 Affective and Effective nature of Authentic Resources and Technology

The role of authentic materials and technology in EFL/ESL classroom is so predominant that any attempt of modification or replacement needed the approval of more number of stakeholders as both are instrumental in improving the language learning atmosphere. However change in usage of authentic material is unarguable keeping the aspirations of the language learners, especially in the current scenario. This paper further explores how affective or effective these material in terms classroom delivery strategies or methods. Also is the focus on integration of technology in EFL/ESL classroom.

Brinton mentioned in his article “The use of Media in Language Teaching” that one advantage of using authentic materials in the classroom is that “they can reinforce for the students the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world.”(461) In addition to this, the online materials show a way to contextualize various aspects of language teaching/learning. This indicates that when the teachers prepare or carry their lessons on comprehending a weather forecast, user manual, a newspaper article or anything that students confront in the real world, lead the students to concentrate more on the content and meaning overlooking the emphasis on language. Authentic materials offer students a platform to acquire language skills, because they expose them to multiple linguistic paradigms, which may not be present in the language of their teachers and or the texts that they carry.

First, the advantages of using new technology in language classrooms can be interpreted in light of the changing goals of language education and the shifting conditions in our postindustrial society. New technology was part of the social fabric at the turn of the century. So while we taught foreign language students to write essays and read magazines a generation ago, we must now teach them to write e-mail and conduct online research.

Thus, integrating technology into language classrooms is inevitable. (The Journal)

Many studies in the recent times brought forth the advantages of using authentic materials and technology in EFL/ESL classroom. They concluded that the effective nature of using news items in classroom benefits the students with the recycling of vocabulary items which reappear over a period of several weeks in the news. The students can learn more about the social and cultural aspects in language usage. Another possibility is using videos in language learning classrooms, where motivational factor of students is high due to moving pictures and sound that present language comprehensively and realistically. The language learners can learn simultaneously on non-verbal communication. In addition to this the computer-based integrated activities encourage a great amount of listening, speaking, reading and self-assessment tests that are crucial for gaining proficiency in the language. Many teachers consider that the use of technology has been highly effective, both for helping and improving students’ general and specific language abilities. Such a facility assists students in learning the kind of internet-based English communication and also leads them to gain research skills that are necessary for academic distinction.

Though there are proved findings of the researchers on the positive effects of the technology usage in language teaching and learning, there are still some affective areas and some limitations to it. One thing that affects here is the time taken and the tedious effort of the teachers to locate authentic materials for their class as the resources are plenty. They may spend lot of their valuable time on learning the language used in the online materials and they have to constantly observe the changing websites or software programs, so that they find a better way to use these

materials or programs in the classroom. Time consumption and frequent changes in the web-content are the two major threats for some teachers as they struggle to use new multimedia technology in the classrooms.

There were many main factors that discouraged and stopped the participant students and teachers from utilizing and integrating technological instruments and programs in English language learning and teaching process. In addition, they included technological constraints, financial support, limited access to technological equipment, lack of information about how to use various types of technological tools and programs, and lack of effective training courses for both the students and teachers. (Mohammed, 96)

1.3 Conclusion

To sum up, it can be noted that technology indubitably increased the quality of language teaching and learning experience as well as enhanced the ability of the language teachers to reach their students. However, inclusion of technology in EFL/ESL classrooms should be in tune with the instructional goals and objectives of the teachers, as it determines the teaching style considering the different technical tools available for them in the market. In addition, integrating multimedia technology in language learning activities in the classroom allows student to work individually and experience the real- life and meaningful language situations and contexts and also helps the teachers to deal more effectively with a large group of students. Warschauer and Meskill in their book on *Technology and Second language Teaching and Learning*(2001) holds the opinion that “the key to successful use of technology in language teaching lies not in hardware or software but in our human capacity as teachers to plan, design, and implement effective educational activity”(303). Although the usage of technology empowers the English language teachers in reaching their learners in the class, some teachers still have apprehensions towards technology integration in their classrooms.

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