

RESEARCH ARTICLE



TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES – A NEW ACCESS TO THE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The English language is used very extensively as a second or foreign language in many countries throughout the world. It has been widely taught with many approaches, methods, techniques and trends. In every decade, a new trend is set up by the teachers and researches in teaching English as a second or foreign language and now, the most recent and highly developed trend is technology. With the introduction of networked multimedia computing and the internet, language teachers have been warming up to using computers in the language classrooms. It is the best platform where both teaching and learning turn out to be an audacious experience.

This paper seeks to explore how the recent technology can be used to both assist and enhance the effectiveness of teaching in English language classrooms. In this paper, some teaching guidelines are suggested to achieve various learning goals and objectives of English language. The use of new technology allows students to engage in the online communication which will be leading for success in their academic and professional pursuits. However, some technological resources are discussed to support effective teaching and learning English language. By using new technologies in the language classroom, teachers can better prepare students for the kind of international interactions which are increasingly required for success in academic, vocational or personal life.

Key Words: Language, Learning, Teaching, Technological Resources.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, teachers have incorporated various forms of technology to support their teaching and engage students in the learning process. Thus, technology continues to grow in importance, as a tool to assist language teachers in facilitating and mediating language learning for their students. The effectiveness of any technological tools depends on the knowledge and expertise of the qualified language teacher who manages and facilitates the language learning. The

teachers of today cut away from the conventional trends, followed in teaching English the most recent and advanced trend of using new technology. From task design to assessment, technology has become a helpful tool in supporting the pedagogical goals. Today's language teachers must reflect on how to best integrate technology within their methodologies to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching and learning in their classrooms.

There are three technological platforms that offer tools to enhance language teaching and

learning: the Web, Network-based Communication (e-mail, chat programs, wikis, blogs, etc.) and CD-ROM or Hyper Media applications. The Web and Network-based Communication applications present a wide range of environments for interaction. The Web offers endless sources of materials for content-based lessons and provides plentiful opportunities for interaction with the authentic cultural material. Network-based Communication applications or Computer Mediated Communication offers tools for social construction of meaning. Synchronous or asynchronous chats provide excellent opportunities to student centered, task-based interactivity in the second language. Teachers quickly discover a wealth of on line activity for their students in the form of web quests and on-line communication. By expanding the opportunities for interaction, the teacher observed their communicative potential moving from learners to communicators who actively conversed for meaningful purposes.

With the introduction of networked multimedia computing and the internet, language teachers have been warming up to using computers in the language classroom. This is particularly true in higher education where students and teachers have greater access to computer laboratories and Internet accounts. The Internet is so vast and complex that learning how to incorporate it effectively into the language classroom can be quite challenging. Nevertheless, by keeping some basic principles in mind makes the process simpler and clearer. These principles relate to pedagogy rather than to technology. They are divided into - learning goals, teaching guidelines, and planning information.

Learning Goals

The various goals and objectives of English language courses vary from course to course and among individual students. Computer technologies can help teachers create best possible learning environments in many contexts, but when planning, computer-enhanced language learning activities, teachers must put learning goals ahead of technology. They are:

1. Collaborative learning is often seen as a means in the English language classroom. In the age of the Internet, the ability to cooperate and collaborate

with other partners in the same institution or across the world is essential to success and students cannot really learn to use the Internet well if they do not learn collaborative communication and teamwork skills. This can be achieved through students' collaboration on authentic tasks and projects while simultaneously learning both content and language.

2. Students must learn the autonomous learning strategies needed to get used to new technologies and new situations. This ability will help students in achieving the types of benefits that will long survive one particular course.

3. In today's Internet-connected global society, success in various fields depends on the ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures and interpret information from varied cultural contexts. So, the Internet not only enhances the importance of collaborative learning, but it also magnifies the importance of cross-cultural learning.

4. Teachers should also help learners think critically at the macro level by considering how new information technologies are helping reshape social and economic contexts in a broader sense. To get vast amount of information available on the Internet, critical learning and literacy skills are more important than ever before.

5. Information Technologies are becoming ubiquitous, but many students use these technologies in a passive manner. The teachers should help them achieve active and creative mastery of new technologies. This mastery will enhance students' opportunity to actively shape the multimedia future.

Teaching Guidelines

The above learning goals are important elements to consider in any English language classroom. They obtain even greater importance in relation to the goals of incorporating the Internet into teaching. In areas of second language development, the teaching guidelines will help the teachers organize students' classes to achieve the above goals as well as specific learning objectives.

A. Dual Immersion- To learn effective communication skills, students must learn the English language and use of technology together. L. Beckman has suggested a framework for

accomplishing this, which she calls dual immersion. In this, students are immersed in learning language skills and technology skills simultaneously, with the teacher providing the necessary structure and support along the way.

B. Integration- Unless computers are not well integrated into the curriculum, dual immersion is not best achieved. CALL has gone through three stages: behavioristic, communicative and integrative. Behaviorist CALL emphasized drill and practice software for the learning of distinct skills. In communicative approach, using computers in language classes could promote team work among students and, if planned well, could also encourage them to use the target language to communicate in front of their computers. In integrative CALL, the computer is used naturally and regularly together with other tools and media “serving the creation of an enriched workplace for accessing resources and using language constructively.” The introduction of computers has the most impact when the computers are an integral component of a new way of learning. In CALL, therefore, try to think of how Internet based activities can become part of and support the overall class curriculum rather than how to use them in isolation.

C. Project-Based Learning- In project-based learning, students work together on substantive projects, they gain experience in developing their own learning goals and using the Internet as a resource to fulfill these goals. Project work can also help and ensure that Internet activity moves beyond simple chatting or Web surfing.

D. Student-Centered Learning- Learning the student-centered implies that the course curriculum in general and student projects in particular, will be shaped according to the students' own needs and interests. In learning student-centered the teacher helps students, organize their projects and gives language-specific instruction as needed during their project activities.

E. Purpose of Learning- The Internet allows students to access important information and also allows communicating to a real audience and it is well suited for supporting projects with a meaningful purpose. Students can work in long-distance teams to tackle various issues. The

purpose will ensure that students learn not only how to surf the Web but also how to make waves.

Guidelines for using Technology in Language Classrooms: Teachers must consider how to use new technology so that it supports effective learning. The five guidelines may be applied differently in language learning contexts and are important components in any language classroom.

1. Teachers should not use the computer simply for its own sake. They should use technology to support the pedagogical goals of the class and curriculum. The use of technology must be subordinated to the learning goals.

2. Teachers should make the technology accessible to all learners. The technology should be used to address the learners' own needs and be useful for a variety of instructional purposes. For example, some students prefer visual activities and others prefer verbal ones.

3. Computers are often said to play at least three roles in the classroom: tutor, teacher and tool. But the most useful way to look at technology is as a tool that supports learning in a wide variety of ways.

4. Students should learn language by making effective use of technology. By using a grammar software package in the computer lab, each student can obtain instant and appropriate feedback. In this case, the grammar software might provide more effective grammar practice than the teacher could in the classroom.

5. With less time and work, efficient use of technology accomplishes learning goals for teachers and learners. For example, a listening programme on a computer can instantly replay a passage, while an older technology, such as the audio tape, may waste the students' time because it requires rewinding many times.

Use of Multimedia technology: Integrative approaches to CALL are based on two important technological developments—multimedia computers and the Internet. Multimedia technology exemplified today by the CD-ROM allows a variety of media (text, graphics, sound, animation, and video) to be accessed on a single machine. Multimedia have even become more powerful and then turned into hypermedia. That means multimedia resources are all linked together

and learners can navigate their own path simply by pointing and clicking a mouse. Hypermedia provides a number of advantages to language learning. Use of multimedia may involve an integration of skills; but it too seldom involves a more important type of integration—integrating meaningful and authentic communication to all aspects of the language learning curriculum. Fortunately, electronic communication and the Internet make it possible.

Use of Internet: The Internet is a powerful tool for supporting a socio cognitive approach to language teaching, and it largely accounts for the new-found enthusiasm for using computers in the language classroom. Computer Mediated Communication is probably the single computer application to date with the greatest impact on language teaching. Language learners, for the first time, can communicate directly and conveniently with other learners of the target language from school or home. The internet is a vast interactive medium which can be used in a myriad of ways.

Computer Mediated Communication in a Classroom : There are a number of different approaches for using the Internet to facilitate interaction within and across discourse communities. One way is to use the online activities to foster increased opportunities for interaction within a single class. This takes place both through the computer assisted classroom discussion and through outside of class discussion. The computer-assisted classroom discussion makes use of synchronized (real-time) writing program. The class meets in a networked computer lab and students communicate through writing rather than talking. Students type on their messages and strike a key to send the message to the rest of the class. All the messages are listed chronologically on the top half of the screen and can be easily scrolled through and re-read. The entire session can later be saved and passed on to students.

Electronic communication has been formed to have a number of beneficial features which make it a good tool for language learning. First, computer-assisted discussions tend to feature more equal participation than face to face discussion, teachers or a few outspoken students are less likely to dominate the floor, and in this way two way

activities take place. Second, the computer assisted discussion allows students to better notice the inputs from others messages and incorporate that input into their own messages, thus expanding opportunities for learning of new linguistic chunks. Third, computer assisted discussion takes place in writing and allow more planning time than does face to face talk. Finally, since computer based discussion can take place outside of the classroom, it provides students increased opportunities to communicate in the target language for all these reasons, language teachers have found single class computer mediated communication projects to be beneficial. This communication can be asynchronous through tools such as electronic mail which allows each participant to compose messages at their time and pace, or it can be synchronous, using programmes such as Moos, which allow people all around the world to have a simultaneous conversation by typing at their keyboards. It also allows not only one-to-one-communication, but also one-to-many, allowing a teacher or student to share a message with a small group, the whole class, or a discussion list of hundreds of people.

CMC allows users to share not only brief messages, but also lengthy documents—facilitating collaborative writing and graphics, sounds, and videos. Using the Web, students can search through millions of files around the world, within minutes to locate and access authentic materials exactly modified to their own personal interests. They can also use the Web to publish their texts or multimedia materials to share with others.

CMC and the Internet can facilitate an integrative approach to using technology. For example, students of English don't just study general examples and write homework for the teacher; instead they use the Internet to actually become good writers. First, the students search the Web to find articles in their exact area of specialty and then carefully read and study those specific articles. They then write their own drafts online; the teacher critiques the drafts online and creates electronic links to his own comments and to pages of appropriate linguistic and technical explanation, so that students can find additional background help at the click of a mouse. Next, using this

assistance, the students prepare and publish their own articles on the Web, together with reply forms to solicit opinions from readers. They advertise their Web articles on appropriate Internet sites so that interested writers around the world will know about their articles and will be able to read and comment on them. When they receive their comments they can take those into account in editing their articles for republication on the Web. This illustrates an integrative approach to using technology in a course based on reading and writing. This perhaps is the most common use of the Internet to date, since it is still predominantly a text-based medium and this will undoubtedly change in the future, not only due to the transmission of audio-visual material, but also due to the growing use of the Internet to carry out real-time audio and audio-visual chatting.

Computer-Mediated Communication for Long Distance Exchange: Long distance exchange projects have been organized in number of ways, generally using e-mail but also using Web-based Conferencing systems or various types of software for synchronous chatting the most effective exchange projects are ones that are well-integrated into the course goals and are based on purposeful investigation rather than just electronic chat. Such projects might involve joint exploration of culture, social conditions films or literature and after result in some kind of collaborative publication.

Accessing Resources and Publishing on the World Wide Web: This Web offers a vast range of resources. Accessing and using these pages in language education supports a socio-cognitive approach by helping massive students in discourses that extend well beyond the classroom, their immediate communities, and their language textbooks. Students can use web pages as authentic materials for conducting research on culture and current events or for gathering material for class projects. Students can also publish their own work on the Web, thus enabling writing for a real audience. In some cases, teachers have created in class online newsletters or magazines that their classes have produced. In other cases teachers help their students contribute to international web magazines which include articles from many students around the world. And even, students

work together in collaborative teams internationally and then publish the results of their projects on the web.

In short, the advantages of using technologies in the language classroom can only be interpreted in the light of the changing goals of language education and the changing conditions in society. Language teachers now, seek not only to teach students the rules of grammar, but rather to help them gain apprenticeship into new discourse communities. This accomplished through creating opportunities for authentic and meaningful interaction both within and outside the classroom, and providing students the tools for their own social, cultural and linguistic exploration. The computer is a powerful tool for this process as it allows students access to online environments of international communication.

In conclusion, the key to successful use of technology in language teaching lies not in hardware or software but in teachers and our human capacity as teachers is to plan, design and implement effective educational activity. By using new technologies in the language classroom, teachers can better prepare students for the kind of international cross-cultural interactions which are increasingly required for success in academic, vocational or personal life.

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