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Digital Tools for Teaching and Learning English Language in 21ˢᵗ Century

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Abstract:

We are surviving in a world where technology is omnipresent and indispensable. Owing to the ubiquitous presence of technology, the pedagogy of teaching English has also undergone a huge change. The application of modern technology represents a significant advance in the contemporary English language teaching and learning process. Most of the present English language teachers are actively incorporating a range of technological aids designed to facilitate optimum teaching delivery. Concerning language teaching and learning, digital media has invaded the classroom. In general, today's teaching and learning seemed to be more interesting due to the technology arena. They created an image of being creative, and above all, innovative in approach. The phrase "e-Learning" or "Technology in Education" has become a significant word in every educational environment. The 21st-century learners cater to the need for technology with the education system. The traditional methods are mainly based on lecturing but the present learning systems are interactive based. Recent technologies like Blogs, the Internet, Interactive Boards, Mobile Phones, Skype, Twitter, YouTube, and many more have added not only stimulus but also learners' engagement and true interactivity within the classroom. The present paper aims at establishing various elements of the technology used in English teaching and learning that brings innovative technique and promote to ensure effective and quality teaching.

INTRODUCTION

In the traditional mode of teaching, including the teaching of English as a foreign language in India, teachers used to be a source of everything in the classroom, while students were only the recipients. Teachers were the center, while students were the silent, passive objects. This concept has changed today. Now the students are the center of the teaching and learning process. Teachers with all their efforts and main roles as the classroom director, manager, counselor, and a model in the use of the language they teach, facilitate learning inside the classroom and, possibly extended to, outside formal learning context.

The use of modern technology in teaching English is broadly understood to encompass an innovative application of methods, tools, materials, devices, systems, and strategies that are directly relevant to English language teaching and lead to the achievement of the desired goals. Thus, while technology is now generally accepted as an important educational and auxiliary tool across a range of teaching and learning contexts, it is particularly true of English language teaching since it affords several potential opportunities to enhance both the content and delivery of the pedagogies typically associated with traditional English language instruction. This is primarily achieved by enabling the student and/or teacher to revisit problematic content time after time until it is fully understood and assimilated. Familiarity with the concept of using modern technology is not merely limited to the use of modern appliances and devices, but rather obtains to the introduction of innovative systems and methods of teaching which facilitate faster and more comprehensive learning progression.

According to prevailing pedagogical theories, in utilizing the learning potential of technology learners are better able to acquire and hone their language knowledge and skills. The use of technology in teaching English consolidates the integrated view of the modern means of system and association with other components which benefits students by achieving the required results. The use of modern technology in English language teaching has therefore become indispensable, especially in the wake of unprecedented developments across numerous fields and disciplines. It is essential that the education sector keep apace of the global technological revolution by adopting

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modern technological means such as computerization, multi-media devices, mobile phones, audio/visual effects applications, and social media, to optimize English language instruction and equip teachers to connect with classroom language learners in a systematic and advanced way. The Internet provides easy, immediate, and virtually unlimited access to software, applications, and a host of ancillary platforms and materials which can expedite English teaching and learning. While these affordances may be widely available to all, it is noted that teachers often play a key role in operating the different tools and teaching methods. Moreover, many such programs are specifically designed to promote effective English teaching whilst simultaneously increasing learner understanding and attainment of English language skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Yoon et al. (2012) stated that digital learning (E-Learning) was first proposed by Jay Cross in 1999. With the advance and development of technology tools, it appeared different explanations and terminology, such as Internet-based training, web-based training, online learning, network learning, distance learning. Doris Holzberger et al. (2013) regarded digital learning as delivery with digital forms of media (e.g. texts or pictures) through the Internet; and, the provided learning contents and teaching methods were to enhance learners' learning and aimed to improve teaching effectiveness or promote personal knowledge and skills. Computers and network technology media were applied to learning situations, including synchronous and asynchronous network learning, to break through the restrictions on time, location, and schedule, and to achieve learner-centered individualized learning (Kaklamanou et al., 2012). In the era when knowledge and information flow rapidly, the application of digital learning covers different fields and industries. Based on distinct positions or points of view, the definitions are different. The most representative one is the definition proposed by the American Society of Training and Education (ASTD). It defines e-learning as the process of learners applying digital media to learning. Digital media contains the Internet, corporate network, computers, satellite broadcasting, audiotapes, videotapes, interactive TV, and compact disks. The application includes network-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital cooperation. Anttila et al. (2012) regarded digital learning as a digital tool to acquire digital teaching materials for online or offline learning activity through wired or wireless networks (Hockly, 2012).

Current literature, therefore, reveals different explanations of digital learning among domestic and international researchers. By comprehensively analyzing the viewpoints of several researchers, digital learning could be divided into four parts (Keane, 2012).

1. Digital teaching materials: It emphasizes that learners could learn by extracting some digital teaching material contents. The so-called digital teaching material contents refer to e-books, digitalized data, or contents presented with other digital methods.
2. Digital tools: It stresses learners proceeding learning activity through digital tools, such as desktop computers, notebook computers, tablet computers, and smart phones.
3. Digital delivery: It emphasizes that learners' learning activity could be delivered through the Internet, e.g. intranet, internet, and satellite broadcasting.
4. Autonomous learning: It focuses on learners engaging in an online or offline learning activity through digital learning by themselves. It stresses personal autonomous learning and requires the participation of learners with autonomous learning to precede learning activity.

CURRENT STATUS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

The 21st century confronts its citizenship with new choices, opportunities, and challenges due to the all-pervading technology into all spheres of life. In this era, the educational institutions cannot remain mere venues for the transmission of a prescribed set of information from teacher to student over a fixed period rather the educational institutions must promote "learning to learn" i.e. the acquisition of knowledge and skills that make it possible continuous learning over the lifetime. So, it becomes the responsibility of the teachers to shape up accordingly to meet the demands of the day.

The need of the day is to equip people with proficiency in the English language and this is possible only with a proper blend of edification and e-learning tools (modern technologies). Traditional teaching and learning paradigms have been shaken by the impact of the integration of e-learning tools into educational practices. E-learning is a diverse range of technological tools and systems that can be utilized by capable and creative teachers to enhance teaching and learning situations. These are used to make learning more interesting, motivating, stimulating, and meaningful to the students. These tools

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have been touted as potentially powerful enabling tools for educational change and reform as they are making marked inroads into the combination of digital technologies and English language learning.

USE OF E-LEARNING TOOLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

A learning system based on formalized teaching but with the help of electronic resources is known as E-learning. While teaching can be based in or out of the classrooms, the use of computers and the Internet forms the major component of E-learning. E-learning can also be termed as a network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge, and the delivery of education is made to a large number of recipients at the same or different times. Earlier, it was not accepted wholeheartedly as it was assumed that this system lacked the human element required in learning.

However, with the rapid progress in technology and the advancement in learning systems, it is now embraced by the masses. The introduction of computers was the basis of this revolution and with time, as we get hooked to smart phones, tablets, etc; these devices now have an important place in the classrooms for learning. Books are gradually getting replaced by electronic educational materials like optical discs or pen drives. Knowledge can also be shared via the Internet, which is accessible 24/7, anywhere, anytime.

INTERNET

Internet is the most useful technology of modern times which helps us not only in our daily lives but also in professional lives. For educational purposes, it is widely used to gather information and to do research or add to the knowledge of various subjects. The Internet has become a major tool for effective teaching as well as a learning tool. Teachers can use it as a teaching tool by posting their teaching materials (notes and videos) on the school website or forum. The learning process becomes interesting and diverse with the use of tutorial videos and notes. Teachers can teach with the use of animation, PowerPoint slides, and images to capture the students' attention.

YOUTUBE

YouTube videos can be used in a language classroom for various aspects of English to enhance vocabulary, accents, pronunciations, voice modulation, and many more. The real advantage of using YouTube in teaching English is that it offers authentic examples of everyday English used by everyday people. The teacher can use it as a tool for improving their Listening and Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills.

SKYPE

Using Skype provides unlimited possibilities for teachers and students to collaborate anywhere in the world. It provides immense opportunities for the students in a foreign language class to connect with classes in other countries to practice their language skills. Through Skype, the teachers can provide mentoring or homework help to the learners. The Students can read, present, or perform for other students and also collaborate with other students on writing or research projects. They can also participate in professional development activities within or outside the organization.

TWITTER

Twitter, a gift of Technology, is a social networking application that could help in improving students' English to a greater extent. As an online education technology tool, twitter's impact on engaging students in learning concepts is unlimited. The teacher can use a dozen activities for using an online education technology tool to engage students in classroom activities to develop a better understanding of concepts.

Smart-boards

Interactive whiteboards are good replacements for traditional whiteboards or flipcharts as they provide ways to show students everything which can be presented on a computer's desktop (educational software, websites, and others). SMART boards help teachers use a student-centered approach to teaching language arts. Language arts teachers can use SMART Boards to improve reading and comprehension and teach grammar and writing. With a SMART Board, teachers can **combine video, audio, Web browsing, and word processing to teach students interactively.**

MOBILE PHONES

The use of mobile phones as a learning tool has a wide variety of applications. It helps to conduct online classes anywhere anytime. It is easy to carry and comfortable to manage.

PODCASTING

A podcast is a series of digital-media files which are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and computers. Utilizing podcasts in the classroom is very easy. Today the students are listening to news clips, music, and video clips via the Web. The teacher can reach these students in one

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new way i.e. through podcasts. The teachers can also assign the news channels through which the student can also learn the use of intonation and stress.

BLOG

Blogging has become increasingly popular, especially in the realm of education as they are a great way to share information and generate discussion. Instead of textbooks and traditional methods, many educators prefer using these new techniques to help teach students and gain experience with various forms of social media. Setting up a course blog doesn't have to be complicated. Educators can use a free platform such as BlogSpot, Word press, or Tumbler to host the blog.

Nowadays, blogs can also display photos and some people are using them with audio and even video, the teacher should encourage the students to visit the blog frequently. S/he should respond to student posts quickly, writing a short comment related to the content s/he should also ask questions about what the learner writes to create a stimulus for writing. Writing to the blog could be required, and it may form part of the class assessment. Students should be encouraged to post their writing homework on the blog instead of only giving it to the teacher.

ADVANTAGES OF USING DIGITAL TEACHING MEDIA

According to Kemp and Dayton (1985), the use of media in teaching is beneficial in the following ways

1. Uniformity of presenting learning materials. Teachers may vary in understanding a concept. With media, their various interpretations are reduced, and therefore, the messages are conveyed uniformly.
2. More interesting in the learning process. Media helps convey audible information (audio) and visible (visual), in such a way that they can describe principles, concepts, processes, and procedures from abstract and incomplete to more concrete and complete.
3. More interactive learning process. If accurately selected and well-prepared, media can help teachers and students communicate in two ways actively. Without media, teachers may tend to speak 'one way to the students.
4. Reduced teaching and learning time allotment. Quite often, teachers need much time explaining the learning materials. When done correctly, the use of media can save time. This means students may spend more time doing exercises and varied learning tasks.
5. Improved student learning quality. The use of media does not only make the learning process more efficient but also

helps students absorb or master learning material more comprehensively.
6. Students' less dependence on the teacher. It is another way to say media "talk". When planned carefully, media enable the learning process to occur anywhere and anytime the students want, with little or no help from and even in the absence of the teacher.
7. Optimized positive attitude towards the learning process. The use of media that is interesting to students will in turn enhance students' favor/love of and appreciation for knowledge and skill gave and its inquiry.
8. Teacher's wider roles. Through media, teachers do not have to repeat explanations again and again. They can save their time by giving oral explanations. Consequently, they have time to pay more attention to students, encouraging, giving them help, etc.

The digital world is becoming ever more intertwined with the world of the classroom. As tech continues to present new learning opportunities, educators must adapt to our new knowledge landscape with approaches that benefit both them and their students.

Digital tools and platforms are becoming ever more integral to our personal and working lives. Digital learning increases access to education and knowledge while empowering students with a mindset and capabilities that set them up for success in their present and future.

Google Classroom is a free web service designed for schools to help them with drafting, mass distribution, and grading assignments in a paperless form. With Google Classroom, the learning process becomes extremely easy and is streamlined by way of sharing files between teachers and students. Here the students can post their queries on the lessons taught in the classrooms and receive answers from teachers and other students. Teachers can also post-study materials for students to review at home. Google Classroom combines Google Drive for assignment creation and distribution, Google Docs, Sheets and Slides for writing, Gmail for communication, and Google Calendar for scheduling.

Benefits of Digital Learning

Why online distance learning and why now? Online distance learning meets the needs of an ever-growing population of students who cannot or prefer not to participate in traditional classroom settings. These learners include those unable to attend traditional classes, who

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cannot find a particular class at their chosen institution, who live in remote locations, who work full-time and can only study at or after work, and those who simply prefer to learn independently.

The minimum requirement for students to participate in an online course is access to a computer, the Internet, and the motivation to succeed in a non-traditional classroom. Online courses provide an excellent method of course delivery unbound by time or location allowing for accessibility to instruction at anytime from anywhere. Learners find the online environment a convenient way to fit education into their busy lives. The ability to access a course from any computer with Internet access, 24 hours a day, seven days a week is a tremendous incentive for many of today's students.

Online learning is the education that takes place over the Internet. It is often referred to as "e-learning" among other terms. However, online learning is just one type of "distance learning" - the umbrella term for any learning that takes place across distance and not in a traditional classroom. Distance learning has a long history and there are several types available today, including:
• Correspondence Courses: conducted through regular mail with little interaction.
• Tele-courses: where content is delivered via radio or television broadcast.
• CD-ROM Courses: where the student interacts with static computer content.
• Online Learning: Internet-based courses are offered synchronously and/or asynchronously.
• Mobile Learning: using devices such as cellular phones, PDAs, and digital audio players (iPods, MP3 players).

A NEW PARADIGM FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Online learning is catalyzing a pedagogical shift in how we teach and learn. There is a shift away from top-down lecturing and passive students to a more interactive, collaborative approach in which students and instructors co-create the learning process. The Instructor's role is changing from the "sage on the stage" to "the guide on the side."

CONSTRUCTIONS

This point of view maintains that people actively construct new knowledge as they interact with their environment. This is a student-centered approach in which students "co-create" their learning experience. This approach empowers students as active learners instead of just passive recipients absorbing information and reproducing it for standardized tests.

COLLABORATION

As an instructor, you focus on the experiences that would best generate learning from the learner's point of view, rather than just publishing and assessing the information you think they need to know. Each participant in a course can and should be a teacher as well as a learner. Your job changes from being the sole source of knowledge, to be a guide and role model. You connect with students in ways that address their own learning needs by moderating discussions and activities in a way that collectively leads students towards the larger learning goals of the class.

21st Century Skills and the "4Cs" in the English Language Classroom

For many language teachers around the world, the classrooms of today may look and feel very different from those that we remember from our childhood. In teacher training workshops and professional development activities, you may have heard talk about 21st-century skills and "new literacies." Many of us have realized that our students today need new sets of skills to prepare them to be successful participants in the globalized society of the future. But for many busy teachers, these new skills and concepts may be unclear or you may be struggling with how to implement them in the actual classroom. In this text, we'll be considering some of the fundamental changes that are currently taking place in 21st-century education by looking at the 4Cs, and, importantly, we'll also consider how these changes can and should be impacting English language teaching and learning around the globe.

Often these are considered to be key skills for 21st-century learners, and they have been reshaping education all across the world. In simple terms, 21st Century Skills refer to the skills that are required to enable an individual to face the challenges of the 21st-century world that is globally active, digitally transforming, collaboratively moving forward, creatively progressing, seeking competent human-resource and quick in adopting changes.

•4Cs: Critical Thinking, Creativity & Innovation, Collaboration, Communication

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•IMT: Information Literacy, Media Literacy, Technology Literacy

•FLIPS: Flexibility and Adaptability, Leadership and Responsibility, Initiative and Self-Direction, Social and Cross-Cultural Interaction

Findings

As English has turned into a global language, its appearance and value in the world have expanded enormously in the past decades. But if language teachers teach as they taught earlier, then the required goals of learning the English Language may not be achieved in the present global scenario. In the past, no productive, creative or constructive activity was given to the learners to develop the four language skills (LSRW). With the changing needs of the hour (time), technology is developing day-by-day. We are living in the 21st century and it is the age of technological advancement. Thus, the recent trend in teaching English is the use of modern technological tools as English language teaching has been affected a lot by the availability of these tools

Conclusion

Technological advancements in different fields of study have existed in the language classroom. The teachers of English should warmly welcome the technology progress and optimally make use of it as a medium to support their teaching and learning process. This new way of teaching has been appreciated and welcomed by every teacher, student, and parent. The students are more enthusiastic and excited to learn things in this new way. Instruction has been changed from teacher-centric to student-centric.

One of the ultimate goals of using modern technology is to actively engage the students in language learning and motivate them to acquire English language skills practically and realistically. This can be gained through an open learning context that fosters openness and access to the subjects and information through modern technology means, wherein students are motivated and directed to communicate with each other. In terms of future development, it is clear that multimedia will be integral to the student-centered process of teaching English to modern standards. As such, the quality of teaching and application of students to modern educational foundations would benefit from an extensive survey of English language skills to improve overall communication proficiency. Hence, the present teaching-learning without digitization is inscrutable, unintelligible, and incomprehensible.

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