
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the Impact of Digital Tools on Linguistic Competence: A New Dimension in English Language Teaching Methodologies

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| ABSTRACT

We are currently in an era where technology is everywhere and essential. Additionally, technology has transformed how we teach English. Integrating modern technology represents a significant advancement in contemporary English language teaching and learning. Most current English language teachers are actively utilizing various technological tools to enhance teaching effectiveness. In terms of language education, digital media is becoming increasingly prominent in the classroom. Generally, teaching and learning language today appear to be more engaging due to the technological landscape. It fosters a sense of creativity and, above all, an innovative approach. The concept of 'e-learning' or 'Technology in Language Acquisition' has turned into a prominent term in all educational environments. Learners in the 21st century recognize the importance of technology in the language acquisitions. While traditional methods mostly rely on lecturing, today's learning systems emphasize interactivity. Recent technologies like blogs, the internet, interactive whiteboards, smartphones, Skype, Twitter, YouTube, and many others have not only enhanced learning but also boosted student engagement and genuine interactivity in the classroom. This paper intends to identify the various technological elements utilized in English teaching and learning that introduce innovative techniques and foster effective, high-quality education.

| KEYWORDS

Technology, Advancement, Tools, Digital Media, 21st Century, Learning System, Innovative Techniques

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Introduction

In the early part of the 21st century, the variety of technologies available for language learning and teaching has greatly expanded, and their implementation in educational institutions globally has become a common practice. It can be confidently asserted that we are currently in an era where digital technologies are at the forefront. Digital tools are fundamental to what has become a well-established field of computer-assisted language learning and are also increasingly important in general English language instruction. In a world where laptops, tablets, computers, and mobile phones are increasingly preferred technologies, it can be posited that humanity is approaching a critical juncture where the educational system must evolve to embrace new opportunities.

It's important to recognize that modern teaching methodologies utilized within higher education include interactive tools, varied forms, and methods of learning activities within the university's interactive informational environment. Concurrently, the essence and framework of an innovative educational process in higher education should accurately mirror the nature and pace of social transformations in society. The current content of higher education should prioritize the use of information technology and the widespread integration of interactive e-learning, ensuring access to digital and intellectual resources for future development.

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The role of technology has always been crucial in the teaching and learning environment. It serves as a vital tool for instructors to enhance their students' learning experiences. When discussing technology in education, the term 'integration' frequently arises. Given that technology is a prevalent aspect of daily life, it's essential to reevaluate the concept of incorporating it into the curriculum and strive to embed it within teaching practices to bolster the learning process. In other words, technology should be a fundamental component of the learning experience and a major consideration for instructors, starting from the planning of learning activities and continuing through the teaching and learning phases (Eady & Lockyer, 2013).

In today's education landscape, the integration of technology in teaching and learning is increasingly essential. Instructors are now expected to blend traditional methods with modern approaches in their teaching practices. Teachers must be equipped with the skills to incorporate technology into their instructional strategies. In the 21st century, while technologies are engaging, their application in language education remains relatively limited. Recently, the internet has become extremely popular in the field of second and foreign language teaching, with more teachers and learners embracing its use. There is no doubt that technology has influenced both the quantity and quality of education in conventional and distance learning environments. Consequently, digital tools have the potential to enhance the educational experience with their interactive and dynamic content, offering genuine opportunities for personalized instruction.

In today's world, teachers and learners utilize electronic devices and online tools across all areas of language study. The EFL classroom has embraced digital literacy to enhance students' academic performance and to foster their language abilities (Akyuz & Yavuz, 2015). The goal of teaching extends beyond simply imparting knowledge, honing specific skills, or improving learning and attitudes; it aims to integrate these elements through the application of technology. Generally, technology has proven to be effective in reaching the intended objectives. A notable example is the accessibility of various listening and speaking applications like iTunes, YouTube, and SoundCloud. These platforms have significantly increased the efficacy of foreign language instruction, alleviating the tedium and dullness associated with traditional textbooks, true-false and multiple-choice questions, as well as repetitive exercises (Lacina, 2004).

In 2014, the British Council launched a study titled *Innovations in Learning Technologies for English Language Teaching*, which aimed to give English teachers ample opportunities to investigate the emerging technologies utilized in language education. These technologies have now become a fundamental component of contemporary language teaching methodologies. The previous study indicates that today's teaching practices are deeply integrated with digital technologies, not merely as part of areas like Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), but as an essential aspect of English Language Teaching (ELT) as well (Stockwell, 2007). Consequently, a significant number of language learners now have access to the Internet and multimedia devices, which teachers can leverage to enhance students' creative thinking and motivate them to practice language skills both in the classroom and beyond. Moreover, the study brought to the attention of stakeholders another aspect related to teachers' excessive and unstructured use of technology. This may lead educators to rely on pre-made materials and implement them without adapting or customizing them to suit the unique needs of their students. Such a situation may account for the unreflective adoption of technology, resulting in ineffective teaching practices. Thus, the current research aims to emphasize this concern, advocating for a balance between technological use and the principles of effective teaching by taking into account the curriculum, students' needs, the necessary infrastructure for integrating modern technology, and existing teaching methodologies to ensure technology is used effectively without undermining pedagogical practices.

Research Problem and Significance

Digital tools have revolutionized the conventional educational landscape, allowing educators to improve their teaching approaches and provide students with more engaging and tailored learning experiences. These tools grant students access to a wide range of educational materials, such as online courses, interactive learning platforms, digital textbooks, and multimedia resources. In addition, digital tools empower teachers to design more interactive and stimulating learning activities that address the various learning styles and capabilities of their students. The role of digital technologies in English Language Teaching (ELT) will be explored. The significance of digital technologies in the English classroom will be emphasized. Most importantly, the notable challenges faced by teachers and students when utilizing digital technologies will be examined.

Literature Review

CALL is an academic concept that pertains to the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the teaching and learning of languages. The term originated in the United States during the 1960s. (Levy 1997, p. 1) characterizes "computer-

assisted language learning" as "an approach to language instruction and learning where computer technology is employed to assist in the presentation, reinforcement, and evaluation of the content to be acquired, frequently featuring an interactive component" (Levy, p. 1). With the advent of portable digital devices becoming a common part of our lives, "CALL" has evolved into a crucial element of language education and research.

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) can be divided into three stages. The first stage appeared in the 1950s and continued until the 1970s. This phase was referred to as "structural/behavioral CALL" (Warschauer, 1998) and relied on the repetitive practice of visualizing similar content. As Warschauer (1996, p. 3-4) states, "The primary feature of this method is that the computer is ideally equipped for conducting repetitive exercises." Here, the computer functions like a teacher, presenting materials and evaluating activities on an individual basis, enabling students to advance at their own pace.

Using computers in language instruction has been shown to effectively enhance the teaching and acquisition of a foreign language. Computer-assisted learning boosts exposure and enables the practice of a foreign language. It serves as a medium for communication and enhances student interaction. Kelm (1998) states that computer-based learning allows students to practice foreign languages in real-life contexts and encourages social interaction and communication among learners.

The relationship between technology and English language teaching is significant (Singhal, 1997). During the 1960s and 1970s, English language learning labs featured small cabinets equipped with cassette players, microphones, and headphones for individual students, alongside a central control system to oversee student participation. This technology had the advantage of accelerating students' oral language skills development. The idea of language labs effectively linked technology to the educational process of learning English. Nonetheless, students often perceived the "audiovisual" approach as dull and repetitive (Singhal, 1997). Another reason for the lack of success of this method was the limited engagement.

According to Yoon et al. (2012), the concept of digital learning (e-learning) was first introduced by Jay Cross in 1999. As technological tools advanced and evolved, a variety of definitions and terms emerged, including "Internet-based" training, "web-based training," "online learning," "network" learning, "distance learning," and "digital forms of media" that encompass "texts or pictures." The content and instructional methods were crafted to "enhance learners' learning" as well as to boost teaching efficiency or "encourage personal knowledge" or "skills". Learning scenarios utilized computers and network technology (similar to synchronous and asynchronous network learning) to address challenges related to time, location, and scheduling, thereby facilitating "learner-centered, individualized learning."

Key Digital Tools Used in English Language Teaching

Followings are the Digital tools that are very useful in developing students' Digital literacy.

TED Talks

TED Talks can be incorporated into the classroom setting for various educational purposes, including the teaching of English as a foreign language (López-Carril et al., 2020). As such, TED Talks provide accessible and captivating material for teaching or learning English (Ziebell, 2019). Teachers can utilize these talks to enrich their lessons, ignite their students' enthusiasm for language acquisition, and enhance their English proficiency. According to previous related research, TED Talks are shown to positively impact English skills, including speaking, listening, and writing abilities.

YouTube Videos

YouTube is regarded as a valuable resource that can be utilized both in and out of the classroom (M. Jalaluddin et al., 2016). It encourages a more self-directed and student-focused learning approach. YouTube allows students to engage by leaving comments on videos and posing questions related to the content. Additionally, it offers students a chance to showcase their understanding by creating their videos and sharing them with their classmates.

Audio Recordings

In an environment with limited technology, audio recordings can be a useful resource for enhancing pronunciation and speaking abilities. Students can utilize their smartphones or basic recording devices to practice reading texts aloud or participating in scripted conversations. By listening to their recordings and receiving feedback from their peers, learners can improve their language fluency and communication skills.

Learning Management Systems (LMS)

Utilize the capabilities of Learning Management Systems such as Moodle or Canvas to create detailed lesson plans and design courses. These systems support the organization of content, distribution of assignments, and communication.

Multimedia Presentations

Elevate your lessons using multimedia tools such as Prezi, Google Slides, or Adobe Spark. Captivate students with vibrant and visually striking content that aligns with language learning goals. Store these lessons and create a personalized collection of tailored lessons.

Digital Flashcards

Utilize tools such as Quizlet to design digital flashcards that feature vocabulary terms, idiomatic expressions, or phrases for classroom use or for students to review at their own pace.

Storytelling Tools

Utilize platforms such as StoryJumper or Book Creator for digital storytelling initiatives where students can craft, collaborate, and share their narratives, enhancing various language skills.

Podcasts

Instructors can utilize applications such as Audacity and GarageBand to produce podcasts, enabling students to articulate their thoughts verbally and enhance their language capabilities, while also collaborating and acquiring additional skills.

Connecting Through Online Forums

Facilitating communication beyond the classroom will guarantee that the learning process continues even after the bell rings. Platforms like Edmodo and Google Classroom can be utilized to set up online forums, allowing discussions to persist outside the traditional class environment and offering structures for project-based learning.

Interactive Whiteboard

Classrooms that feature technology like interactive whiteboards and screens can enhance conventional teaching approaches. Rather than relying on outdated listening and reading materials, teachers can create engaging lessons using real-world examples and other authentic resources that emphasize contemporary subjects. Instructors can connect resources, oversee assignments and classes, and develop project concepts to deliver stimulating and interactive learning experiences.

Duolingo

This application emphasizes vocabulary and grammar. Duolingo is a popular language learning application that provides gamified lessons to enhance the enjoyment of learning English. It addresses multiple language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Grammarly

Grammarly is a writing tool that assists students in enhancing their writing abilities by offering immediate grammar and spelling recommendations. It can be incorporated into web browsers, making it a valuable resource for improving written English.

Benefits of Using Digital Tools in Language Acquisitions

In the following section, the researcher presents the benefits of using digital tools in language acquisition:

Enhancing Student Engagement

One of the key advantages of digital language teaching resources is their capacity to increase student involvement. Interactive programs and multimedia materials can transform language learning into a more lively and enjoyable experience.

Simplifying Lesson Preparation

One major advantage of language teaching tools is that they simplify the process of lesson preparation. Crafting lessons can consume a lot of time, but utilizing the appropriate tools allows instructors to conserve important time. Educational technology platforms frequently provide ready-made lesson plans, activities, and multimedia resources that can be seamlessly incorporated into the curriculum.

Improving Assessment Accuracy

Accurate assessment is crucial for understanding student growth and identifying areas that need improvement. Resources for language instructors can significantly enhance the accuracy of evaluations. Online platforms often come with built-in assessment features that provide immediate feedback, allowing teachers to quickly evaluate student performance.

Facilitating Virtual Learning

The increase in remote teaching has underscored the necessity of having strong language teaching resources. Tools tailored for online education can facilitate a smooth shift from in-person classes to virtual learning. Essential features such as video conferencing, screen sharing, and collaborative real-time interactions are crucial for successful remote instruction.

The advantages of digital teaching tools for language educators are numerous. These tools not only boost student engagement but also simplify lesson planning, enhance assessment precision, and support remote teaching, providing a variety of benefits that can greatly enhance the quality of language instruction.

Conclusion

English is now integrated into the national curriculum of almost every country, with students starting English classes at a young age. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate technological tools that engage students, enabling meaningful learning of English as a foreign language. From the viewpoints of both teachers and students, the use of technological tools can enhance teaching and, consequently, the learning of English as a foreign language, contributing to improved language acquisition. Technological tools support the learning of English by aiding the development of all language skills, boosting students' cognitive abilities while also sparking their interest, as these tools allow them to learn a new language using familiar resources. Future research should concentrate on this vital issue, specifically on how teachers can develop the IT skills necessary to enhance their students' learning by employing a variety of technological tools. English has emerged as a medium for intercultural communication. Today, it is evident that there is significant interest and motivation for the language, as well as for the technological tools that aid in learning English as a foreign language.

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