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Perspectives of ESL Learners on the Integration of Technology in English Language Learning Process: An Evidence-Based Research

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Abstract: Technology is a part and parcel of this information age; no sphere of learning is untouched by it. The field of ELT/EFL/ESL is no exception. The current paper is an attempt to understand how the use of technology has been received in the field of English as a second language and gather perspectives from the learners of the English language about the effect of technology in their learning. The paper explores various modes of e-learning and how the tools aid traditional ways of teaching and learning English as a second language. An attempt has been made to trace new trends in learning with the ever-evolving technology in the 21st century. This paper has reviewed a few significant researches to give a perspective on the efficacy of modern technologies in learning English for ESL students.

Keywords: English Language Learning Process, Learners Technology, Perspectives of ESL

1 Introduction

Technology is defined as "New machinery and equipment that has been produced using scientific knowledge or methods" in the Cambridge Dictionary. Technology has dominated modern society to the point where it is impossible to ignore its impact, particularly in the area of education. It has become a part of everything that is done in the field of education and academics. From using a computerized PowerPoint presentation for a seminar to seeking up a challenging term on Google, technology comes into play. You might have to browse the e-texts of the novels listed in your syllabus or write your essay on Microsoft Word. Without us consciously recognizing it, the usage of modern technology has crept into the realm of contemporary education.

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Computers are seen as a crucial teaching tool in language classrooms where teachers have easy access, are well-prepared, and have some control over the curriculum, according to Becker (2000).

Many instructors consider technology to be an important component of offering a high-quality education. Therefore, using contemporary technology in teaching English has become essential, especially in light of remarkable advancements across a variety of sectors and disciplines. The adoption of contemporary technological tools like computerization, multi-media devices, mobile phones, audio/visual effects applications, and social media by the education sector is crucial if it is to optimize English language instruction and equip teachers to connect with classroom language learners in an advanced manner (Mofareh 2019). Many studies have been conducted on the efficacy of technology on language learning. While there has been variation in the results, the majority of them implied high efficacy of technology in learning English as a second language. Second-language learners of English have shown particular optimism in this regard. According to Eaton (2010), computer-based communication aids language learning.

Computer-assisted conversation has more equitable involvement than face-to-face discussion. Zhao (2013) agreed that language acquisition requires authentic materials in the target language. The introduction of digital technology into the classroom has aided learning, according to Gary Motteram, editor of the British Council magazine *Innovations in learning technologies for English language education*. He argues that digital technologies are excellently positioned to help teachers working with learners and students working independently in undertaking the necessary "languageing" in his most recent book for the British Council, *Innovations in learning technology for English language education*.

1.1 Efficacy of technology in improving language skills

Information and communication technologies greatly benefit the learners and teachers of a second language. Students' language learning abilities can improve as a result of their ability to process new learner-based instructional resources (Costley, 2014; Tutkun, 2011). Learners nowadays can easily access information related to the lessons taught in class, thus providing a kind of follow-up for conventional learning patterns. This greatly benefits both learners and teachers since understanding becomes easier with the aid of technology. The introduction of digital technology into the classroom has aided learning, according to Gary Motteram, editor of the British Council magazine *Innovations in learning technologies for English language education*. He argues that digital technologies are excellently positioned to help teachers working with learners and students working independently in undertaking the necessary "languageing" in his most recent book for the British Council, *Innovations in learning technology for English language education*.

According to (Lee 2001) the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) modifies students' attitudes about learning and boosts their self-confidence. Early English learners would be entirely dependent on the teacher. There are too many pupils for one instructor, making it difficult for everyone to get their questions answered. Technology now serves as the tutor who clarifies students' questions that remain unanswered in the class. Rodinadze and Zarbazoia (2012) asset that technology facilitates learners' learning and serves as a real educational tool that allows learning to occur.

In a study on the comparison of teacher-student interaction in high and low-technology use elementary EFL classrooms in China, a different observation was made. Conversation analyses of these class films showed that technology use hindered the development of communicative classroom discourses, with teachers who used more showcase questions and commands and encouraged less spontaneous or genuine language production from students (Li, G., Sun, Z., & Jee, Y. 2019). Additionally, teachers in both types of classrooms gave little to no corrective feedback, which suggests that technology had less of an influence on how teachers gave feedback. The results show widespread teacher-centered technology use in EFL classrooms, which

highlights the urgent need for talking about how to improve EFL instructors' pedagogical understanding and proficiency in technology-assisted language education.

This study examines empirical research that compares newer technologies to older ones in foreign language (FL) acquisition and instruction. Despite a plethora of papers on technology usage in FL learning and teaching, the evaluation of over 350 research (covering classroom-based technologies, individual study aids, network-based social computing, and mobile and portable devices) found no evidence of usefulness. However, Computer-assisted pronunciation training, particularly automated voice recognition, provided convincing evidence that technology has a measurable influence on FL acquisition (ASR). ASR improved pronunciation and provided useful feedback in several experiments. More research supported FL learning with conversation. Chat greatly boosted learners' language productivity and complexity. Technology improved learners' output, interaction, mood and motivation, feedback, and metalinguistic understanding (Golonka, E. M., Bowles, a. R., Frank, V. M., Richardson, D. L., & Freynik, S. (2014)., n.d.)

1.2 Different Modes of Learning English and Various Digital Technologies for Language Improvement Audio-visual learning

Audiobook Listening: An audiobook is a recording of a book being read aloud. Due to the ease and convenience it provides, the use of audiobooks has increased over the years with many groups of people. Audiobooks come in handy and make it very easy for busy people to access their favorite read without having to put in much effort. Moreover, audiobook controls allow you to skip ahead or go backward or scroll along the timeline, jump to chapters, and set playback speed according to your reading pace and snooze timer. Baskin and Harris 1995 found that audiobooks helped students with learning disabilities understand written text and improve their English-as-first-language reading fluency.

In another study conducted by Alcantud-Díaz and Gregori in 2014, the researchers did an extensive review of the use of audiobooks in foreign language learning. Even though audiobooks are rarely used in Spain (where the study was conducted), the authors believe they can support English learning in the five skills listed in the Common European Framework of Reference for language learning: listening, reading, spoken interaction, and writing. However, Emanuela Marchetti and Andrea Valente's studies on elementary and secondary school students show that despite the rising availability of audiobooks, the learners use audio resources in a conventional method which poses certain challenges since they have to listen to an audiobook on a portable device, take notes on paper or using a different app, and then present and discuss their thoughts in their group.

Podcast listening: Another form of learning with audio is listening to podcasts. According to Wikipedia a podcast is a program made available in digital format for download over the Internet. For example, an episodic series of digital audio or video files that a user can download to a personal device to listen to at a time of their choosing". Even in academia, podcasts are being used as a convenient learning tool both as integrated into the curriculum as well as supplemental material. To this end, a study was conducted by (Abdous, M. H., Facer, B. R., & Yen, C. J. 2012) to test the benefits of podcasts as integrated into the curriculum versus podcasts as supplemental material in language acquisition. The relationship among students who used podcasts as integrated in the curriculum was inconclusive.

However, it was observed that the supplemental podcast listeners had higher grades in their exams. Podcasts are thus useful for course revision. Similarly, according to (Vicenc Fernandez et.al 2009), podcasting is a great supplement to course resources, but not a replacement. Some other findings of their study implied that podcasting gives pupils the perception of constant interaction with teachers, motivating them. Moreover, it allows the students to study in diverse ways.

1.3 Mobile applications

Mobile phones are easy to use and access, making them perfect for language learners (Ekinci, E., & Ekinci, M. 2017). The computer has made the acquisition of information incredibly easy. Mobile phone as personal portable computer is currently the best invention of humans toward the benefit of accessibility of knowledge. Mobile learning, a modern trend has grown in the educational sphere as young people employ multifunctional mobile devices to gain knowledge (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005). Various digital applications have made learning more interesting and stimulating, especially for learners of English as a second language. Mobile applications make it easy for ESL learners since it is one device we all carry with us most of the time. Some such applications used for second language learning are listed below:

- Duolingo
- EWA: English
- Mondly: Learn 33 languages
- LinGo: Play
- Babbel
- Beelinguapp
- BBC Learning English
- FluentU
- Hello English
- Lingbe
- Memrise

Ecem Ekinci and Mithat Ekinci in 2017 did a case study to determine the benefits and drawbacks of employing particular mobile apps as support for their language learning process over a course of ten weeks. It was discovered that these applications had a favorable effect on the students' listening, reading, and writing abilities. It was also discovered that these software programmes aid in the development of their vocabulary and grammar skills.

1.4 Learning English with social media

"The term social media refers to a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities. Social media is internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, documents, videos, and photos". More than 4.5 billion people use social media, as of October 2021. Among the largest social media networks are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok.

Facebook is undoubtedly one of the most popular platforms with over two billion users worldwide. Klimova, B., & Pikhart, M. 2019 explored the impact of Facebook on developing writing skills in learning English as a foreign language in one of their journal article where the paper demonstrates that utilising Facebook helps students improve their writing skills in EFL classrooms, particularly in terms of structuring and organizing ideas, boosting motivation, encouraging peer collaboration, expanding their vocabulary, and lessening their shyness. According to this review article the authors came to a definite conclusion that Facebook clearly helps in boosting writing skills of its users. The paper also reiterates the fact that the exposure to posts of fellow group members can improve vocabulary. People who feels overwhelmed in the real world overcome their shyness and improve self-esteem through Facebook interaction.

1.5 Learner's and Teachers' Perceptions about the Use of Digital Technology in English Language Learning

Bordbar (2010) looked at the motivations and elements influencing language instructors' usage of technology in the classroom. The study also looked at how teachers used their practical experience and understanding of computer-assisted language learning to offer their own language education, as well as their attitudes about computers and information technology. According to the findings, practically every teacher had a favorable opinion of using computers in the classroom. The findings also highlighted the significance of teachers' overall perceptions of technology, their technological experience, skill, and competence, as well as the cultural context surrounding the introduction of IT into classrooms and language institutes and influencing their attitudes toward computer technology.

Salami Aydin (2012) remarks that although they have positive opinions about computer integration and attitudes toward computer use, the results showed that Turkish EFL teachers lack understanding of specific software, have trouble utilising the applications, and lack technical and instructional support.

According to ESL learners' who used mobile applications to improve English language, the vocabulary teaching and revising features of those apps were mainly positive. Another feature that greatly helped the learners is the notification system which reminded the users of the time of exercises (Ecem Ekinici and Mithat Ekinici, 2017). In a study aimed at examining the use of social media in English language learning, Tubagus Zam Zam Al Arif observed that the students displayed favourable opinions toward the application of social media to the study of English. They believe that social media is crucial to their development as English language learners.

Additionally, it encourages students to use social media to develop their English language skills by promoting social media use. This study shows students enthusiasm in using social media for language learning. Their most commonly used platform was reported to be Instagram. In another study (Akhiar, A., Mydin, A.-. A., & Adi Kasuma, S. A. (2017) to examine university students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of Instagram in English language writing, it was found that although students had moderate attitudes, they had highly positive thoughts and perspectives about using Instagram to improve their writing skills. Our examination of teacher-student interactions in technology-enhanced EFL classrooms indicates patterns of interaction that are generally very similar to (if not worse than) those in traditional language classrooms with no technology assistance, suggesting a need to focus on the pedagogy of technology integration in EFL classrooms. As Okojie, Olinzock, and Okojie-Boulder (2006) assert, the degree of success that teachers may experience in using technology for instruction is dependent upon.

2 Study design and setting

In this first article of a three-article series, we introduce the evidence-based research approach. Evidence-based research is the use of prior research in a systematic and transparent way to inform a new study so that it is answering questions that matter in a valid, efficient, and accessible manner.

3 Discussion

Language should be learned by receiving a lot of information through the two receptive abilities of reading and listening which cannot be fulfilled by instruction by teachers in school. Those studying English as a second language, autonomous learning alternatives are crucial which is provided by technology nowadays. Thus, it is crucial to include technology in the current educational system, especially when teaching English as a second language. Additionally, it is imperative that English language instructors stay current with the newest technological advancements that support language instruction.

According to (Mofareh 2019) the use of modern technology in teaching English is understood to entail the creative use of techniques, materials, equipment, systems, and tactics that are specifically pertinent to the instruction of the English language and that result in the accomplishment of the desired goals. The desire and willingness to use ICT to change higher education (HE) in underdeveloped nations have increased recently. Evidence suggests that teachers in these nations underuse ICT (Ferede, 2022). Teachers' lack of technological knowledge and their attitude toward it are important factors in whether or not technology is integrated in language learning classes.

In developing countries, professional development may increase instructors' ICT utilization. Future studies should create and evaluate professional development interventions that empower instructors with ICT skills and attitudes. The increasing number of evidence of teachers' lack of computer skills is a matter of concern since the need for technological aid in teaching and learning English is becoming more and more evident with time. Moreover, plethora of research has pointed toward the efficacy of integrating multimodality in ESL curriculum as well as learners' high enthusiasm in using technology in language learning. Language instructors need to start using popular social media sites like Instagram to foster a positive learning atmosphere and increase their students' desire for studying the English language (Akhiar, A., Mydin, A. - A., & Adi Kasuma, S. A. 2017).

4 Conclusion

This paper focuses primarily on the importance of integrating technology to enhance learning and second language learning in particular. We explored the efficacy of various modes of technologically enhanced learning both for the instructors and learners. While tools such as audiobook and podcast make consumption of reading material more convenient, social media platforms such as facebook and Instagram provide opportunities to enhance language learning by polishing productive skills i.e. writing and speaking which in return helps in developing social skills.

One of the most prominent observations from the exploration of various research on the use of technology to develop language learning is that teachers especially in developing countries lack efficiency in the use of technology and there is a need to keep up with the ever-changing pedagogical route by improving their technological skills and integrate it to aid conventional teaching learning mode.

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