Language Learning and Teaching Using New Technologies

Dr. M. Pratibha
Professor-English & HoD-Humanities and Sciences, Mahaveer Institute of Science and
Technology, Hyderabad, India.

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ABSTRACT
How the new technologies can be used to assist the language learning and which innovative applications are helpful to meet the continuously increasing demands of learners is the focus of this study. New technologies including overhead projectors, interactive whiteboards, computers and wireless internet have opened up the classroom to the outside world. The teaching-learning process has to adapt to changing learning contexts. Technology provides a learner independent in language learning. Thus, technology enables the learner's efforts easier and faster. At present, there are several online services and some of them are free. It is possible that many more services will be available in future.

Keywords: Language Learning, Educational Tools, Education Technology.

Introduction

With the advent of new technologies such as mobile phones, tablets, *etc*., learning context has changed from conventional to digital. Learners started adopting the use of new technology in their learning (Kondal and Prasad, 2016). Different forms of technology have always been part of the teaching and learning environment. It is part of the teacher's professional toolbox. It is among the resources that teachers use to help facilitate student learning (Eady & Lockyer, 2013). The teaching-learning process has to adapt to changing learning contexts. Technology has entered into every field including the field of education. Students and teachers are equipped with the required skills for language learning. They also need to update their technical skills for handling the tools for the changing language learning demands, since these technology tools are the powerful instruments to deal with the continuously evolving learning needs.

Research findings in recent years provide evidence of the importance of encouraging student control over the learning process as a whole (McLoughlin and Lee, 2010). With the innovations in the field of technology and its applications, several services are available for learning and teaching. Out of those what are the technological tools available for language learning, how far are they potential and what are their effective uses and applications.

A fundamental issue around the interaction between technology and education is the conditions under which technology can be effectively used in classrooms to improve student learning (Zhao *et al*, 2002). Teachers need to be aware of the latest technological tools and which specific tool is suitable for which teaching-learning purpose.

How to use technology depends on the learners, teachers, and the purpose of teaching. The effectiveness of the tool depends on a learner or teacher's choice - its portability, affordability, multimedia effects, and availability. Some of the popular technological tools include a computer, cell phones, iPods, CDs, podcasts, etc.

New initiatives are needed to promote the use of technology for research on CALL and for facilitating second language acquisition (Garrett, 2009). New initiatives are to be found and implemented for second language learning which is suitable for the local conditions and needs.

There are now richer and more engaging pathways to learn than ever before, but this calls for us to engage with the new tools and gain a deeper understanding of their potential for enabling choice, creativity and self-direction for learners (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). It is necessary to maintain the sustained motivations of the learners through some new teaching-learning methodologies.

Research to improve teaching-learning is a continuous process. In this process, innovatory methods are introduced (Pratibha, 2017). How the new technologies can be used to assist the language learning and which innovative applications are helpful to meet the continuously increasing demands of learners is the focus of this study.

New Technologies

Technology has changed dramatically over recent decades. The increasing variety and accessibility of technology have expanded the toolbox and the opportunities teachers have to use technology (Eady & Lockyer, 2013). To meet the teaching/ learning requirements of growing demands, technology is changing continuously. Varieties of technological tools are continuously added for the process of teaching/ learning.

New technologies like overhead projectors, interactive whiteboards, laptop computers and wireless internet have opened up the classroom to the outside world. Using PowerPoint to present grammar, playing podcasts to practice listening skills, pulling texts off the world wide web to introduce reading skills and empowering students by giving them access to a wide range of web-based tools that allow them to publish work and engage with live audiences in real contexts (Peacock, 2007). New technologies are linking up the globe enabling the learners to access readily available data. These technologies are empowering both teachers and learners. Various technological tools and applications are extending the horizons of language skill development.

Software Tools

Software tools include: Video Conferencing, Blogs, Skype, Facebook, Podcasts, Youtube, Yahoo Groups, PowerPoint, Slideshare, Google Drive (Formerly Docs), Document archiving service, Video servers (Blip TV and YouTube), Digital audio and video recorders, Media Player, Windows Movie Mak, Twitter, Facebook (Peacock, 2010). In India, social tools like Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Skype and Whatsapp are quite popular. Google Drive, PowerPoint presentations, video conferencing, phone-in programs, video games, media player, search engines like Yahoo and Google are in vogue for academic and non-academic purposes.

Audio Recorders

Audio recorders such as talking tins, pegs or cards can be used to reinforce the learning of traditional rhymes or to record the singing of popular songs. Talking photo albums have been successfully used to create stories with an oral narrative. Text can be inserted along with the photos into each page of the album and the user can subsequently record a corresponding narration.
For some more examples, access: www.segfl.org.uk/spot/post/recordable_talking_devices/ (Pim, 2013).

Recording gadgets also have a major role to play in assessment, where examples of oral work can be saved and revisited at a later time in order to show progression in learning. See: www.talkingproducts.com/ (Pim, 2013). It is necessary to record the progress of learning of students to estimate the learning process for further practice.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing is a highly efficient way of inviting visitors into classrooms and for enabling learners to collaborate with each other at distance. Through this method, learners are exposed to native English speakers and for facilitating cultural exchanges. This resource can then easily be shared between several institutions (Pim, 2013). These interactive sessions can be facilitated through the intervention of a teacher. Students are exposed to native language along with their cultural settings. This would enable the learners to understand the meanings easily. Language learning takes place in an atmosphere, which is conducive to learners. Learners are completely aware of what they are learning.

Students can use video cameras to record their mouth movements to develop phonetic accuracy; recordings can subsequently be compared with standard models sourced from the internet (Pim, 2013). Apart from having learning clues, these interactive videos are highly motivational. Students can follow the videos and improve their own pronunciation.

Video recording of PPTs, mock interviews, etc. for self-evaluation – Students should be given evaluation sheets with parameters for evaluation. Evaluation sheets may contain parameters such as: Vocabulary (number of words), reading (speed / comprehension), writing (accuracy/ appropriacy), listening (note taking/ comprehension), body language, confidence, decision making, work with others, team contribution, attitude (acceptance/friendly), etc. The researcher has used the evaluation sheets for B.Tech. third-year students for evaluating role plays, PPTs, interview skills, group discussions, etc. which work remarkably. Apart from self-evaluation, peer evaluation can also be done, to compare and improve the students' performance (Pratibha, 2017).

Computer
CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning)
CALL is for independent, self-paced learning via assessable assets such as language games and drilled activities (Pim, 2013). In CALL, the computer is assisting a learner in language learning, so the learner is not dominated by the technology allowing the learner's freedom in terms of time, place and content.

Apart from the traditional usage of computers for language learning, CALL is also helpful for self-evaluation, practising exercises, for revising grammar through grammar games which are highly interactive, motivating and which also grab the attention of the students easily. Use of apps is a common practice for several academic purposes. For instance, "Learn English Grammar (British Council, 2017) is a top interactive grammar practice app designed to help improve English grammar accuracy. The app offers 1000s of questions to help practice and reinforce English grammar skills". Though students participate in various varieties of speaking activities- this may not meet the demands of all learners. Some students need more practice with certain activities. Those students can get benefited with multimedia CALL (Pratibha, 2017).

Internet

For primary school learners, effective classroom strategies have traditionally involved the use of songs, rhymes and traditional stories with repeated language structures. The internet can act as a rich source of authentic oral models via recorded songs, talking electronic books, podcasts and video clips that help learners with pronunciation as well as acquisition and reinforcement of new vocabulary. Such tools can also help to support teachers who don't feel as confident with their own language skills. Technology affords learners the opportunity to record themselves for playback at a later time. Learners report that the ability to listen and playback recordings helps identification of grammatical errors and inaccuracy in pronunciation, encouraging self-improvement (Pim, 2013). Use of authentic material and varieties of language learning tools help to grab the attention of learners easily. Using such tools, which avoids monotony, students enjoy their learning. This, in turn, leads to learning the language effectively.

Teachers and learners can go online to read or listen to material about different areas of interest, and can then write or speak about what they have discovered, telling others in the class or other classes elsewhere in the world (Motteram, 2013). Numerous online resources are readily available to choose according to the needs and interests of learners. Learners participate actively, thus, enabling the speedy learning process.

Mobile Phones

Mobility is a very essential feature of m-learning. Smartphones combine the functionality of a computer with all the facilities to access online materials to learn language skills such as listening, reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar (Kondal and Prasad, 2016). The usage of mobile phones in language learning include: Internet access, voice messaging, SMS text-messaging, cameras, and even video-recording - all of these features enable communicative language practice, access to authentic content, and task completion (Chinnery, 2006).

The use of telephones in distance language learning is not unique to m-learning (Chinnery, 2006). At present, phone-in programmes for distance learners are a common practice.

MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning)

The result of CALL barriers can be removed and fulfilled through the MALL to learn effectively and grow with less effort and cost. In the teaching and learning context, with the integration of mobile technology in learning may enhance the use of effective methods to gain knowledge of language skills (Kondal and Prasad, 2016). For whichever teaching-learning purposes are not solved through CALL can be solved through MALL and *vice versa*.

Mobile learning (or m-learning) is the ability to learn anywhere and at any time using a portable electronic device. Mobile learning is less structured than e-learning and complements the e-learning perfectly (Motteram, 2013).

Mobile learning, or m-learning, is a subdivision of the e-learning movement. These mobile learning environments might be face to-face, distance, or online; further, they may be self-paced or calendar-based (Chinnery, 2006). Mobile learning can be used in a number of ways according to the convenience of a teacher/ learner.

Students are already using mobile phones for various purposes. It can be extended to language games as well. This avoids the monotony of a way of learning. In MALL, language learning happens unselfconsciously (Pratibha, 2017). Students' use of mobile devices, to connect to the web, is increasing continuously.

Mobile phone apps

There are hundreds of mobile phone apps available and it is possible to find free options suited to students on a budget. The following are five free apps that students can use for extra practice (Emma, 2014):

1. Apps of the British Council offer a huge choice for smartphones. Use the apps on Google Play, Apple's App Store or using a QR code. 'Johnny Grammar's Word Challenge' - is a fun way to improve grammar.
2. 'Duolingo' is a wonderful app that has just won the 'Best education start-up award'. It is designed like a game and is pretty addictive. It is free, contains no adverts and is very effective.
3. 'Two min English' is free, has no adverts and contains more than two hundred two-minute video lessons on a variety of topics e.g., social English, business English, travel English, common mistakes in English, idioms and phrases.
4. 'Game to learn English powowbox' is a multi-level game. Once downloaded, it appears as English tracker. The first three levels are free. Spot the mistake - if you get it wrong, you receive a clear explanation. It is fun and easy to play.
5. 'Real English' offers a variety of apps at different levels – business and conversation apps at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. The apps are free, but they contain adverts. Each app contains 20 lessons that focus on specific grammar or vocabulary areas. Each lesson is made up of five parts.

The following are a few apps and some of their educational possibilities (Emma, 2014):

1. 'Whatsapp' is a mobile messaging app which allows exchanging messages. One can create groups, send each other unlimited images, video and audio media messages over an internet connection.

Some possibilities:

- Sending students a short news article and asking them to send an audio response summarising it in their own words or giving their opinion?
- Students may send photos with captions to illustrate different tenses. They may describe daily habits or routines, or create a set of instructions.
- Students may create a video or audio of themselves making a short business presentation or reviewing a movie or TV show.

2. 'Ipadio' allows you to record up to 60 minutes of high-quality audio. You may add titles, descriptions, images, and geo-locate your recording before instantly uploading to your ipadio.com account or cross-post to your Twitter, Facebook or blog.

Some possibilities:

- Get students to interview a number of people and record and edit their interview in a research activity.
- Send your recorded lesson to students who were absent.
- You may create a revision podcast and send it to your students.
- Students may create a short story or poem with photos and audio.

3. Closed Facebook groups can be a great way of communicating with students. Students can share ideas, opinions and homework projects.

Some possibilities:

- Post quizzes and grammar tips.
- Get students to share book reviews.
- Brainstorm ideas about different topics.

- Each week students may have a different theme and get to share songs, pictures and quotations connected to the theme.
- Create an interactive place for students to interact with you and with each other outside the classroom.

Moblogging

One of the newest technologies with potential application in language learning is 'moblogging', an amalgam of mobile and weblogging. Blogs are a recent trend in language teaching. They provide opportunities for language creation (i.e., journaling) and collaborative activities. Moblogs offer the potential to expand these benefits by removing time and place boundaries and adding authentic and personal visual content (Chinnery, 2006).

Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs)

PDAs are more often associated with m-learning than cell phones. PDAs offer numerous other uses, including Internet and wireless access, and therefore file-sharing between teachers and students and amongst students. Data is also easily backed up on personal computers. Further, at present, a standard feature of these devices is handwriting recognition (Chinnery, 2006).

Ipods

Digital audio files (e.g., MP3s) provide high-quality sound in a compressed format. For example, A middle school in Nebraska, USA, is reported to have been using iPods to record speech samples for self and teacher assessment of English language learners (Chinnery, 2006).

The iPod has also spawned a new form of media known as podcasting, a portmanteau which combines iPod and broadcasting. Podcasting is already widely utilized in language learning, both to access authentic content and to record it. Myriad subscriptions are available to English and other language learners. Voice of America' Special English programs has also been made available via podcast (Chinnery, 2006).

Discussion

Technology has become a significant part of our life. The gadgets have become part and parcel of students' life, with its easy access and cheap availability of mobile phones made individuals more dependent with their complex communication needs in day to day life (Kondal and Prasad, 2016). Technology has entered into almost every part of our life. Both learners and teachers are dependent on technology for every need including their communicational need. Students' dependency on technology should be steered towards language learning. Students feel highly attracted to new technologies with its game-like possibilities.

How far a particular technology is useful in terms of suitability of - age, content, curriculum and technical considerations (Eady & Lockyer, 2013) - depends on both teacher and learner. Mobile technologies are readily available to many Indian students because of their portability, cost-effective than a computer, availability, etc.

The disadvantages of mobile phones are reduced screen sizes, limited audiovisual quality, virtual keyboarding and one-finger data entry, and limited power. Further, their availability can be limited. A computer is better than a mobile phone for handling various types of information such as visual, sound, and textual information, but the mobile phone is superior to a computer in portability. And some students don't have their own computer (Chinnery, 2006). Thus, the mobile phone and computer compensate for each others' disadvantage. Depending on the availability and suitability a learner should choose a particular technology.

Young language learners need to be offered opportunities to practice target language in as many ways as possible. Technology has the potential to provide learners with the opportunity to communicate with others, often native speakers of the language they are learning. Technology allows learners who would not normally have as many opportunities to use the language they are learning in productive ways to communicate with other speakers of the target language (Pim, 2013). To grab the attention of the learners, students should be provided with varied technological opportunities. This could be an interactive session with a native speaker who could be a subject expert. Or varieties of activities, drill exercises for spelling, vocabulary and grammar.

A supportive school environment is important for successful technology integration for language learning. Teachers need access to a healthy human infrastructure and a functional and convenient technical infrastructure. Even though in recent years there is great progress in bringing computers and networks to schools, in many schools teachers did not have easy access to either of the two infrastructures. Teachers should take an evolutionary rather

than a revolutionary approach to change. It is likely that teachers will experience more success and less frustration if they take small but progressive steps toward change (Zhao *et al*, 2002). Sometimes, teachers need to convince school management to get availability to the technology for language learning. Awareness regarding technology used for language learning is the responsibility of every teacher.

Conclusion

With the use of technology, learning has become more interesting and effective to the learners by making a clear change from teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning. It plays a vital role in addressing the needs of the learner (Kondal and Prasad, 2016). Technology provides a learner independent in language learning. Thus, technology enables learner's efforts easier and faster. The learner can be more focused on learning a specific language skill.

Mobile learning is less structured than e-learning, but it complements e-learning perfectly (Emma, 2014). Though mobile learning is comparably less structured, it has innumerable advantages including portability and availability.

Language learning using mobile phones is gaining prominence. At present, there are several online services and some of them are free. It is possible that many more services will be available in future.

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