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## The Effect of Using Technology in Teaching English Language Receptive Skills

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to focus on the role of using modern technology in teaching English language receptive skills (reading/listening). It discusses different methods and techniques which can be used by English language teachers (instructors) to assist English language learners to progress their learning receptive skills by using technology. A case study has been done to investigate the response of a typical English language classroom learners for using technology in the learning process. Upon this practical study, the paper identifies the demerits and limitations of the present conventional English language learning tools and accomplishes with positive suggestions and recommendations.*

**Key words:** subtitles, captions, receptive skills

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It has become very clear that everyone's life is intensively affected by technology and the rapid flow of information. Technology plays an essential role in the development of society. According to this fact, it is necessary to make the best use of modern technological devices to assist the process of English language learning.

Learners of English as a foreign/ second language need further support, they need to practice the four language skills in order to develop their skills and experience. For doing such

tasks, they are in need of using several tools which can help in learning the language easily and effectively. The effect of technology has become noticeable in teaching and learning languages in addition to the instructor's role. In other words, the role of the instructor together with the role of technology can lead to very good and positive learning results.

## **2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Technology and English language education are related to each other. During the sixties and seventies of the last century, English language laboratories were being used in various educational institutions. The traditional language laboratory consisted of a number of small cabinets, provided with cassettes desk, a microphone and a headphone for each one. Teachers use a central control panel to monitor their learners' interactions. The main advantage of that type of technology was the verbal behaviour of the learners would help them to learn the second language very quickly. The learners' skills can be enhanced by encountering more practical drill problems. Although the language laboratory was a positive step in linking technology and language learning, this technique could become monotonous and boring for learners. Also, there were minimal interactions between the teacher and the learners.

## **3. ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS**

English language skills mean the development of the main parts or elements of the language which are listening, reading (receptive) writing and speaking (productive). Each language skill or area has different educational tools that are likely suited to it. The use of several technical tools has an important effect on the learning process of each area of the language. English language receptive skills are classified as

### ***3.1 Listening***

Listening is defined as the process of identifying and understanding the speech of the speakers. It involves understanding the speaker's accent or pronunciation, the speaker's grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning. The listener should be capable of doing four things at the same time. Therefore, listening is a very important process of second language learning. Listening is considered a principal language skill. Through listening, people can acquire a large portion of their education, their information, their ideas, and their understanding of the world. As an input skill, listening plays a vital role in the student's language development. There are several technical ways for the listening capability of the ELL students, which are summarized below.

#### **3.1.1 Use of computers**

The use of computers in solving listening problems provides the learners with both visual and sound inputs which can enhance their information and ideas, and develop their listening skills (Hoven, 1999).

Computers based listening tests are very important in reinforcing the understanding skills of the listener. Short movies and videos can also provide significant advantages over the traditional methods. Finally, internet voice chatting using the second language may also aid the communication capabilities of the learners.

#### **3.1.2 Use of smartphones**

Using smartphones has become very dominant in our modern life. It has become the main part of everyone life from the age of early month to unlimited age. In the beginning, teachers were a bit hesitant about using smartphones in the classrooms however now most teachers encourage their students to use the smartphones for several classroom activities such as looking up words in online dictionaries, google image, do tasks online and

listen /watch short videos. The role of smartphones in education is dramatically increasing, however, few traditional teachers are kind of reluctant to use mobile phones in the classrooms.

### **3.1.3 Broadcasting**

Listening to TV and radio educational language programs is another technical way for developing the understanding ability. However, the learners should be careful in selecting the specific programs that are suitable for his/her needs and level. News satellite TV channels, like BBC, are also useful for practising with video and audio media.

### **3.1.4 Use of CD players**

The use of CD-player devices is another modern tool for listening comprehension. CD-players are electronic instruments used specifically to run audio CD-ROMs. Lectures and listening examinations can be saved on these audio CDs for later use by the ELL student.

## **3.2 Reading**

Reading is a process of understanding a written text by the learner. It is an important input skill which depends on the vocabulary and background knowledge of the learner in the second language. During the reading process, the English language learner can improve his vocabulary and terms, acquire new information and ideas, and enhance real-world knowledge. Several methods can be utilized to improve the reading ability of the learner through the use of technology. Some of them are summarized below:

### **3.2.1 Use of computer-based reading programs**

Computers can raise the interest of reading for learners through the use of simple and easy to understand the text. Reading-based computer programs can be used to improve the word vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension of the students.

This also can enable ELL students to increase their interaction with texts, pay their attention to individual needs, and enhance their abilities to read texts they would not otherwise be able to read (Ybarra & Green, 2003). Computers can perform several tasks simultaneously and run programs at a very high speed. Learning computer programs can check exercises after they are performed by students, move students gradually from easy to more difficult problems according to their abilities. Computers can also be used to correct answers for the learners, and to simulate tests in an easy to understand manner (AlKahtani, 1999).

### **3.2.2 Use of multimedia software**

Multimedia are computer programs that use a mixture of text, graphics, sound, video, and animation. Multimedia computer programs can increase the motivation for learners to develop their vocabulary and reading skills.

### **3.2.3 Browsing the internet**

The Internet is certainly a modern technological way for persons hope to develop their English language skills. There are many Internet websites prepared solely to enhance the reading abilities of English language learners. There are also a huge number of resources available in the form of newspapers, magazines, journals, electronic libraries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and newsletters (Kenworthy, 2004). Browsing these resources and sites will obviously enhance the learner's vocabulary and reading ability.

### **3.2.4 Use of Electronic Dictionaries**

Another modern way of improving the vocabulary of the learner focuses on the utilization of electronic dictionaries designed specifically for English language learners. These dictionaries have several built-in functions and tools that are not provided in book dictionaries (Constantinescu, 2007). Electronic

dictionaries are also easy to use and represent quick tools for vocabulary acquisition.

### **3.2.5 Reading CD-ROM Based Newspapers**

Compact discs (CDs) can be used to store large amounts of information digitally. For example, all the articles published in one newspaper for one whole year can be stored on a single CD. Besides, a searching computer program can locate any subject or article on the CD within a few seconds (Seedhouse, 1994). Newspapers which are stored on CD-ROMs can provide an effective and easy way of getting and reading information to enhance the learner's background knowledge and vocabulary of words.

## **4. CASE STUDY**

In order to access how typical English language classrooms students can take benefits to learn English as a second language, a questionnaire form has been used for this purpose. The form was given randomly to groups of the students of the department of English Language College of arts, from different Universities in Sudan.

The data collected shows the following results:

- 65% of the students use technology in their daily life.
- 94% of the students believe that the computer can improve their English vocabulary.
- 93% of the students believe that using a computer in the classroom increases students' interaction with learning.
- 76% of the students assure that their teachers sometimes encourage them to use technology for learning the English language.
- 98% of the students believe that using a computer will help them to develop their writing skills.

- 32% of the students assure that their university has a good source of technology for learning the English language.
- 84% of the students believe that the use of the computer will improve their listening skills.
- 67% of the students prefer using technology to learn the English language.
- 97% of the students believe that using technology will help them to learn the English language faster than other ways.

## **5. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS**

The results of the case study showed that most of the students prefer the use of technology, especially computers, in developing their second language skills. However, it seems that the technical capabilities of their college are almost poor, and there was a weak tendency for encouraging students to use technology in the classroom lessons.

Some of the drawbacks of using the classical teaching methods in English language learning are:

1. The conventional methods are ultimately based on theory and rarely use practice.
2. The conventional teaching methods are generally not exciting and miss the motivation factor.
3. The classical methods are generally slower than the modern technical ways of learning the English language.
4. The conventional teaching methods are almost concentrated on the teacher (teacher-centred), while the modern technical methods give students a significant role in the learning process.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Using technology in learning a second language has become a real necessity nowadays. This paper has reviewed briefly how technology can be utilized in developing the language skills of the learner. Different methods for using technology in improving the four language skills were discussed thoroughly. A case study was also carried out to estimate the acceptability of some students for the utilization of technology to enhance their language skills. As a result, the following concluding remarks and recommendations can be recorded:

1. As technology has developed, the incorporation of this medium into the instruction process becomes necessary.
2. The computer is being viewed more as an integral part of the learning activity, and as a means by which skills are transferred to learners.
3. Theory and practice in second language learning can be matched together by the use of modern technology.
4. Modern technical ways should be followed for effective learning and teaching of the second language.
5. English language teachers should encourage their students to use technology in developing language skills.
6. Educational institutions should modernize their technical instruction capabilities by using new equipment and laboratories for supporting the teaching process.

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