

# Breaking the boundaries: Increasing demands of digital technologies & IT for teaching and learning English language

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## ABSTRACT

*Technology has a transformative power and Language is a powerful means of communication. It is the vital component in education by which we acquire all kinds of knowledge. The interconnectedness of digital technologies has created new contexts for language learning and new labels have emerged for teaching and learning in the digital context: Computer Assisted Learning; Web-based Learning; Online Learning; Distance Learning; E-Learning; MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) Mobile Learning etc. As a result of the application of cyber technologies, both teaching and learning are facilitated, Students learn faster and easier than before. Internet, ICT, VLE, digital media and software as such have heralded a new era in many aspects of our lives, to which education is no exception. The rapid rising and development of information technology has offered a better pattern to explore the new teaching and learning ways. Learning English through the web and using new trends in education make students willing to learn effectively. This paper focuses on the role of digital technology and IT for teaching and learning English language effectively and internet communication tools in use.*

**Keywords-** English language learning, E-learning, ELT, ICT, VLE

## I INTRODUCTION

The new era assigns new challenges and duties on the modern teacher and learner. The tradition of English teaching and learning has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. Technology provides so many options as making it interesting and also making it more productive in terms of improvements. Technology is one of the most significant drivers of both social and linguistic change. Graddol: (1997:16) states that "technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education work and culture. At present, the role and status of English is that it is the language of social context, political, socio cultural, business, education, industries, media, library, communication across borders, and key subject in curriculum and language of imparting education". It is also a crucial determinant for university entrance and processing well paid jobs in the commercial sector. Since, there are more and more English learners in India. Web based technologies and powerful internet connections provide various new possibilities and latest trends for teachers and learners. In fact as the electronic media as internet and the use of cyber space in education are the inseparable elements of education in the global atmosphere today, special attention must be paid on how to use the information communication technology (ICT) and virtual learning environments (VLE) to meet the demands of the era, as information and communication technology has become a crucial part of the modern world. Now most of the countries emphasize learning and applying the information and communication technology as the base of their educational systems. Students and teachers are increasingly using accessing information online to support their learning and teaching.

## II THE GROWTH OF ELT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

When you speak of globalization, the first language that comes to mind is English. English Language Teaching has been with us for many years and its Significance continues to grow, fuelled, partially by the Internet. Graddol's study (2000) suggests that in the year 2000 there were about a billion English learners- but a decade later the numbers doubled. The forecast points to a surge in English learning, which has peaked in 2010. The same study indicates that over 80% of information stored on the internet is in English. For the first time there are more Non-Native than Native users of the language. For ESL students who learn the language for more than just fun. For them to keep pace with ELT and gain more confidence they have to stride into the world of multimedia technology.

With the rapid development of technology, the emerging and developing of multimedia technology and its application to teaching, featuring audio, visual, animation effects comes into full play in English class teaching . It's proved that multimedia technology plays a positive role in promoting activities and initiatives of student and teaching effect in English class. Technological innovations have gone hand –in hand with the growth of English and are changing the way in which we communicate. It is true to say that the growth of the internet has facilitated the growth of the English language and that this has occurred at a time when computers are no longer the exclusive domains of the dedicated few, but rather available to many. With this there has been a very significant proliferation of literature regarding the use of technology in teaching English language. Teachers

can use Multimedia Technology to give more colorful, stimulating lectures (new Horizons).

### III MULTIMEDIA LANGUAGE LAB AND TEACHING ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In the modern age of technology, role of multimedia language lab occupies a significant place and is in resonance with modern pedagogical practices. The concept of multimedia language lab brought in a cost-effective, user-friendly and 100% digital methodology of learning language at your own time and convenience. It can bridge between language and technology and acts as the advanced step for using computers in the language field. The computer software will 'teach' students the knowledge that teachers are supposed to teach. As a result, a teacher must transform his role from an instructor under the communicative framework to a coordinator. The teacher coordinates the flow of communication between the teacher and student as well as between the student and computer. The choice of appropriate language software that fits into the setting of multimedia lab is one of the key factors to success. They are the most useful component of language lab. However, the medium of teaching ought to go along with the language software. The other dimensions that should be taken into consideration are that chalk and board are totally obsolete in language lab. The appropriate teaching tools are computers, OHP, and power point slides. Accordingly, using computer software in multimedia lab should be fun and interactive.

### IV POSSIBLE APPLICATION OF THE LATEST TRENDS IN E-LEARNING

(a) **Web-Based Learning-** Many of us use the internet or the "web" (World Wide Web) as a source of information and as a learning tool. Web is used effectively to support both, their own learning and that of their students. A variety of basic language skills can be developed with the help of web-based language learning activities. It is known that; there are four basic skills in English which are listening, speaking, writing, and reading. These skills can be put on the web and made interactive in a variety of ways. One of these ways is internet communication tools such as E-learning, m-learning, e-mail, blogs, and chat. These tools provide integrated environment for teachers and students. Students generally feel positive about web-based learning tools, when they are:

- Well-designed, user friendly and easy to learn.
- When the tool is well as support, not as replacement of lectures.
- When the use of diverse tool features, i.e. chat, bulletin board, is relevant and tied into the specific course structure and content (Storey et al., 2002)

(b) **Portals and Web Tools-** In an era of the Internet and Information Technology, there has been an intend demand for numerous website portals for teaching English and learning activities. These Portals has emerged as an online education program with sole purpose is to conduct classes for the students through E-learning mode which is simplified for online learning and teaching purpose. Here, students and teachers interact through online audio and video sessions, online forums and posts, online projects, course materials, practical sessions and numerous other resources. It is a tool in which online training classes are conducted. Site now offers multiple beginner and advanced courses and the online practice test, a daily online magazine, and Universal Translator. As an example for learning English online newly expanded portal are [www.GlobalEnglish.com](http://www.GlobalEnglish.com), <http://www.englishpond.com/> [EnglishForum.com](http://EnglishForum.com) and [ESLpoint.com](http://ESLpoint.com) etc.

(c) **e-mail** - E-mail is a communication tool which is being used in language learning. E-mail is probably the most commonly used Internet application. By getting a single e-mail account both foreign teachers and students can join e-mail assisted language activities. For learners of English e-mail is an excellent way to communicate with their instructors because of its usefulness and easiness. With a single e-mail account, "foreign teachers and students can integrate e-mail based activities into their curriculum" (LeLoup, 1997, p.37). The teacher can assign a debate topic and then ask the students to start to discuss it via e-mail. When the time comes to form debate teams in class, the students will already have a satisfactory understanding of both sides of the issue and they will be able to make better and relevant decisions. English teachers can benefit from web sites which include e-mail accounts so teachers can create a discussion topic and send it to students via e-mail when receiving the e-mail students start to write compositions or essays in English and discuss a work and then send back to teacher. This helps them to improve their writing skills and vocabulary as well as their ability to practice analyzing a literary work.

(d) **Web Blogs-** Academically, a blog is a website on which teachers and students can post and share their thoughts and ideas. Effectively, it is like a notice board, school magazine and book club, all rolled into one. Nardi et al. (2004) states:

"Blogs are well suited to serve as on-line personal journals for students, particularly since they normally enable uploading and linking of files"(p.41). Language learners could use a personal blog, linked to a course, as an electronic portfolio, to authors' website or weblogs and other open access sources providing students with both reading resources as well as helping them discover the hidden layers of meaning in a work of art. Moreover students can publish weblogs too which improves their writing abilities. As an example a practical site to be introduced to the students to use it as a role model is: <http://blog-assisted-language-learning.blogspot.com/>. In which students discuss any topics to develop their writing and reading English language skills. One of the useful articles that discuss using blogs in teaching English is for ELT: [teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/blogging-elt](http://teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/blogging-elt).

**(e) Instant Messenger-** CQ was the first general messenger service in the early 1996 ([www.worldstart.com/tips/tips.php/1498](http://www.worldstart.com/tips/tips.php/1498) ). During the years a variety of messenger services such as Yahoo Messenger, MSN Messenger, etc. began to serve to people. Newly more services are added to such technologies. Among the most important new ones, one can name: [www.oovoo.com](http://www.oovoo.com) and [www.qq.com](http://www.qq.com)

Students writing, listening and speaking could be improved if the above websites are used. Moreover, students of English can have better interaction with teachers in these virtual environments; they can communicate with teachers and share information. For example when it is talked about MSN Messenger, it provides several features beyond audio, video, text, and file transfer. Messenger is used with a Webcam and allows users to see each other in a small video window while talking. So students can talk with their teachers in English in order to develop their listening and at the same time speaking skills.

**(f) Skype-**Nowadays almost all messenger services have technological equipments such as computer, laptop, and also have cameras on them. So students can talk with their teachers far away. "Skype is a relatively newly emerging technology and the potential application of it to language and literature learning and teaching needs to be further explored" (Wu, 2005, p.13). Learners can speak with native language teacher and compare their pronunciation, and they can improve their grammar and understanding of the language. In addition to improving their literary knowledge by discussing intended literary works with university professors, they can improve their speaking too. Students can develop their English language skills in positive, enjoyable and memorable way. Speaking skills can be developed by using this application.

**(g) Mobile Devices-** Mobile learning is one of those technologies which have been used for a few years. Mobile learning means that people are learning whenever and wherever they want with their mobile phones, PDA's and other technological devices. Mobile learning is also defined as "any service or facility that supplies learner with general electronic information and educational content that aids in acquisition of knowledge regardless of location and time. Mobile learning system is available for delivering education to learners anywhere and anytime they need it. Nowadays Mobile phones are the most popular devices among people. Mobile devices could be used in teaching both Language and literature: for e.g. IPODS, SMARTPHONES, TABLETS are the mobile media devices which enable users to produce, organize, deliver the learning material and also users can share texts, images, audio or video with their English teachers. The technology and pedagogy of using podcasting and iPod could be in improving listening skills in case of English language learning.

## V POSITIVE IMPACT OF E-LEARNING ON SOCIETY & ECONOMY PROGRESS

ICT and human life cannot be separated; society has a cyclical co-dependence on technology. Technology has improved education and learning process and Education is the backbone of every economy and it has a great social importance. Effective eLearning comes from using information and communication technologies (ICT). To broaden educational opportunity and to help students develop their English language skills eLearning can deliver substantial positive effects. Family interaction and parental involvement may increase. Communities benefit from bridging the digital divide. Economic progress can result from direct job creation in the technology industry as well as from developing a better educated workforce.

## VI CONCLUSION

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) cannot be underestimated in language teaching and learning process because emerging technologies make it pertinent and practical to approach learning in ways that have been advocated by theorist scientist and educational psychologists. The development of Web-based language teaching and learning activities continue to be an exciting and growing field. Language teachers can create their own web based language activities and use the communication tools. In order to provide an

interaction between language learners and teachers, internet connections and mobile devices are of the most popular and useful ways in language learning. Concerning the development of technology, we believe that in future, the use of multimedia English teaching and E learning will be further developed. The Development of the learner as a professional person requires that the teaching-learning process be perceived and understood as a dynamic human interactional growth process, in order to fulfill its obligations to the society it serves, learning through latest technology must be a continuing, ongoing process.

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