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Technology as a Tool in Language Learning

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Abstract

Educational Technology is a study and ethical practice for facilitating learning and improving performance. Technology in education is just an additional opportunity to achieve education, if you haven't enough time or opportunities to do it another way. It can be defined as the use of different types of technologies in the learning experience which can result in the positive changes of pedagogy and teaching methods all over the world.

INTRODUCTION:

New Technology should serve as a tool for a better education, though the human being should always remain at the center. Technology should act as a "servant or tool at the heart of the education process," In future, higher education will depend on one's ability to sift through the "worldwide ocean of knowledge and choose the way."

Today, students take a more practical approach to academia, abandoning the humanities and trying to pursue applied degrees that will provide financial stability.

Prof. David Passig of Bar-llan University, a futurist and a member of the Israel National Council for Research and Development at the Science, Technology and Space Ministry, said the newest trend in higher education was "anti-disciplinary study," in which students study contrasting subjects such as philosophy and computer science, as opposed to the multi-disciplinary study of similar fields such as economics, business administration and accounting.

Meir Brand, managing director of Google Israel for Greece and sub-Saharan Africa, agreed, saying that today, industry is much more interested in the "tools and abilities" of students, rather than the "content of their studies." His ideal future would include the study of both humanities and STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics–subjects.

However, Gila Ben-Har, CEO of the Center for Educational Technology, said that despite the need for science and technology education, there are very few teachers with the expertise to teach these subjects, fewer students studying science and math, with even fewer pursuing a teachingdegree in these areas.

According to Ben-Har, the future virtual classroom should enable the best educators to teach a variety of subjects, including STEM to students via the use of advancing technology.

Technology should serve to "complement studies and not replace the personal touch." Rather, universities need to evolve to incorporate small classrooms and lecture halls, as well as virtual classrooms and computer laboratories.

A Brief History of Technology and Language Learning

Virtually every type of language teaching has had its own technologies to support it. Language teachers who followed the grammar-translation method (in which the teacher explained grammatical rules and students performed translations) relied on one of the most ubiquitous technologies in U.S. education, the blackboard? a perfect vehicle for the one-way transmission of information that method implied. The blackboard was later supplemented by the overhead projector, another excellent medium for the teacher-dominated classroom, as well as by early computer software programs which provided what were known as "drill-and-practice" (or, more pejoratively, "drill-and-kill") grammatical exercises.

In contrast, the audio-tape was the perfect medium for the audiolingual method (which emphasized learning through oral repetition). University language classes in the 1970s and '80s usually included obligatory sessions at the audio lab where students would perform the dreaded repetition drills.

By the late 1970s, the audiolingual method fell into disrepute, at least in part due to poor results achieved from expensive language laboratories. Whether in the lab or in the classroom, repetitive drills which focused only on language form and ignored communicative meaning achieved poor results.

The 1980s and 1990s have seen a shift toward communicative language teaching, which emphasizes student engagement in authentic, meaningful interaction. Within this general communicative trend, we can note two distinct perspectives, both of which have their implications in terms of how to best integrate technology into the classroom. These can roughly be divided into cognitive approaches and sociocognitive approaches.

Cognitive Approaches

Cognitive approaches to communicative language teaching are based on the view that learning a language is an individual psycholinguistic act. From this perspective, language learners construct a mental model of a language system, based not on habit formation but rather on innate cognitive knowledge in interaction with comprehensible, meaningful language (Chomsky, 1986). Errors are seen in a new light?not as bad habits to be avoided but as natural by-products of a creative learning process that involves rule simplification, generalization, transfer, and other cognitive strategies (see Chaudron, 1987). Learners' output (i.e., what they say or write), if relevant at all, is beneficial principally to the extent that it helps make input (i.e., what they hear or read) more comprehensible or salient so that the learners can construct their own cognitive models of the language.

Technologies which support a cognitive approach to language learning are those which allow learners maximum opportunity to be exposed to language in meaningful context and to construct their own individual knowledge. Examples of these types of technologies include text-reconstruction software, concordancing software, and multimedia simulation software.

Text-reconstruction software (e.g., NewReader from Hyperbole or Text Tanglers from Research Design Associates) allows teachers to provide students various texts in which letters or words are either missing or scrambled. Students work alone or in groups to complete or re-arrange the texts, thus supporting a process of mental construction of the linguistic system. While such activity could in theory be carried out with paper and pencil, the computer facilitates the process for both teachers and students. Teachers can quickly and easily create re-arranged texts or cloze exercises (i.e., texts with deleted words) from any original word-processed passage. Students can use hints provided by the computer to assist their learning process.

Concordancing software (e.g., Monoconc from Athelstan) allows teachers or students to search through small or large texts to look for instances of the actual use of particular words. Concordancers are thus supplements to dictionaries in that they help illustrate the usage of a word, rather than just its definition. Concordancers are also useful for investigating collocational meanings (e.g., "large box"

vs. "big box," or "think about" vs. "think over") or grammatical features (e.g., "was going" vs. "used to go").

Multimedia simulation software allows learners to enter into computerized microworlds with exposure to language and culture in a meaningful audio-visual context. The best of these programs allow learners a good deal of control and interactivity so they can better manipulate their linguistic input. One excellent example of this is the multimedia videodisc program A la rencontre de Philippe developed by the Athena Language Learning Project at the M.I.T. Laboratory for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. Philippe is a game for intermediate and advanced French learners that incorporates full motion video, sound, graphics, and text, allowing learners to "walk around" and explore simulated environments by following street signs or floor plans. To help language learners understand the sometimes challenging French, the program provides optional comprehension tools, such as a glossary and transcriptions of audio segments , as well as a video album that includes samples of language functions. Students can also create their own custom video albums, which they store on their own computer diskettes.

While text-reconstruction programs, concordancers, and multimedia simulations are often used in pairs or groups, the software programs by themselves do not require human-to-human interaction.

Sociocognitive Approaches

Sociocognitive approaches, in contrast to cognitive approaches, emphasize the social aspect of language acquisition; learning a language is viewed as a process of apprenticeship or socialization into particular discourse communities (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Gee, 1996). From this perspective, students need to be given maximum opportunity for authentic social interaction, not only to provide comprehensible input but also to give students practice in the kinds of communication they will later engage in outside the classroom. This can be achieved through student collaboration on authentic tasks and projects (see for example Breen, 1987; Candlin & Murphy, 1987; Long & Crookes, 1992; Prabhu, 1987) while simultaneously learning both content and language (see for example Flowerdew, 1993; Meskill, in press; Snow, 1991).

The Internet is a powerful tool for assisting a sociocognitive approach to language teaching, and it is in fact this fit of the Internet with a sociocognitive approach which largely accounts for the new-found enthusiasm for using computers in the language classroom. The Internet is a vast interactive medium which can be used in a myriad of ways, as will be illustrated below.

TECHNOLOGY AS A FACILITATOR:

Some of the first educational technologies were illustrated in 17th-century books and slate chalkboards in 18th-century classrooms. Educational technologies in the 20th century include lantern-slide and opaque projectors, later radio, and then motion pictures. During the 1950s, programmed instruction emerged as the first true educational technology, that is, the first technology developed specifically to meet educational needs. With every other technology, including computers, educators recognized its importance and debated how to apply each nascent commercial technology for educational purposes. Unfortunately, educators have almost always tried to use technologies to

teach students in the same ways that teachers had always taught. So information was recorded in the technology (e.g., the content presented by films and television programs), and the technology presented that information to the students. The students' role was to learn the information presented by the technology, just as they learned information presented by the teacher. The role of the technology was to deliver lessons to students, just as trucks deliver groceries to supermarkets (Clark, 1983).

HOW TECHNOLOGY WON THE HEARTS :

With technology, educators, students and parents have a variety of learning tools at their fingertips. Here are some of the ways in which technology improves education over time:

Teachers can collaborate to share their ideas and resources online: They can communicate with others across the world in an instant, meet the shortcomings of their work, refine it and provide their students with the best. This approach definitely enhances the practice of teaching.

Students can develop valuable research skills at a young age: Technology gives students immediate access to an abundance of quality information which leads to learning at much quicker rates than before.

Students and teachers have access to an expanse of material: There are plenty of resourceful, credible websites available on the Internet that both teachers and students can utilize. The Internet also provides a variety of knowledge and doesn't limit students to one person's opinion.

Online learning is now an equally credible option: Face-to-face interaction is huge, especially in the younger years, but some students work better when they can go at their own pace. Online education is now accredited and has changed the way of educating the students.

There are innumerous instances till date where we can see the improvement in education, once it embraced technology. Here are a few remarkable ones of them to provide you with a more realistic picture of the whole scenario. Here's the list along with the references to the originals:

The Flipped Classroom: This popular technological approach has gotten to everybody's ears by now. It is a practice in which, students watch lecture videos as homework and discussion is carried on them in the class-time by the teachers. It has resulted in a remarkably better student performance, with noticeable grade boost-up. Students can now learn at their own pace and save class-time for interaction.

Effectiveness of EdTech on Mathematics for K-12: Technology has proved to be effective for making students efficiently adept with Math. Out of several, there are three remarkable technologies, should be brought to the light. Computer-managed learning is a program that uses computers to assess student learning on Math and assign them with appropriate Math material, which they can work on to score and receive a chart of their progress for self-assessment; Comprehensive models such as Cognitive Tutor and I Can Learn use computer-aided instruction as well as non-computer activities for students to approach Math; Supplemental CAI technology consists of individualized computer-assisted instruction (CAI), to provide additional instruction at students' assessed levels.

Findings indicate that educational technology applications produce a positive effect on Mathematics achievement.

Long-term research indicative of the positives of technology on learning: Researches have been performed to address to the question, does the use of computer technology affect student achievement in traditional classrooms as compared to classrooms that do not use technology? An extensive literature search and a systematic review process were employed and insights about the state of the field, implications for technology use, and prospects for future were discussed.

Educational Technology improves student learning outcomes: Evidence suggests that educational technologies can improve student achievement, so long as such tools are integrated thoughtfully into teaching and learning. When digital capabilities like, online environments are incorporated meaningfully into instruction, students have new opportunities to learn and achieve.

The effect of technology on education depends on the design of instruction: The design of the instruction accounts for more variance in how and why people learn than the technology used to deliver the instruction. Educators and educational researchers should be encouraged to focus on determining how to better integrate the use of a given technology to facilitate learning, rather than asking if it works or if one is more effective than another.

Over the past years, a number of studies have shown benefits from the use of technology in education. The role of technology in education is vital and it enhances learning also.

BENEFITS OF TECH:

Access to information

Many years ago we couldn't imagine that we can get to know new information without going out of the house. Mothers examined new recipes from the book that they borrow in the libraries. Fathers bought newspapers to learn the updated information from business, economy and society. Students all evenings spent in the libraries to write the report, project or academic paper. Today information is easily accessed through the internet. Meanwhile, online courses are accessible to the students who are unable to attend traditional educational buildings because of health or other complications. It is a convenient way to study.

Help in protecting the environment

There are thousands of schools in every country. And it is a compulsory institution in every distant village. Due to technology in education, we are not to buy all these books. Actually, there now schools that were switched to the use designing computers for their lessons and libraries. It saves money and time when used thoughtfully.

Increase the popularity of distance learning

With development of such inventions like the internet, the popularity with educational technology is growing every day. Nowadays it is one of the most preferred methods of learning. Traditional lessons have been supplemented by virtual ones. Online classes include transferring files, chat rooms and

even board of progress to follow the students' success. Another benefit is that students can maintain a flexible schedule that is convenient for them (anytime, anywhere learning). It helps to combine distance education and work.

Easiness in teaching

There are various ways of improving teaching efficiency with technology in education. Technology keeps an eye on the student's progress. Moreover audio-visual presentation, wide-screen televisions, projectors can be used for improving the delivery of instruction to actually improve learning and increasing the comprehension level among the students.

Technology makes education enjoyable

It is a true fact that engaging the children in learning is too difficult. However they enjoy the process when the instructor uses white board or touch screen technology in order to make classes more interactive and interesting. In that way it's easy to attract the kid's attention. By the way, the involving technology in the educational process makes education more enjoyable both for the instructors and the learners.

We shouldn't underestimate the possibilities of educational technology in our modern society. Nowadays virtual classes are preferred by people all over the world. This form of education is really enjoyed by children, and many students have recently graduated from virtual High Schools.

THE 31 EDUCATION WEB TOOLS A TEACHER SHOULD KNOW:

Google drive, Dropbox, Evernote, Twitter, Google Plus,
Pinterest, Socrative, Edmodo, Tweetdeck, Prezi, Paper.li, ThingLink, Flipboard, Skype, TED
Ed, Edutopia, Google in Education, YouTube Video
Editor, Wevideo, Scoop.it, TodaysMeet, Keynote, Poll
Everywhere, Piktochart, Edshelf, Diigo, Slideshare, Pearltrees, Remind101.

TECHNOLOGY IS DESIGNED TO STIR EMOTIONS. SO HERE WE ARE, STIRRED:

Education technology is costly. It takes practice and a lot of trial-and-error, and just when you start to find your rhythm, it all changes again. It also naturally disrupts most schools and systems in general, at which point it becomes, whether teachers can see it or not, about pride. An identity thing.

Though new academic standards make technology in learning a matter of both policy and law, policy and law doesn't inspire anyone. Technology is in your face, flashy, and personal—it seeks out our imagination in everything from user interfaces to app design and social integration. A smartphone or a tablet isn't technology so much as it is a portal to a new way of thinking. Apple designed the iPad so you'd feel an emotional response to it. It is this deep stirring of people that is partially to blame for the anger as well.

Compelling mobile technology is inherently manipulative to both people and the systems those people make up. That means the current system of education is, at best, aging and rickety. And some

teachers are ready to burn it all down, and have been for years; for them, technology is transformational.Toothers , it is like a rock band in a library.

And this is where things get stressful. Technology doesn't make teaching better or worse, simpler or more complex–it changes it all entirely. The frameworks, the models, the training, the instructional design, curriculum lesson design, Assessment, learning feedback, classroom management, school design.

CONCLUSION:

Earlier, technology in education was a debatable topic amongst the society. Everyone had their own views on modernizing education and making it technology aided. There were a huge number of positives and negatives to education technology. But, gradually as technology was embraced by the educational institutes, they realized the importance of technology in education. Its positives outnumbered the negatives and now, with technology, education has taken a whole new meaning that it leaves us with no doubt that our educational system has been transformed owing to the ever-advancing technology. Technology and education are a great combination if used together with a right reason and vision.

In conclusion, the key to successful use of technology in language teaching lies not in hardware or software but in "humanware"?our human capacity as teachers to plan, design, and implement effective educational activity. Language learning is an act of creativity, imagination, exploration, expression, construction, and profound social and cultural collaboration. If we use computers to fully humanize and enhance this act, rather than to try to automate it, we can help bring out the best that human and machine have to offer.

RECOMMENDED READING FOR STUDENTS:

For Algebra, Spreadsheets Beat Newer Tech

iPads In The Classroom: Worth Doing Right

Should All High School Students Learn Programming?

3 Keys To Gamification For Education

Art And Computer Literacy Overcome Challenges At NYC School

Edmodo: Social Collaboration For Teachers

Big Data's Opportunities, Responsibilities For Education

http://www.thefreedictionary.com

http://www.wsu.edu/-brian/errors/

http://www.manythings.org/e/grammar.html

http:www.thehindu.com/

http://www.aspiringminds.in

http://www.tcyonline.cocm/blog/reading-comprehension-tips-and-tricks/

http://www.aspiringminds.in/referenceLinks.php?file=rcs-strategy

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http://www.informationweek.com/

www.teachthought.com

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