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An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

Role of Technology Towards Improving Communication Skills

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DOI: 10.53032/tcl.2018.3.4.01

Abstract

At present, technology comes in handy in facilitating smooth communication among individuals or businesses; as it provides alternatives that lead to effective communication. Through smart phones and computers, people can pass messages and receive feedbacks through calls, messages and emails respectively. Such advanced technologies have had significant influences on communication in its entirety. Having picked the focus of the paper, the brief write up will explore the influences of technology on communication, by examining the methods of communication via technology. The methods include blogs, email, cell phone, online chats and video calls. The study on the relevance of communication skills to the technical students in the colleges of Engineering and Technology proposes to examine the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing which is rightly termed as LSRW techniques in language learning. It is also proposed to learn the communication skills which could be enriched the knowledge and ability by regular and continuous practice by the students. The new era assigns new challenges and duties on the modern teacher. The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology .Multimedia has played the crucial role in teaching –learning process. It has turned Education into Edutainment that is education through entertainment.

Keywords- Technology, Communication, LSRW, Language Learning

Introduction

As employment is mostly controlled by multi-national companies, communicative competence in English, the global language, is considered a vital necessity for the learners in the Higher education domain. It is true that technology cannot play the vital role of a teacher, but it can be used as a supplementary tool for enhancing teaching methods in classroom. As the conventional chalk and talk method seems to be monotonous and boring to the students. So teachers emphasize on latest technologies for teaching the subjects. Various software and modern technologies are being

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introduced to make students to get access with their subjects easily. As the number of English learners is increasing, different teaching methods have been implemented to test the effectiveness of the teaching process. Use of authentic materials in the form of films, radio, TV has been there for a long time.

In the past, the teachers used audio-visual recordings and film strips to improve the language skills of the learners. But the gradually growing emphasis on information and communication technology demands that the teaching of languages should aim at imparting skills to deal with computer data as well as communication across languages and cultures. Therefore, the need of the hour is that the latest Computers Aided Language Teaching (CALT) techniques should be introduced and implemented at the level of higher education and no more this should be regarded as a foreign approach invading our traditional teaching practices. We are living in a society which is called "technologically civilized" society. From dawn to dusk, we are using technology in various aspects for all the works. We have to update ourselves for surviving in this hi-tech world. More than the process of communication, trade and transactions, today technology is widely used in educational sectors. One of the most influential recent changes in education is the application of information communication technology (ICT).

However it's an accepted fact that the successful implementation of any new approach to teaching needs to be preceded by teacher preparation and acceptance. Hence before introducing the CALT techniques for teaching English to the college level learners of India, it is necessary to understand which skills the teachers are required to acquire for the effective use of CALT and how prepared are the teachers for this. Use of computers for English language teaching and for the development of learners' communication skill has been much discussed by theorists and researchers. Riding the band wagon, the Indian academia has expected the teachers in the schools and colleges to utilize computers to boost the language skills of their learners. But research shows that most of the Indian teachers do not possess the skills required for implementing the Computer Aided Language Teaching (CALT) techniques in their class. Therefore, despite having Digital Language Labs at their disposal, they are unable to utilize these effectively, as envisioned. This paper analyses the different levels of ICT skills required for effective implementation of CALT and reports the findings of a small scale survey on teacher preparedness for using CALT.

To full-fill this modernistic approach, language teachers are now much taking help of technology which has made the English language teaching process a context oriented .Technology satisfy both the visual and auditory senses of the student.

The Creative Launcher

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Use of Multimedia Technology for Communication

The new interactive digital media technologies can support and inspire a student-centered and constructivist pedagogy, partly because Web development tools, multimedia presentation tools, and media editing systems—graphics, sounds, video, animations—allow students to take the lead and help one another with visual and interactive forms of online research and communication. One way to use computers for English Language Learners is to teach vocabulary. Students need to learn vocabulary in context and with visual clues to help them understand. Computers can provide this rich, contextual environment. Computers can incorporate various learning strategies as well as accommodate a variety of learning styles. The rapid rising and development of information technology has offered a better pattern to explore the new teaching model. Using multimedia to create a context to teach communication skill has its unique advantages.

In teaching and learning communication skills, we have a lot to choose from the world of technology: TV, CD Rom, Computers, C.A.L.L., the Internet, Electronic Dictionary, Email, Blogs and Audio Cassettes Power Point, Videos, DVD's or VCD's. The last two decades have witnessed a revolution due to onset of technology, and has changed the dynamics of educational institutes, and has also influenced the educational system and the way people interact and work in the society. No doubt, computers make excellent teaching tools especially in teaching languages in any aspect, be it vocabulary, grammar, composition, pronunciation, or other linguistic and pragmatic communicative skills. The basic features of computers like speed, memory, accuracy, color, timing etc facilitate to present teaching materials in more attractive way, to preserve the material for future uses, to update them with little effort and there by improve the learning efficiency. It saves the learner's time and provide for better learning environment.

Use of Technology Enhances LSRW Skills

Computer assisted Language learning has many program in the field of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Gramophone records were among the first technological aids to be used by language teachers in order to present students with recordings of native speakers' voices, and broadcasts from foreign radio stations were used to make recordings on reel-to-reel tape recorders. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has begun a revolution in the domain of language pedagogy. Before the presence of technology, learning a language with the old-fashioned methods could not meet the learners' needs and what they expected from language for an effective communication. In addition, in the absence of software programming and so many other facilities by which learners could enhance their language abilities quickly, learning came to be tediously time-consuming. Therefore, the purpose of this review is to introduce some features of Computer-assisted Language Learning approaches and the related studies that have been carried out in this

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area. Multimedia teaching stresses the role of students, and enhances the importance of “interaction” between teachers and students. A major feature of multimedia teaching is to train and improve students’ ability to listen and speak, and to develop their communicative competence. During this process, the teacher’s role as a facilitator is particularly prominent. Using multimedia in context creation creates a good platform for the exchange between teachers and students, while at the same time providing a language environment that improves on the traditional classroom teaching model. In addition, multimedia teaching is also flexible. It is obvious that the context can be created not only in the classroom, but also after class. Multimedia language teaching can also create a multimedia language environment for the purpose of conducting English communication teaching.

The opportunity for multimedia users to process combined media (text, sound, and video) simultaneously is a popular trend in software design in general, and language learning products in particular. In the language classroom, use of visual material of all kinds has been a predominant tool for instruction for quite some time. Pictures, slides, drawings, and the like serve many roles in language learning activities. Regarding language learning, strong receptivity may also be linked to the ease of aural processing that visual accompaniment implies. Video can fill in gaps in aural comprehension which at once lowers affect and empowers the language learner.

Other examples of technological aids that have been used in the foreign language classroom include slide projectors, film-strip projectors, film projectors, videocassette recorders and DVD players.

However in the modern language classes various strategies have been implemented.

Modern technologies available for teachers of English today are:

- Communication lab
- Video conferencing
- Video Library
- CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning)
- TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning)
- Pod casting
- Quick Link Pen
- Quicktionary
- Programs through educational satellites
- Blogging

Application of Above Mentioned Technologies

Language Lab can be used for teaching/learning through teacher’s Console and Language Learning Software. It acts as a platform for learning, practicing and producing language skills through

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interactive lessons and communicative mode of teaching. Learners can act and respond in a variety of ways at their own pace. Software's are available to develop LSRW skills. By incorporating suitable software through computers the students will play it again and again with their own interest and try to improve their LSRW skills, which are most essential in this modernized IT world.

Listening skills make one to understand what another person speaks. Speaking skills is essential to convey the desire and idea of a person in the right way to the other. Reading skills is important to interpret what is given in the text. Writing is used to express our thoughts. The usage of headphones in the Communication lab. makes the students to have interest over the subject and induces them to repeat again and again instead of feeling boredom.

Video Conferencing

It is the method in which one person can access to the speeches of other persons in some other parts of the world. It is the live relay of a program, which is mostly used to view the lecture of a professor who resides in foreign country. The most notable point in video conferencing is that the students can post questions immediately and get their answers at once.

Video Libraries

They are most essential in our fast and modernized world. This is helpful for the students to those who miss some interesting session. In this process the teaching of the faculty will be recorded and made available to the students. The students can view the tapes in their leisure hours. The advantage in this method is that students can replay it when there is a necessity.

Blogging

It can be used for instructing the candidates when the teacher is off campus. The teacher can post his article or the instruction to the students, where the students are allowed to post their comments and queries. The teacher can answer the question through his blog. Blogging seems to be widely in use.

Mobile Phones

They can also be utilized to enrich vocabulary skills by receiving new words daily. There are certain websites and services to provide new words every day. The educational role of Computers in learning a second language and the role of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) is significant. The teacher can use the latest technologies, which have the potential to transform the students from passive recipients of information into active participants. CALL is defined as the search for and study of applications of the Computer in language teaching and learning.

TELL

It is the use of computer technology including hardware, software and the Internet to enhance teaching and learning of languages. It allows the students to get access with all the technologies

The Creative Launcher

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available for the enhancement of English learning. Students are allowed to use online dictionaries, chat, and to view the various happenings around the world.

Internet

It is a commonly acknowledged term and widely used by people throughout the world. Students now use Internet in the class to learn English. Online teaching inside the classroom seems to be interesting and makes the students to find out the suitable materials for them. Students are instructed to do the grammar exercises which are available online. Through Internet we can collect data from various sources for any instruction. There are many 'self exercises' in the Internet. English Exercises Online at www.smic.be has over 100 free exercises covering grammar and vocabulary. Another interactive site is www.eslgo.com. In this site a student can learn English language with an ESL teacher. There are two examples out of thousands of websites, which combine ICT and English teaching. Discussion forums, course management systems are also available in the Internet as advanced tools.

Pod Casting

It is the integration of audio files where we can feed our own materials and ply it inside and outside of the classroom. Students use i-pods to hear their favorite music files. In the same way they have their education in the form of entertainment.

Quick Link Pen

It allows learners to copy and store printed text, Internet links. It helps to transfer the data to computers and enables the reader to get the meaning of the word from a built in dictionary. Accessing this type of machine seems to be a more convenient method. Recent developments in machine translations presents translation engines like GO Translator and Bablefish.

Quicktionary

It is a pen-like device. It allows the reader to easily scan the word and get its definition and translation on its own LCD screen. Technology such as Enounce and Sound-Editor enable learners to adjust the speech rate of listening materials to assist their comprehension, and present spectrum of speech waves and visual depictions of mouth and tongue movement to ease the learning and refine pronunciation.

Conclusion

Technology has contributed to the alteration of topics into different communications; as people seek to pass on breaking news within the shortest time possible. Advancement in technology has simplified communication allowing voluminous messages to be sent at minimum cost. In this respect, people can change the nature of communication to adopt the form that will be easy to comprehend. Computers can aide in vocabulary development as well as verbal language development.

The Creative Launcher

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However, it is important to recognize that computers are not a substitute for effective teaching. Computers are tools--they are simply one type of supplement to the regular curriculum in teaching English Language Learners as they develop their English language skills. There are various ways of communication the utilize technology and they include email, blogs, video calls, cellular phones and online chats. It has also become apparent that one should seek to use technology when faced with the challenge of barriers in their communication. Technology also helps in facilitating recording and storage of verbal communication and retaining old contacts, as well. In conclusion, we believe that this process can fully improve students' ideation and practical language skills, which is helpful and useful to ensure and fulfil an effective result of teaching and learning. The study found that students' performance, achievements and learning can be grown profoundly by adopting complementary organizational innovations. They have acquired new skills, new competencies, collaborative attitude, team building mechanism and project management expertise. The modern tools are in addition to the inputs given by the teachers in the classrooms. The magic is real in that it helps the students to enhance their language learning in a fruitful way. There are various ways of communication the utilize technology and they include email, blogs, video calls, cellular phones and online chats.

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