Technology-Enhanced Language Learning: A Review of its Benefits

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Abstract: Recently there has been an explosion of interest in using technological tools in the language classroom. The implementation of technology has dramatically changed the way of language learning. Technology-enhanced language education has proved to be an important factor in proficiency development. By means of providing many alternatives, the integration of technology in the language classroom has the potential to make learning more interesting and productive. This paper attempts to explore the advantageous of using technological devices in language learning.

Keywords: Technology, Facilitate, Communication, Motivation, Progress

1. Introduction

Today, technology has been used widely almost everywhere including educational purposes. Uluc (2012) argued that technology "has permeated into all facets of our lives, including educational settings". Technology has the potential to provide a great number of opportunities to empower the learning process. Technology-based language teaching can foster communication, develop language skills, promote cooperative learning, improve motivation of learners and reduce anxiety in language learning process (Yang, 2001; Brandl, 2002). Additionally, learners take advantage of development in self-concept, more engagement in the learning process, improvement of higher-order thinking skills (Brownlee-Conyers, 1996; Dwyer, 1996).

2. Literature Review

Technology is the implementation of scientific knowledge for practical purposes. Technology has been an integral part of our lives for centuries. Over time, it has brought about important advancements in almost all fields in the world we live today. It has led to many changes in the way we live, work, and interact with one another. Today, in most jobs technological tools have been extensively used. Thanks to technology, the life has become easier and more convenient. Another benefit of technology is its contribution to the

enhancement of efficiency and productivity. Technology also has been used in education widely. It has transformed the way students learn and teachers teach. It is possible to say that the integration of technology in education has improved the quality of education and opened up new opportunities for students to learn and succeed. In order to prepare learners for the knowledge society, the use of technology in educational settings cannot be ignored.

Education has become more accessible with the help of technology. Learners have the opportunity to access learning materials and resources with ease from anywhere. Furthermore, learning has become more engaging and interactive by means of technology. In particular, the use of visuals, videos, and simulations facilitate comprehension because they can help learners visualize complex concepts and understand more effectively. Also, the benefits of technology on the development of collaborative learning are worth mentioning. Technological tools have the potential to enable learners interact with their peers and teachers which are essential for enhancing the learning experience. All these advantageous technological equipment provides learners allow them to retain more information. This benefit of technological tools creates an environment in which learners can involve in discussions. These discussions can foster social interaction (Coffey, 2012). Moreover, interactivity holds a very important place in education. The implementation of technology in the classroom can encourage engagement and interactivity. The applications, learners are exposed can motivate them to engage more in the activities. Strong et al. (1995) argue that if learners are engaged in the learning process, they are motivated to study more diligently. Motivation has always been a serious source of frustration because learning has always been difficult without motivation. Thus, the effective use of technology owing to the features it has can affect motivation. Learning through technology becomes enjoyable in the classroom and this leads to improved learner attitude towards interest in learning (Valdez, McNabb, Foertsch, Hawkes, & Raack, 2000).

Technology is relevant to today's learners because they are familiar with these tools. With this in mind, the use of these tools in education is essential to meet their needs. Insisting on the traditional approaches can discourage them. Technological tools help teachers establish meaningful projects which can foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills of learners. In addition, technology can increase collaboration which is a highly effective tool for learning. When learners work together on a project, they can learn from each other.

Eady and Lockyer (2013) stress that technology is used in educational settings for the purposes of:

1) introducing a new topic to learners
2) lecturing and demonstrating
3) creating group or whole-class discussions
4) enabling learners access to different text types
5) engaging learners in activities
6) allowing learners to learn at their own pace

The role of teacher is critical; however, the use of technology can greatly facilitate the learning process and contribute to learner achievement. The implementation of technology in education can encourage learners to be active in the classroom.

Language learning is an essential requirement of personal development and enables individuals to communicate effectively with other people from different cultures and backgrounds. Communicating people from different cultures is a crucial step in personal and professional relationships. In addition, the ability to speak a language fosters cultural understanding and empathy and paves way for more meaningful interactions with people from different backgrounds.

Language learning has the potential to develop cognitive abilities. It goes without saying that foreign language learners exhibit greater cognitive flexibility, enhanced memory, and improved problem-solving skills. Furthermore, language learning requires developing cognitive skills such as concentration, attention to detail, and memory retention. All these skills can be transferred to other areas of life. Language learning is a good opportunity to broaden cultural horizons. It provides a richer understanding and appreciation of different cultures. Moreover, language learners stand a better chance of developing personal growth, improving open-mindedness and enlarging one's worldview.

The integration of technology into language learning leads to new experiences for learners. It is possible to say that technology has revolutionized the way people learn a language. The role of practice in language learning holds a very significant place and technology has made it possible for learners to access language learning resources with ease. With the help of technological devices, learners can easily learn at their own pace using the online resources. Another benefit of technology in language learning is its potency to create a more engaging and interactive learning setting. With the use of multimedia resources such as videos, animations, and simulations, learners can better visualize complex concepts and understand them more effectively. Additionally, collaborative tools such as discussion forums and online chat rooms enable learners to interact with their peers and teachers, providing a platform for collaborative learning and enhancing the learning experience.

It should be noted that motivation is a key variable in the field of education (Ushioda, 2011, Mart, 2011). Williams and Burden (1997) define motivation as "sustained efforts towards a set goal, where the value the individual places on that goal will determine the effort directed towards attaining it" (p.120). It is highly related to language learning achievement and it highly supports successful learning. Motivation is a powerful component in language learning and can greatly contribute to learners in the learning process. Gardner (1985) defines motivation in language learning as "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 10). The usage of technology motivates students to learn a foreign language better and creates a different learning atmosphere in the classroom.

It is a need in language learning to practice the language skills. Through online tools and language learning applications, learners have an opportunity to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Learners can communicate with native speakers through language exchange programs and online platforms, providing opportunities for authentic communication practice. Technology supported teaching provides engaging, motivating classroom situations. Technology is a powerful resource that can display illustrations, demonstrations, visualizations, and collaborations, and all these tools help learners understand the concepts and ideas easily. Needless to say, the use of visual materials can make the process of learning more interesting.

The tools technology offers in the language classroom can enrich the content of classes which can nurture the interest of learners. The appropriate use of these tools can provide learners authentic learning materials. The use of authentic materials is an advantage for language learners to understand and use natural language. Garrett (1991, p. 75) argued that "the use of the computer does not constitute a method" and it is only a "medium in which a variety of methods, approaches, and pedagogical philosophies may be implemented" (p.75). Although the use of technology cannot guarantee learner achievement, it has a facilitating role in order for learners to understand better. Technological tools are important components of teaching and learning. The employment of technology is an important instructional instrument in language learning. Its implementation allows teachers to provide a high-quality education to learners.

Technology-enhanced education can promote activities for language learners and help them access a great deal of information. All these alternatives bring about productive learning and lead to progress (Patel, 2013). Furthermore, compared with teacher-centered education, student-centered education has more advantageous to create learning responsibility. The use of technology can constitute more positive changes in the classroom and introduce a learner-centered learning atmosphere. The self-direction given to the learners by means of technology-based tools in the language classroom helps them to be more responsible for their own learning. When learners become more autonomous, their motivation for learning increases and they will stand a better chance of developing their learning skills. Some benefits of using technological devices in language learning can be listed as (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p.59):

1. multimodal practice with feedback
2. individualisation in a large class
3. pair and small group work on projects, either collaboratively or competitively
4. the fun factor
5. variety in the resources available and learning styles used
6. exploratory learning with large amounts of language data
7. real-life skill-building in computer use.

Very often it is not that easy for teachers to provide as many tasks as possible due to learners' different levels. However, the use of technology can allow learners to be exposed to many language activities. This advantage of technology is useful to have more practice.

3. Conclusion

It is an important requirement to meet the needs of learners in education. Today's learners are quite familiar with technology; thus, it is essential to use technological devices in the classroom. It is possible to say that technology serves today's learners. The integration of technology into the language classroom brings about a great number of opportunities to make progress. The use of technological devices boosts motivation, helps learners with self-understanding and problem solving, and increase responsibility of learners towards better learning. Also, the use of different activities technological devices provide promotes understanding of learners' language rules and facilitates their advancement. The use of technological devices can create a learner-centered environment in which learners have more responsibility for their own learning.

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