

# ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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## ABSTRACT

*This qualitative research study examined the role that technology plays in supporting all students i.e English Language Learners (ELLs) in the classroom. The purpose of this study was to identify different teaching methods and plans used in the classroom to support ELLs, as well as to identify some technological tools, such as computers, tablets, and Smart Boards that can be used to assist classroom teachers and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and their students during the language learning process. In the upper-elementary and middle-school grades, students study content areas in greater depth and are exposed to more complex vocabulary and complicated concepts. With just a textbook, ELL students may experience enormous difficulty. Multimedia projects offer students hands-on, engaging ways to explore the scientific content and concepts presented.*

Key Words: English Language Learners, English ,Technology

## INTRODUCTION

The centre had begun investing heavily in computers and had just opened its ‘Classroom of the Future’ – a classroom with specially adapted furniture which gave students relatively painless access to computers built into desks. Times have changed, teachers have evolved, and we now have a new breed of learning technologists. In the classroom itself – new technologies such as overhead projectors, interactive whiteboards, laptop computers and wireless internet have opened up the classroom to the outside world. Teachers who spent their lives managing with a textbook, a tape recorder and a blackboard are now adept at using PowerPoint to present grammar playing podcasts to practise listening skills, pulling texts off the world wide web to introduce reading skills and perhaps most ground-breaking of all – empowering students by giving them access to a wide range of web based tools that allow them to publish work and engage with live audiences in real contexts.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We see this methodology still being developed, but when handled best it is the most likely candidate for a starting point for getting teachers to work with technology in their practice. It is still the case that most teachers work in physical classrooms and looking at ways that these spaces can be augmented with digital technologies is a very good starting point. An extended classroom is one that allows learners to engage in material beyond the regular class period, so while a blended classroom is looking at ways that an activity might be enhanced by a technology, we also see technologies being used to make it possible to cover areas of the curriculum that there is just not enough time for in the busy world of formal education, particularly in primary and secondary schools.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My main research question is: What role can technology play in supporting ELLs in today’s classrooms? My sub-questions that support my main question are:

- 1) What methods or strategies are teachers using to help ELLs be engaged in the class?
- 2)How can technology support teachers who are teaching ELLs?
- 3)How can technology support ELLs in the classroom?

- 4) What technology tools are being used in order to help ELLs in an inclusive classroom?
- 5) What is the perception of teachers, students and parents about the use of technology to support the ELLs learning?

## OVERVIEW OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English is a West Germanic language that was first spoken in early medieval England and is now a global *lingua franca*. Named after the Angles, one of the Germanic tribes that migrated to England, it ultimately derives its name from the Anglia (Angeln) peninsula in the Baltic Sea. It is closely related to the Frisian languages, but its vocabulary has been significantly influenced by other Germanic languages, particularly Norse (a North Germanic language), as well as by Latin and Romance languages, especially French.<sup>[6]</sup> English has developed over the course of more than 1,400 years. The earliest forms of English, a set of Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to Great Britain by Anglo-Saxon settlers in the 5th century, are called Old English. Middle English began in the late 11th century with the Norman conquest of England, and was a period in which the language was influenced by French. Early Modern English began in the late 15th century with the introduction of the printing press to London, the printing of the King James Bible, and the start of the Great Vowel Shift. Through the worldwide influence of the British Empire, modern English spread around the world from the 17th to mid-20th centuries. Through all types of printed and electronic media, and spurred by the emergence of the United States as a global superpower, English has become the leading language of international discourse and the *lingua franca* in many regions and in professional contexts such as science, navigation and law.

By the late 18th century, the British Empire had facilitated the spread of English through its colonies and geopolitical dominance. Commerce, science and technology, diplomacy, art, and formal education all contributed to English becoming the first truly global language. English also facilitated worldwide international communication. As England continued to form new colonies, these, in turn, became independent and developed their own norms for how to speak and write the language. English was adopted in North America, India, parts of Africa, Australasia, and many other regions. In the post-colonial period, some of the newly created nations that had multiple indigenous languages opted to continue using English as the official language to avoid the political difficulties inherent in promoting any one indigenous language above the others. In the 20th century the growing economic and cultural influence of the United States and its status as a superpower following the Second World War has, along with worldwide broadcasting in English by the BBC and other broadcasters, significantly accelerated the spread of the language across the planet. By the 21st century, English was more widely spoken and written than any language has ever been.

## SUPPORTING ELLS IN TODAY'S CLASSROOMS

### FILM AND VIDEO

Using short and feature-length videos is an engaging way to work on skills like vocabulary and comprehension. Videos help to expose students to the use of natural English. [Young children](#) really enjoy cartoons and animated movies, and older students can learn about current events through news broadcasts.

### APPS

Learning English can be very difficult and frustrating at times. Apps on iPads and tablets are a great way for students to practice English and to have fun while doing it. For practicing grammar rules, apps like Grammar Up allow students to test their knowledge on specific topics (verbs, prepositions, etc.). The app also keeps track of students' progress and allows them to skip questions by shaking the tablet.

## DIGITAL FIELD TRIPS

Students absorb a great deal of information through experiential learning, but field trips are not always an option with limited school budgets. Digital field trips provide more authentic ways for students to absorb new information.

## PODCASTS

Students can listen to podcasts to improve their comprehension. They can also create podcasts to practice their English speaking abilities. A free download of iTunes gives teachers access to hundreds of free podcasts on a range of topics. There are multiple podcasts tailored specifically for English language learners. Teachers can also have students create podcasts to give them opportunities to practice their speaking skills.

## PEN PALS

Since snail mail is becoming a thing of the past, students can have pen pals that they email or write to on a discussion board. Make an arrangement with an English-speaking class in another state or country and have students write to their pen pal on a regular basis. This is a great way for them to practice their English writing and reading comprehension skills, while making friends in the process.

## WEB QUESTS

Web quests are a fun way for students to use the Internet to build English proficiency. Students are given a task and rely on their content knowledge and grasp of English language to complete it. Teachers can create their own or visit Web Quests to access tutorials and databases of pre-created web quests.

## METHODS OR STRATEGIES TEACHERS ARE USING TO HELP ELLS BE ENGAGED IN THE CLASS

### 1. Increase ELL students' English language production and peer interaction.

*Specific and measurable goal: ELL students will verbally demonstrate their English speaking abilities in classroom work at least three times a week.*

There are two key items ELLs need in order to improve their English — time and practice. There is nothing teachers can do to rush English acquisition, but there are many ways to provide opportunities to practice English in the classroom. If activities are structured to support student-to-student or group interaction, ELLs are required to use English to explain concepts and contribute to the work. This gives teachers an opportunity to gauge what the student has learned, and it demonstrates the student's progress in English language development. Teachers can also informally assess correct use of language structures and academic vocabulary. If ELLs are having difficulty with phrases or vocabulary, the teacher will be able to offer guidance or further instruction to support language development.

### 2. Explicitly teach English language vocabulary and structures.

*Specific and measurable resolution: I will identify, teach and post key academic vocabulary and structures for one content lesson each day.*

Teachers play a critical role in supporting language development. Beyond teaching children to read and write in school, they need to help children learn and use aspects of language associated with the academic discourse of the various school subjects. They need to help them become more aware of how language functions in various modes of communication across the curriculum. They need to understand how language works well enough to select materials that will help expand their students' linguistic horizons and to plan instructional activities that

give students opportunities to use the new forms and modes of expression to which they are being exposed. Teachers need to understand how to design the classroom language environment so as to optimize language and literacy learning and to avoid linguistic obstacles to content area learning

### 3. Build on ELLs' Background Knowledge to Increase Comprehension

*Specific and measurable goal: I will elicit background knowledge from ELLs in one content area through a variety of activities, including questioning and graphic organizers.*

Learning something new is like stacking building blocks. The more you have, the higher you can go. It is not always apparent what building blocks ELLs come with due to language barriers, and sometimes ELL students don't connect their previous experience with the lesson currently being taught. That is where the teacher's skill at drawing on background knowledge becomes so important.

### 4. Increase ELL Parent Involvement

*Specific and measurable goal: Teacher will contact one ELL parent each week to share information on his/her student or to inform the parent of a school event.*

No matter what language you or your students' parents speak, parental support is a big key to academic success. ELL families are often at a disadvantage when it comes to supporting their child because of language and cultural barriers. It can be easy to interpret ELL parent "no shows" as a lack of interest in education; however, very often ELL parents want their children to succeed as much as any other parent but are unable to participate to the same extent that other parents participate due to these barriers or their work schedules.

## TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT TEACHERS WHO ARE TEACHING ELLS

Five core principles guide our approach. Heterogeneity and collaboration – schools and classrooms are heterogeneous and collaborative by design that build on the strengths of each person. Experiential learning – project-based activities that culminate in a product with assessment of students through portfolios that comprise authentic tasks and/or classroom projects developed over a period of time to demonstrate understanding. Language and content integration – strong language skills develop most effectively in context and emerge most naturally in a purposeful, language-rich, interdisciplinary program. Localized autonomy and responsibility – Teachers work together on teams to take collective responsibility for their students' learning and student outcomes. One learning model for all – the models for adult learning and student learning mirror each other. All students, including ELL students, are capable of deeper learning and instruction must be tailored to their specific needs. The challenge is how we provide opportunities for ELLs to engage in deeper learning while they are developing language skills, not waiting until they've mastered English to provide opportunities to engage in deeper learning. We need to support all teachers in developing the capacity to integrate language and rigorous, meaningful content.

## THE PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS ABOUT THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT THE ELLS LEARNING

In language teaching and learning, we have a lot to choose from the world of technology, such as Radio, TV, CD Rom, Computers, C.A.L.L (computer assisted language learning), the internet, Electronic Dictionary, Email, Blogs and Audio Cassettes, Power point, Videos, DVD's or VCD's. using multimedia to create a context to teach English has its unique advantages. This paper tries to analyze the necessity of multimedia technology to language teaching and also brings out the problems faced by using these technologies. It also aims to make English teacher aware of the strategies to use it in an effective manner.



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. Technology provides so many options as to make teaching interesting and also to make teaching more productive in terms of improvements. The use of English language has increased rapidly after 1960. Once a method evolves in teaching of English by keeping in mind the interests and tastes of the learners, it is tested effectively and is widely accepted for teaching English in the modern world.

Multimedia teaching enrich teaching content and make the best of class time and break the 'teacher-centered' teaching pattern and fundamentally improve class efficiency. The utilization of multi-media sound lab materializes the individualized and co-operative teaching. On the contrary, multimedia technology goes beyond time and space, creates more vivid, visual, authentic environment for English learning, stimulates students' initiatives and economizes class time meanwhile increases class information. Multimedia teaching creates a context for language teaching. This method makes the class lively and interesting, as well as optimizing the organization of the class. During the process of multimedia English teaching, sounds and pictures can be set together, which enhances the initiative of both teachers and students. When using multimedia software, teachers can use pictures and images to enrich the context of classes, and also imagine different context in the process of producing teaching courseware. Students in the class can use multimedia to understand the class in a better way.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we believe that this process can fully improve students' ideational and practical English language skills, which is helpful and useful to ensure and fulfil and effective result of teaching and learning. Barring a few problem areas multimedia technology can be used effectively in classroom of ELT with proper computer knowledge on the part of teachers, overcoming the finance problems in setting up the infrastructure and not allowing the teachers to become technophobes. Concerning the development of technology, we believe that in future, the use of multimedia English teaching will be further developed. The process of English learning will be more student-centered but less time-consuming. Therefore, it promises that the teaching quality will be improved and students' applied English skill scan be effectively cultivated, meaning that students' communicative competence will be further developed.

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