

COMPUTER ASSISTED CLASSROOMS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A RESEARCH REVIEW

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Abstract: This article analyses the role of computers in education, particularly in English language classrooms. It also discusses about how computers assist in developing the four language skills. Technological assistance enhances the effectiveness of education process. A computer assisted classroom can strengthen the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. The article gives a glimpse of computer technology in English language classrooms.

Index Terms: Computer Technology, Hybrid learning, Blended Learning, Creativity.

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as an astronomically important factor in our life. The latest advancement in education is assisted by technology. Computer Assisted Learning is an encompassing term and it refers to the use of computers in education namely Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI), Computer Managed Instruction (CMI) and using computers as tools in classrooms.

The last two decades have witnessed a revolution due to the outset of technology. It has offered a better pattern to explore the new teaching model. Technology increases student engagement and motivation. It offers mobility and can be a time saver for teachers. The key to successful technology integration in English language classrooms is to understand its benefits and to find resources that support learning. Technology aided education can be called in different terms such as hybrid learning, technology- based learning (TBL), mixed learning, blended learning, online aided schooling, information technology (IT) for education, distance learning etc.

In language teaching, computers have been available as a resource for more than 20 years. The advance in the use of computer in language teaching came with the transition from floppy disc to compact discs (CDs) as basic form of software's. It is found that a vast array of language teaching material is available on CDROM or DVD. It ranges from self-study materials to supplement published course books. In teaching English language in classrooms, teachers have options like setting writing tasks, communicating with learners by e-mails, making them do research works using internet etc.

Learning with the help of computers help increased learner autonomy, creativity, productivity and team work. With the emergence of internet, language learning has become more communicative, interactive and explorative. That is, audio and video exercise can be integrated in the teaching-learning process.

The Role of Teacher in Computer Assisted Classrooms

Even though computer assisted language learning aids much to the learners in learning, the role of the teacher cannot be eliminated. Learners can be active rather than passive listeners. The teacher can interact with the students so as to facilitate difficulties in using the target language. Teachers should be familiar with the resources to be used in order to anticipate technical problems and limitations. Teachers are inevitable especially in conducting review sessions to reinforce what they learnt.

The Role of Students in Computer Assisted Classrooms

Student's participation also is very crucial in computer assisted classrooms. Students can assimilate new information through interactions and collaboration with someone other than the teachers. Such a student-centered environment can help them to be active participants that will also help them raise their self-esteem and improvement in knowledge.

Computer Assisted Classrooms and the Development of the Language Skills

Listening

In developing listening skills, YouTube can play an important role. It provides unending source of authentic materials of different genres to the learner. The learners can listen to collocations, sayings, idioms, humors, sarcasm etc., about which learners

have a limited understanding in classroom environment. Listening activities involve presentations followed by comprehension questions. This enhances understanding early in the activity. Listening sites include www.estlab.com, www.ello.org, www.lingual.net etc.

Speaking

Speaking is deemed to be the most important skill in learning a foreign language. Speaking is “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts” (Chaney, 1998). In the beginning, teachers used tape recorders to instruct students. Now it has developed as communication laboratory. Technology offers a chance for learners to engage in self-directed actions along with error correction and specific feedback. Speech recognition software helps improving the student’s speaking. This also helps in converting spoken words to machine-readable input. In turn, the device provides a positive reinforcement through positive comments. Internet is a good source where students can find a lot of learning materials like audio, video, radio, TV show, games, voice recordings, quizzes, podcasts etc. and this help them develop their speaking skills.

Reading

During the past decades, the nature of reading has changed with the advent of mobile devices, multimedia websites, e-books, interactive graphics and social media. Exposing students to both print and digital reading is a way of reflecting how reading looks like. Reading has changed from being a linear experience in print to being a non-linear online experience. There are online games and apps available to help students practice their foundational reading skills like phonics, sight words, vocabulary etc. Computer assisted language learning has the power to motivate and engage through audio, video or gaming and it offers new paradigms for teachers and learners alike.

Writing

Using technological assistance in writing can offer students immediate feedback in multiple ways. Students can access resources like online dictionaries and thesauruses. They can share documents with their teacher and gain feedback at every stage of the writing process. Blogs are a great way to encourage students to write collaboratively. Technology allows greater connectivity and it helps students to make voices heard. There are websites like Grammarly, Grammar Girl, The Purdue Writing Lab, Thesaurus, Hemingway App, Writers Digest University etc. to improve writing skills of students. Writing is a form of art and it takes time and perseverance to see through the toughest challenges each student faces while writing. The assistance of computers will make it more likely that learners will also engage with the editing process to produce the highest quality text the learners can.

Conclusion

Computers play an important role in helping students learn faster and also in increasing the level of creativity. But computer is just a tool which can be of no function without a teacher’s guidance. Computer technology can be used for visual illustrations. It covers technological tools like PC’s, smart white boards, i-pads, projectors, internet and mobile phones. It helps in long distance learning. Computer gadgets like i-pads can access internet from anywhere and also help students attend remote classes. This has opened boundaries to so many students. It also helps in real-time education. With the use of broadband internet, teachers and students can get real-time example on specific subjects. This makes learning easy by simplifying the way they learn.

As technology is developing, the use of multimedia in teaching also will be developed further. Hence, it promises that teaching quality can be improved and skills in learning English language can be effectively cultivated with the help of technological devices in classrooms.

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