

INTERNET AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Learning English with the help of the Internet is a new initiation in the process of learning and teaching English. The Internet has now restructured English language teaching and learning methods in many ways. The Internet is gaining more importance nowadays and it is being used with mammoth interest by modern-day instructors and learners. This paper highlights Internet prospects as a powerful tool for teaching English language and its effects on ELT. It brings out the reasons to use the Internet for language learning and a view of the basic skills needed to use it. It also discusses some of the common types of Internet activities used to learn English language today.

Keywords: Internet; English Language Learning/Teaching

Introduction

Because of technological progress, new methods of teaching and learning have been initiated in English language education. Many new technological mechanisms are now being used to make the teaching process more effective. “The simultaneous impact of globalization, the spread of English and technological development have transformed our learning and teaching English as a lingua franca in an unprecedented way (Warschauer, 2004)”. As one of the outcomes of technological development, internet-assisted language learning is a well-known and productive method. The internet (World Wide Web – www) and computer technologies has entered all fields including language learning practices and methods.

Modern English teachers therefore abandon the traditional teaching method and start using modern techniques in their teaching. Despite of depending on the use of blackboard and chalk, they make use of the application of computer and Internet in English language education. For today's students, the Internet is a fact of life in the classroom. Nearly every field of society and every part of human life is attracted by the Internet. It is getting more popular on an ongoing basis and reaching everyone. Many people spend most of the time of a day on the Internet without knowing that they are continuously using it. The Internet is quite enormous, complex and changes people's lives. So it is important for teachers to understand the opportunities this medium offers. Muehleisen (1997) recommends ESL/EFL teachers to utilize the Internet in their classes for motivating students to use the English language outside the classroom and to make the language a part of their daily lives.

The effect of the internet on the teaching and learning of English has many positive effects. It plays a role as a key component of education and has the potential to make English language teachers a major source of information. Using the internet in the learning process gives the learners better results. It provides a large amount of ideas and offers many language learning strategies. The Internet unlocks the way to create creativity and learning enthusiasm. In addition to encouraging and motivating students, English with internet learning activities will be noteworthy, useful.

English is used as an official language and employed by a majority of Internet users in most countries around the world. It is the dominant language of the internet and most websites are only available in English. Web technology uses words in English. In addition, today's youth frequently use the Internet and use it several times a day. They are always in close contact with the English language, so they surf the English-based web pages. In active Internet users, e-commerce, internet advertising, and collaboration with the B2B industry, the English-speaking United States dominates.

The prospectives of Internet

The Internet is very useful for learning English. Students can learn English without any support on Internet. It provides up-to-date and current data. It stores vast quantities of information that can be quickly and easily retrieved. The massive amount of hypertext-connected information on the Web seems to be extremely important for learners with a self-directed learning style. Internet also provides a wide range of learning opportunities for both teachers and students. Peterson (2000) points out that an Internet-based learning environment can offer an instructional tool. Ryder and Graves (1997) also assert that the Internet is a dynamic medium, which provides teachers and students with immediate access to tools and resources.

The Internet is a great source of teaching for English teachers. It offers different learning techniques and materials for audio / video that can be useful to them. To collect materials for classes and teaching plans, teachers use the internet. A good number of language teachers have turned to using the internet since the advent of the new ICT, which creates diverse learning methods and multimedia materials that can be useful for language teachers (Son, 2007). With the internet facilities, language teachers can make their classes individualized and/or personalized which in turn can lead to self-empowerment in learning (Warschauer, Turbee & Roberts, 1996).

The Internet has changed the system of education and improved the process of teaching. It builds a learning atmosphere centered on students that increases the important thinking skills of the learners and the ability to resolve crises. This powerful medium is used by creative language teachers to enhance language exposure and communication in and beyond classroom. English teachers in any part of this globe can exchange information with other teachers. Teachers can not only access the Internet for finding resources for their classes but also supply their own materials, knowledge and ideas for other teachers via the Internet (Warschauer, Shetzer & Meloni, 2000).

Today's internet is an important part of the life of students. Students simply have a computer with an Internet connection to access information and resources. It can provide students with a wealth of information that is not available readily in textbooks or lectures. They have the opportunity to communicate in English with foreign friends. They can search for the answers they need to do their homework and read more authentic internet articles. If they need, they can take English courses on the Internet. It includes understanding the accent or pronunciation of the speaker, grammar and vocabulary of the speaker, and understanding the meaning. In other words, students browse the World Wide Web daily for communication, information gathering, listening to music or other multimedia activities.

Studies can be easy by using the internet. It can foster an exciting way of learning as there are plenty of images and graphics that the internet can provide. Communication skills are improved when they communicate and work with pupils who speak English. University campuses provide students with access to remarkable high speed connections through a local area network (LAN) that places merely clicks away from an international arena of information, culture and, most importantly, language.

Reasons for using the Internet

The Internet allows students to learn language whenever and wherever they want. In Internet Assisted Language Teaching, students can make all decisions about their learning: determining goals and objectives, choosing content and materials, deciding methods and techniques, organizing their learning and evaluating their progress. Each learner is allowed and encouraged “to manage the learning process independently and to explore linked pieces of information non-sequentially on the basis of their personal preferences and needs” (Son, 1998). It gives students confidence to take a dynamic role as autonomous learners outside the classroom and provides greater freedom and flexibility in learning at one's own pace and convenience, whether in the context of a language course or beyond.

Authenticity is very important because when language learning takes place in an authentic and meaningful context, then the process is most successful. The Internet provides students with access to vast quantities of authentic material on any topic. It also allows authentic communication and publishing opportunities that are rewarding, motivating and easy to arrange. The Internet can be considered as an ideal learning and teaching tool because it offers authentic learning resources available without having to travel to English-speaking countries (Smith, 1997).

The Internet is often recognized as a factor in increasing the motivation of learners. Students are motivated in the learning process by using internet facilities. Using the internet in language learning enhances the English skills of students. Students who are computer literates are more interested in internet-assisted teaching and say that when learning English the internet was of great help.

Communication and information are the Internet's two most important uses. At any time and for any number of times, information can be updated or modified, which helps in learning and understanding better. In a wide range of subjects, students can search for up-to-date information, learn to present their information on the web for others to see and appreciate. They learn to communicate with students from different cultures and countries. Good communication is the most common goal for language learners. The internet will improve learners' communication skills.

The main means of acquiring a language and gaining fluency is interaction. Effective language teaching incorporates oral and written communication skills development as one of the goals of the learning. The Internet offers students the opportunity to interact with native and non-native speakers around the globe to make language learning more efficient. E-mailing or chatting with English native speakers online improves the communication skills of students in English outside the classroom.

Fast and relatively low-cost access is one of the major advantages Internet provides to people and students around the world as it is easy to get an Internet connection. For the first time, learners of a language can now communicate inexpensively and quickly with other learners or speakers of the target language all over the world. (Warshauer: 1996).

Students are permitted to use all relevant Internet resources such as online dictionaries, encyclopedias and reference books on terminology and other useful materials. It can contribute to lifelong learning, perhaps most evident in internet use, which is a global library and resource center where information can be accessed quickly and efficiently. Learners can thus benefit from a vast range of authentic language materials and resources which can be selected according to learning needs, aims, styles, strategies and preferences.

English teachers are constantly in need of additional teaching materials; therefore, the internet is an invaluable resource for them. Internet helps teachers to keep up to date with new materials. A teacher can get access to English teaching support of many kinds through the WWW sites specialized in English teaching; download a wealth of information from newspapers, tourism and hobby-based WWW sites to use in class.

Internet activities for Language Learning

The World Wide Web (WWW) has many sites designed to help learners. These sites provide Internet-based activities that can be used to improve English learners' English language skills. These sites also contain interactive exercises that teachers can refer to for self-access learning to their students. They can download and print these non-interactive exercises. In addition to these activities, reading online magazines and newspapers, surfing the net, emailing, researching and creating a website for a class help learners to learn the language. Listening to online news and accessing websites for learners to speak and listen can help the students to develop their speaking and listening skills. They can use Skype Chat for interaction or social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, wikis, and instant messaging for writing practice.

Internet-based learning activities make students enjoy reading, encourage the use of critical reading skills and promote fluency reading. Students can find a large number of documents and texts written in English throughout the internet. They can read authentic English materials on the web. The WWW also has sites that are essentially electronic reference books that can be used by students and teachers for language points. This encourages them to read on many websites written information and to communicate in English with other foreigners. This allows them to develop their English language skills.

Network chatting can provide a good language. Through e-mail, conference tools and newsgroups, a virtual learner community can exchange knowledge, ideas and perspectives on specific topics or topics. They can communicate from school, home, or work on either one-to - one or many-to-many basis. Learners can use social media such as whatsapp, facebook, twitter etc to communicate with English native speakers and learn more about English-speaking communities and their cultures.

English teachers can establish their own teaching website. They also can set up E-mail lists or news groups used for communicating with the students, handing out materials used for the next class and collecting assignments, etc. For example, teachers can develop a reading comprehension exercise by forming questions to go with an article from an on-line periodical. English teachers should maximize the internet based learning activities as most colleges and universities are setting up information campus to take advantages of the Internet.

To summarize, using of online dictionaries, listening, speaking, writing and reading online, searching for online English materials, using Google's translation, using web-based flashcards to learn vocabulary, discussing assignments with friends and teachers via emails, sharing English in a forum are some of the well-known on-line activities aimed at developing English language skills.

The Internet skills

To gain more knowledge and teach the English language efficiently, teachers need to learn how to use the internet tools effectively. The use of new and emerging Internet technologies to support English language teaching and learning creates many challenges for teachers in their careers to execute and use it properly. They will therefore have basic computer skills including typing and using the mouse, the proper way to start and shut down computers, and a basic understanding of how computers work. Additional skills such as creating documents in a Microsoft word, using email and the internet, operating scanners or printers and searching on the internet are required for successful operation of computer and internet.

Conclusion

Nowadays, the Internet makes a drastic change in the use of communication technology for all users of computer. It changes many aspects of society such as on-line education, advertising, marketing sales etc. The use of internet is a successful approach to teaching English because it provides students with a rich learning atmosphere. Students could also develop upon their communication skills through the use of internet. Today language teachers have become interested in using the Internet since recent growth in technology help variety in learning methods and multimedia materials that can be useful for language learners. So, Internet assisted learning is a change from the traditional teacher-centered classroom to the learner-centered classroom.

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