Use of Technology and the Changing TESOL Classrooms

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Abstract

Most of today's language learning classrooms are based on technology which will help in enriching student's language learning process and in improving learner's language skills. Technology has great potential to change the existing language teaching methods, Pourhosein Gilakjani (2013). Use of technology allows a teacher to experiment with the teaching pedagogy. Students can be engaged through online activities and immediate feedback can be elicited through them by means of online surveys such as monkey survey. In the present times, technology is considered a life skill and therefore vital for students to learn and use it not only in the confines of their classroom but also apply its usage in the outer world.

Key Words: Language Learning, Methods of Teaching, TESOL, Use of Technology

Introduction

It would not be an exaggeration to say the 21st century is the century dedicated to technology. Technology has pervaded every facet of our life. Consequently, the field of education has also experienced this effect of technology in a great way. Most of today's language learning classrooms are based on technology one way or the other. By using technology, teachers can vary and adapt their classroom activities which will help in enriching student's language learning process. Even research has demonstrated that effective use of technology will help in improving learner's language skills.

Background

The use of technology in the classroom has undergone tremendous transformation from 1900s to 2000s. In the 1900s, it used to be mostly the use of audio-visual aids like radio and television that were used occasionally in the classroom. But with the advent of 21st century, these were replaced with a variety of highly sophisticated and effective technological tools. For example, tablets, laptops, PCs, interactive whiteboards, videos, mobile devices, smartphones etc. In fact, the term

'multimedia' became more synonymous with the use of technology. As mentioned in the chapter 15th of Cambridge Guide to TESOL, technology enhanced language learning was given an exceptionally huge boost when Sydney Papert (1993) applied the principles of John Dewey (1938) and Jean Piaget (1950) to the use of computers. Thus, 'constructivism' involves the use of problem-solving during tasks and projects in addition to the direct instruction by the teacher. This means that the use of technology can be easily supplemented with teaching. This would provide a more enhanced learning experience to the student.

The methods of teaching have also undergone a drastic change with the use of technology in the classroom. This claim is supported by Solanki and Shyamleel (2012) and Pourhasein Gilakjani (2017) who were of the view that teaching methods have undergone considerable change due to the invasion of technology. They were also of opinion that application of technology and its tools in the classroom helps the learners to learn on the basis of their likes and interests. It leads to the satisfaction of their audio-visual senses, thus making them feel more connected to the learning process. Use of technology in the classroom makes learners feel that they control their own learning process and thus they will gain access to more information which their teachers are not able to provide at one time. Technology has great potential to change the existing language teaching methods, Pourhosein Gilakjani (2013). Technology not only provides learners with diverse activities to promote learning but also significantly impacts teaching methods. In this context, teachers who do not prefer to use these tools in the classroom find themselves at a loss thus affecting their teaching and overall teaching learning process. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to have a thorough knowledge of the use of these technological tools so as to be successful in teaching language skills (Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2017; Solanki and Shyamleel, 2012).

Rationale behind Use of Technology

As has been discussed above, there's no doubt that technology is an extremely effective tool for both teachers and students alike. The question of how to integrate technology in to different classroom activities is of significant consideration. Here, I would like to use the Wordsworth's phrase "child is the father of man". Based on which I can say that learners today are more proficient in the use of new technological tools. They are far well versed in the operations of

these tools than most teachers. So, it is extremely important that the teachers of these learners gain first-hand knowledge of the use of these tools. Only then they can attract their learner's attention and deliver a successful class by using a variety of available tools. Modeling of a task using technology is of utmost importance. Once, it is modelled correctly and effectively, it becomes a significant learning tool for the students helping them tremendously in their learning process.

Advantages of Using Technology

There are a number of advantages of using technology in the classroom. First of all, it is an indispensable part of 21st century. A large number of classroom activities are actually tailored around using some type of technology or the other. Use of technology allows a teacher to experiment with the teaching pedagogy. Students can be engaged through online activities and immediate feedback can be elicited through them by means of online surveys such as monkey survey. By using technology, teachers can keep a constant supervision on a student's progress and help the learner when necessary. Use of these tools helps in ensuring maximum participation of the students. It helps even the shy learners to participate as they do not have the fear of making mistakes in front of others. Teachers can plan before and after quizzes to gauge students' knowledge before and after the topic is completed. Using technology not only makes learning effective in the classroom but fun too. There are innumerable resources available online or otherwise which can be used to enhance learning. These tools transform the classroom from a boring, one-sided teaching place to a place of fun, competition, engagement and learning. Activities like role-play digital story telling create an atmosphere interactivity in the classroom thus reducing passivity. Technology provides students with instant access to the latest information which can supplement their learning. Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle, Blackboard can be used for this purpose. Personally, I use Moodle I upload all the worksheets, course outlines, etc. for the students. Even the quizzes and assessments are uploaded. The students are encouraged to complete and submit the same through the system. This helps in not only reducing the wastage of paper but also engages the students in the ongoing cyclic process of learning before, during and after the lesson.

According to the NMC Horizon Report (2017, Higher Education Edition), 'to be digitally literate' means 'to have a deeper understanding of the digital environment' which enables intuitive adaptation to new contexts. It is more than simply having technological skills in isolation. In the present times, technology is considered a life skill and therefore vital for students to learn and use it not only in the confines of their classroom but also apply its usage in the outer world. Almost all the careers today are technology based in some way or the other. Hence, knowledge of technology is not a matter of choice but it is a must-have, if students want to have a successful future. Teachers can motivate students to use technology in the classroom in a variety of ways. They can be encouraged to make presentations, create digital stories and portfolios. Teachers can also help students understand and differentiate between reliable and unreliable sources. In a step by step process, students can also be taught to develop and maintain online etiquette. These all are the necessary life skills of 21st century on the basis of which a learner's achievement is measured within and outside the classroom as an adept user of various technological tools.

Conclusion

The use of technology plays a vital role in the classroom teaching. Technology has great potential to change the existing language teaching methods. It is helpful in enriching student's language learning process and in improving learner's language skills. Almost all the careers today are technology based in some way or the other. The knowledge of technology is not a matter of choice but it is a must-have, if students want to have a successful future. Students can be encouraged to make presentations, create digital stories and portfolios. In a step by step process, students can also be taught to develop and maintain online etiquette. Therefore, technology is considered a life skill and essential for students to learn and use it not only in the confines of their classroom but also apply its usage in the outer world.

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