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An Overview of the Efficiency of Modern Technological Aids in EFL Instruction

Mohammed AbdAlgane*

Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English & Translation, College of Science and Arts, Ar Rass, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia

*Corresponding author: Mohammed AbdAlgane, Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English & Translation, College of Science and Arts, Ar Rass, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. Email: Mo.mohammed@qu.edu.sa; ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4782-9644

Abstract

Presently, the use of technology in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has become prevalent globally. AI technology may be necessary in educational and learning settings. The objective of this essay is to examine the efficacy of incorporating technology in language schools. Furthermore, its objective is to determine the findings of previous research regarding the impact of technology in language classrooms, with the overarching goal of providing guidance to educational institutions in the midst of evolving circumstances. This study conducts an analysis of previous research in the field to provide a comprehensive grasp of the current technological advancements in English Language Teaching (ELT). The researcher has employed the descriptive-analytical study approach to illustrate the utilization of technological aids in EFL courses. The interview was used as a data collection instrument. The study asserts that in light of the altered educational paradigms, both educators and students should make use of technology and employ it effectively in the process of teaching and learning. The article also asserts that technology has a beneficial impact on the field of ELT, but it requires increased incorporation into educational environments, as well as heightened awareness among teachers and students to effectively utilize the new applications and tools that have emerged in the technological realm in recent years.

Keywords: intelligent virtual environment; learners' engagement; foreign language instruction; technological advancements.

1. Introduction

The advancement of students' linguistic skills and their active participation in the educational process nowadays heavily relies on the utilization of technology and its accompanying devices. Research has demonstrated that this enhances the efficiency of the pedagogical and cognitive processes for both educators and learners. Numerous experts contend that the advent of the digital era has had a profound impact on the field of education, and has also introduced challenges such as disruptions to the learning process. Nevertheless, this issue can be resolved by adopting a receptive attitude towards the utilization of innovative technologies (Morris, 2012). Technology has been consistently used in the classroom since its debut. As an educator, one can utilize it to enhance the learners' success by integrating it into the courses. The term "integration" is commonly used and cited when discussing utilizing technology in educational settings. Given that technology has become an essential component of our everyday existence, it is imperative to prompt instructors and students to reassess the integration of technology into the curriculum and make a concerted effort to utilize technology in teaching to enhance the learning process. According to numerous instructors, the utilization of computer technology is vital for delivering formal learning process of superior quality to learners. Moreover, technology can provide advantages to both educators and learners by providing resources and facilitating practical learning experiences in real-world settings, and there is substantiating research to back this assertion. Access to a wide range of real resources through technology may greatly enhance the process of learning a new language, making it a highly enjoyable experience for students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Literature

According to Li et al. (2015), the swift progress in technology has not only changed our lifestyles, but also our education system. Extensive study on the utilization of technology to promote instruction and acquiring new knowledge demonstrates that technology, when employed proficiently, has substantial capacity to support teaching, involve learners, and boost students' learning achievements (Mann et al., 1999). Over the past twenty years, there has been a gradual growth in the use of technology in classrooms, leading to a growing demand for classroom technology in education (Martin, 2011).

The utilization of a universally understandable language is a crucial aspect of global communication. To become proficient communicators, students must master many parts of the English language, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Ahmadi (2017) argued that the strategies employed by teachers in their courses to facilitate language acquisition play a crucial role in guaranteeing desired learning outcomes. Becker (2000) asserts that computers are considered a crucial teaching tool in language classrooms provided professors have convenient computer access, are adequately equipped, and possess a certain level of adaptability in their lesson plans and curriculum.

Bull and Ma (2001) asserted that language learners nowadays have access to a plethora of resources made possible by technological advancements. available to them. In order to achieve proficiency in language learning, Harmer (2007) and Gençlter (2015) recommended that professors assist learners in

selecting suitable activities using computer technology, and inspire educators to make use of digital tools for language learning endeavors. Moreover, Clements and Sarama (2003) argued that learners can get advantages from the utilization of appropriate technology resources in their educational environments. Furthermore, Harmer (2007) stated that the use of computer-based language exercises is beneficial for enhancing students' learning in a collaborative environment.

Coskun and Marlowe (2015) investigated the utilization of Animoto and Fotobabble in the instruction of English Language Teaching (ELT). Additionally, they examined the perspectives of many university teachers towards these applications and tools. In general, the study found that educators had favorable perspectives on the implementation of such tools in ELT.

According to Al-Kadi (2018), implementing ELT tools into lesson plans does not ensure the successful teaching of English. In addition, he noted the absence of a coherent methodology that compels experts to create a theoretical framework that facilitates the integration of theory and practice.

Tomlison (2009) and Gençlter (2015) argue that tasks performed on a computer offer learners with up-to-date and pertinent knowledge, a claim that is further substantiated by empirical study. They argue that the use of internet resources encourages students to persist in their studies. In other words, educators at all levels of the educational process, from designing lessons to monitoring students' progress, consider technology as a critical issue (Eady & Lockyer, 2013).

Solanki and Shyamlee (2012) and Gilakjani (2017) have supported the idea that technology progress has revolutionized the methods used for teaching foreign languages. The researchers concluded that the utilization of technology enriches students' learning since it allows them to explore their personal interests. Furthermore, Bin-Hady and Al-Tamimi (2021) discovered that technology has the ability to inspire learners to independently engage in their learning within an informal setting. Moreover, it accommodates the needs of individuals who learn best through visual and auditory means. Multiple scholars, such as Lam and Lawrence (2002) and Gilakjani (2017), contend that advancements in technology empower students to exert greater control over their learning processes and access resources that their educators may lack the ability to furnish. Ali and Bin-Hady (2019) found that utilizing WhatsApp as a language learning tool enhances the learning proficiency of Saudi EFL learners while simultaneously reducing the stress associated with learning.

The utilization of technology in language instruction has been the primary area of interest for numerous scholars (Al-Ahdal & Alharbi, 2021; Gilakjani, 2013; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2014). In his study, Gilakjani (2013) observed that current methods have the capacity to undergo a revolutionary transformation. In addition, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2014) highlighted that students possess the capacity to assume accountability for their own education abd have the opportunity to access a diverse range of resources that may otherwise be outside the control of their instructors. Technology not only affects student activities but also has a substantial influence on the educational strategies employed by instructors. Failure to integrate technology into their classes will render instructors incapable of keeping pace with the profound technological advancements. Consequently,

it is necessary for language teachers to stay informed about the latest technological breakthroughs in their profession in order to effectively teach language skills (Gilakjani, 2017; Solanki & Shyamleel, 2012).

Enhancing students' computer technology proficiency and skills can guarantee equitable educational opportunities for all pupils, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds, enabling them to thrive academically. Contemporary kids, although being raised in a technologically advanced society, may struggle to effectively utilize technology in their everyday activities (Bennett et al., 2008). In addition, simply providing technology is insufficient to guarantee success. It is recommended that all students make an effort to enhance their proficiency in technology in order to fully benefit from their whole educational experience (OECD, 2010). The scholars will address critical concerns related to the use of technological tools to the study and instruction of the English language. This study will examine the potential applications of technology in the classroom, review existing research on its efficacy in enhancing English language learning, and offer recommendations for its implementation.

Technology is an influential educational instrument that is accessible to all individuals in the present era. It is imperative for learners to utilize technology extensively as an integral component of their overall learning process. Teachers should effectively showcase the application of technology in the curriculum to enable students to enhance their language abilities by spending more time utilizing technology (Al-Ahdal, 2020; Bin-Hady et al., 2020; Costley, 2014; Murphy et al., 2003). Utilizing technology may enhance student collaboration, which is a highly valuable learning tool. Cooperative learning is a collaborative approach where students collaborate to create projects and gain knowledge by studying the work of their peers (Keser et al., 2012).

Bennett et al. (2000) asserted that the integration of employing computers in educational settings led to enhanced instructional quality by teachers and improved student learning outcomes. This enables educators to utilize technology to address the educational needs of their pupils. Bransford et al. (2000) propose that the use of computer technology enables teachers and students to establish both local and global communities, connecting them with individuals and expanding opportunities for learning. They stated that the positive impacts of computer technology do not happen automatically; instead, they rely on how professors utilize it in their language courses.

2.2 Intelligent Virtual Environment

Over the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in the utilization of virtual reality (VR) technology for providing instruction in foreign languages (Rau et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020). Google Earth (Chen et al., 2020), Google Tour Creator (Nobrega & Rozenfeld, 2019), and Google Expeditions are all products that belong to this category (Rau et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020). Research has shown that using virtual reality (VR) tools in the field of EFL leads to a range of positive results. Two advantages of studying English include heightened motivation and diminished anxiety when using the language in social settings (Adolphs et al., 2018). Additionally, research has shown that learning English leads to enhanced vocabulary acquisition and retention (Jiang, 2022), as cited in the studies conducted by Lai & Chen (2021) and Tai et al. (2020). Furthermore, improving English proficiency and fostering a willingness to

communicate in English are also recognized as benefits (Adolphs et al., 2018). What defines an intelligent virtual environment (IVE)? As to the Oxford Dictionary, the term can be defined as "a blend of intelligent methodologies and tools, manifested as independent entities and agents, along with efficient methods for their visual representation and interaction in diverse contexts." The inception of this concept coincides with the advancement of computer programs equipped with artificial intelligence, which have attained a sufficient level of progress to engage in competitive online gaming (Luck and Aylett, 2000). IVE is commonly utilized for the development of virtual agents, usually referred to as avatars, due to their ability to positively impact the user experience and facilitate cooperation inside digital environments (Yin, 2022). A study conducted by Lan et al. (2018) shown that engaging students with 3D avatars enhances their ability to understand spoken English, especially in the setting of EFL sessions. Studies have demonstrated that individuals who utilize avatars to learn a new language experience reduced anxiety and increased confidence in their linguistic skills (Couto, 2016; York et al., 2021). Amidst the H1N1 pandemic, the use of Interactive Voice Response (IVR) can be employed to engage ESL students during their virtual classes on Zoom, thereby ensuring their focus and attention (Obari, 2020). Conversely, several instructors express skepticism regarding the use of avatars in EFL courses. Two instances of technological variables that contribute to these issues are the general population's reluctance to engage with virtual avatars and the challenges associated with doing so in unstructured situations. These two occurrences exemplify the public's hesitancy to engage with virtual avatars (Lotze, 2018). Nonetheless, the implementation of IVEs in the field of EFL is hindered by the exorbitant cost of the technology and a scarcity of easily available network resources (Cowie & Alizadeh, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to develop new technological innovations in order to address the technical obstacles mentioned earlier. Additionally, it is imperative for EFL instructors to undergo suitable training in order to proficiently utilize IVEs and avatars in the educational setting.

3. Methodology and Study Population

The study employed a descriptive-analytical research methodology. The data was collected through personal face-to-face and online interviews conducted with a sample group of 36 tertiary-level teachers who teach EFL at different universities in Saudi Arabia. The teachers are situated in Saudi Arabia. According to the data in Table 1, each of the 36 group members received ten statements. As shown in Table 2 in appendix (I), the 10 interview statements were given to each of the 36 members of the group. This interview served as the data collection tool. Each responder, while operating within an official environment, instructs English as both their specialized subject and as a second language to students. The goal of the instrument was to ascertain respondents' attitudes on the utilization of different technologies integrated into tertiary-level EFL programs in Saudi Arabia. Each query necessitated a reply utilizing a five-point scale akin to the Likert scale, encompassing response choices spanning from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree with the presented proposition.

S NO.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	15	10	3	4	4
2	17	8	2	5	4
3	19	13	1	3	0
4	23	11	2	0	0
5	20	12	1	3	0
6	18	12	3	3	0
7	14	19	3	0	0
8	13	17	3	3	0
9	9	15	5	4	3
10	11	14	4	4	3

Table 1. opinions on using technology in EFL classrooms

S: Statement

4. discussion

Based on the responses provided by the 36 responders, it is evident that the vast majority approve of utilizing technology in EFL classrooms. In terms of the first statement, "The utilization of technology helps learners in making informed educational choices," 25 responders, i.e. 69% agreed to the statement which proves the validity of the statement. As for the second statement, "Technology empowers learners by freeing them from the constraints of a single, conventional learning approach," 25 participants, i.e. 69% agreed to the statement which is evidence of its validity. Regarding the third statement, "Utilizing technology takes into account the unique discrepancies among learners," 32 responders who represent 88.5% approved the statement which confirms the validity of the statement. Concerning the fourth statement, "Technology enables learners to access instructional resources at any time and from any location, eliminating the need to be limited to classes," 34 of the participants who embody 94% accepted the statement which verifies its acceptance. Pertaining the fifth statement, "Technology allows for the adaptability in delivering academic content," 32 responders who represent 88.5% approved the statement which confirms that it is valid. In regards with the sixth statement, "The rise of technology has transformed EFL instructors into facilitators and directors of the teaching process," i.e. 30 responders who represent 83% agreed to the statement which proves the validity of the statement. As for the seventh statement, "Utilizing technology in EFL classes has the potential to decrease learners' dependence on printed materials," 33 participants, i.e. 91.5% agreed to the statement which is evidence of its validity. In terms of the eighth statement, "Technology has a substantial impact on enhancing the linguistic abilities of EFL learners," 30 responders who represent 83% agreed to the statement which confirms the validity of the statement. Regarding the ninth statement, "Since students and teachers use technological devices, it may cause boredom and a decrease in EFL learning and teaching," 24

responders, i.e. 66.5% agreed to the statement which proves the validity of the statement. Concerning the tenth statement, "Employing technology could enhance the processes of EFL teaching and learning," 25 participants, i.e. 69% agreed to the statement which is evidence of its validity.

5. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, technology exerts a substantial influence on both the process of teaching and the acquisition of knowledge, and it is imperative to acknowledge this in the study's conclusion. In the present era, the majority of individuals possess the means to utilize technology due to the prevalence of technical advancements. Why aren't language instructors capitalizing on their students' interest with their mobile devices? Moreover, the paper advocates for the significance of disseminating awareness among educators and students in order to generate novel technical innovations and utilize them for educational objectives.

6. Findings & Recommendations

The study's findings indicate that technology ought to be employed in all educational environments, with a particular emphasis on ELT sessions. Consequently, teachers are required to supervise students in the classroom to guarantee the efficient utilization of technology. Consequently, the study recommends further investigation in the realm of educational technology, particularly in ELT classrooms. In order to fully leverage the significant technological advancements, it is imperative for computational linguistics experts to conduct further research in this domain, benefiting both educators and learners. It is advisable to reassess the utilization of technology after the Covid-19 pandemic, considering that a significant number of educational institutions have been compelled to deliver virtual instruction, even as the pandemic gradually subsides. The issue exists in underdeveloped nations when governments lack the capacity to provide the necessary technological infrastructure that enables teachers and students to effectively exploit such a conducive atmosphere for academic pursuits.

7. Limitations

This study specifically examined a subset of the technological options that are currently accessible to language teachers and learners. Nevertheless, platforms like Zoom and Teams have gained significant popularity within academic circles as alternatives to traditional lectures. The study did not examine the advantages and disadvantages of the subject. Furthermore, this study just focused on reviewing existing literature and did not explore the effects of technological tools on actual student production, as it was considered to be beyond the study's scope.

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Appendix I
Interview Statements

S NO.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The utilization of technology helps learners in making informed educational choices.	15	10	3	4	4
2. Technology empowers learners by freeing them from the constraints of a single, conventional learning approach.	17	8	2	5	4
3. Utilizing technology takes into account the unique discrepancies among learners.	19	13	1	3	0
4. Technology enables learners to access instructional resources at any time and from any location, eliminating the need to be limited to classes.	23	11	2	0	0
5. Technology allows for the adaptability in delivering academic content.	20	12	1	3	0
6. The rise of technology has transformed EFL instructors into facilitators and directors of the teaching process.	18	12	3	3	0
7. Utilizing technology in EFL classes has the potential to decrease. learners' dependence on printed materials.	14	19	3	0	0
8. Technology has a substantial impact on enhancing the linguistic abilities of EFL learners.	13	17	3	3	0
9. Since students and teachers use technological devices, it may cause boredom and a decrease in EFL learning and teaching.	9	15	5	4	3
10. Employing technology could enhance the processes of EFL teaching and learning.	11	14	4	4	3

Table 2: interview statements.