

Investigating internet influence in English class

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Abstract

The emerging technology has made this world a global village where one can connect easily to another by avoiding space difference. Similarly, this technology has made learning easy and accessible. This research aims to define how the technology opens new doors to learn new ways even in those subjects which seem boring or hectic for students. Internet has made learning communicative and conducive for students. The study explores the differences between reading through electronic media and a book which notes much difference between two. The study also explores how students are motivated towards reading comprehension and finding it enjoyable not boring. It helps to motivate teachers to use digital tools to engage students in the classroom. For teacher, it is a useful tool for making lesson plan and for students it is the curiosity to explore the world of knowledge. Internet has made the language learning easy and interesting in comparison to traditional methods of teaching English by introducing new soft wares which are easy to access and cover all four skills. The paper further addresses the question of whether internet can contribute in improving reading skill among second language learners, and speculates as to how internet based activities might be integrated into language programs in order to increase motivation towards reading comprehension. For collection of data questionnaire was used which was administered on random sampling of the university students.

Keywords: *Internet, Information & Communication Technology (ICT), Functional English, Reading Comprehension, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).*

Introduction

The exposure of ‘Information and Communication Technology’ in every sector of education has become the most important requirement in the 21st century. The use of (ICT) instruments such as audio and video players, computers with CD-ROMs, websites, and the Internet has been proved very effective in English language teaching (Barr, 2004; Johanson, 1999; Pennington, 1996; Warschauer, 2004). The application of (ICT) has altered the scenario of learning as it has become more conducive which improves interaction and atmosphere becomes more at ease for students to interact. ICT has introduced more innovational ideas in education with the blend of traditional teaching due to this innovational trend the monotonous style of teaching in the classroom is dying down. Internet is one of the effective tools of ICT that can be used for teaching language skills in multiple methods. It assists to encourage teachers to use ICT tools to hold students in the classroom for learning. For facilitators/tutors it is just a constructive tool for making lesson plan lively interactive and for learners it is a stimulator to stimulates

curiosity to explore the world of knowledge. Reading among all language skills is considered a boring activity. Reading comprehension is a complicated practice where reader and reading stuff get in touch with multiple tasks to one another.

Mehran University is an engineering university, and those who join Mehran UET are coming from interior Sindh. Mostly their educational (private/public), social and economic background varies from person to person and their experiences are also different from each other. Due to these reasons learners' motivation also varies towards English subject. When students join this university they mostly focus on their major subjects rather than minor and compulsory ones. English subject is a compulsory subject over here. As they are engineering students so they most of the time are in touch with technology. English subjects in first year are Functional English in first semester and communication skills in second semester. In third year technical report writing and presentation skills are being taught. To deal with this situation English teachers at MUET are always in search of innovation to find innovative ideas in their teaching to make that lively and interactive. For the first time in Sindh, Self Access Center has been established at Mehran UET by Higher Education Commission where technology has been used by the installation of computer laboratory and multimedia and students are given access to internet for exploring English material. This center is the center of computer assisted language learning CALL where students would be learning English through computer in future. This paper investigates students' views regarding use of internet in reading comprehension class.

Internet in Pedagogy

The enhancement in expanding language instruction is due to internet. There are several other causes also which are defining integration of the Internet into an English language class. Chun & Plass (2000, p. 161) stated important characteristics of the internet which has possibility to boost language learning. i.e.

- a) The possible accessibility of reliable resources,
- b) The communicative facility via internet,
- c) The multimedia capacity,

The prime reason is unquestionably the ease in accessing and an infinite provider of authentic materials concerned language. Internet has brought the globe to the fingertips. Application of internet in language teaching is extending the chance to meet the criteria in various styles.

Walz, (1998) said "Competence in more than one language and culture enables people to gain access to additional bodies of knowledge; ... all students learn in a variety of ways and

settings; ... language and culture education incorporate effective technologies; and using the Web is consistent with learning theories about learning to read authentic materials" (p. 104).

Rationale of the research

The rationale of the research is determined by the subsequent features:

There is not enough study on this topic class in our setups in Sindh Pakistan. Therefore, consequences of such a study will give an obvious concept to the educationists and syllabus designers to design such programs which can enhance students' and teachers' motivation in learning language with the help of computers/ internet. Because students are learners and when they are preferring/not preferring internet in their English setups, would be genuine data to take right decision, whether use of internet in language class can enhance their language skills specifically reading skills or not. That information can boost the necessity to find new ways to improve classes.

Students at Mehran UET who are engineers are very eager in utilizing technology in their learning setups. So, with the observance, the preference of students' motivation using technology, English teachers should/should not apply that strategy is a question of this research as these students have started using internet in English class as well. English reading comprehension usually in traditional class is being taught by books, but internet can be utilized as a tool in reading skill class. This research intends to survey the impact of internet in reading comprehension according to students' opinion. The hypothesis is that internet is likely to improve reading comprehension skills in Functional English class at Mehran UET Jamshoro of engineering students according to students' opinion.

Literature Review

Sanders, (1995) stated that if we see the hierarchal perspective of ICT that is based on language Learning was started in 1960s, IBM representatives visited the, "the Department of Modern Languages IBM... and realized the worth of computer as a helping tool in education language education". In result of that, in English classrooms setups computers were integrated. Purushottam (2013) says, the appearance of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) may mark out past to the mid-1950s, the time technology commenced to be incorporated into language instruction. 'CALL' classes and technology helps to boost confidence. According to Davies et al (1982), the term computer-assisted language learning (CALL) emerged from computer assisted language instruction or CALI, showing its beginning as a detachment of the universal term computer-assisted instruction or CAI. The term CALI appeared to entail a focal point on a teacher-centered approach, while language instructors are tending to desire a student-

centered approach. CALI, thus, started to be replaced by CALL that centers on learning rather than instruction.

The History of CALL

The 1950s put together the line of computer-assisted learning appliance in teaching, learning setups. At first, PC use for didactic purposes focused on various fields other than language learning, like, science and social studies. Thus, the extensive recognition of B.F. Skinner's behaviorist theory of learning through response to stimuli (1957) and hold for the audio-lingual method of second language instruction led to an enhanced awareness of the usage of computers for language learning/ teaching.(Wikipedia) History of CALL covers three phases, behaviouristic, communicative and integrative (Warschauer, 1996). Every phase communicates the stage point of tools and explicit educational suppositions.

Behaviorist CALL

In the decade of 60's and 70's the initial appearance of CALL trait was recurring language maneuvers, repeat-and-practice technique. That was found on the behaviorist learning representation with PC was observed since modest addition than an automatic tutor that by no means raised exhaustion. Behaviorist CALL was original considered and put into practice during the age of the supercomputer. That was mostly applied for wide-ranging exercises, open language rules coaching, and transformation examination (Ahmad, et al., 1985).

Communicative CALL

Communicative CALL appeared in the decade of 1970's and 1980's in the response to the previous approach to language learning that were behaviorist. Advocates of this approach discarded previous approaches at equally the hypothetical and academic point. Their focus was different that should center mostly on the usage of the forms rather than on the structures themselves. Language rules should be educated unreservedly and learners must be confident to produce innovative expressions rather than controlling manufactured structures (Jones & Fortescue, 1987; Philips, 1987). That sort of computer-based teaching communicated to cognitive theories documented so as to processes of learning was an inventive course of innovation, appearance and expansion. The supercomputer remained back by a PC which was tolerable better potential for an entity work.

Integrative CALL

Final phase of computer-assisted Language Learning is integrative CALL. Previous approach was condemned because of usage of the system in an unplanned and detached style and usage of the computer completed larger input to minor other than essential fundamentals of language teaching and learning (Kenning & Kenning, 1990: 90). Pedagogues shifted from a cognitive opinion of communicative language teaching to socio-cognitive concepts that

highlighted genuine language application in a consequential, genuine situation. Integrative CALL search to put together the variety of skills of language learning i.e. listening, speaking, writing, and reading and to put together technology completely into language learning and teaching (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Till this conclusion, the compact disk-set of connections computers offered a variety of knowledge, unrestrained, and printed instruments which are in capacity of obtainable to each learner. In the CALL research area, there are not many studies that openly probe motivational enhancement as a subject matter internationally there are few and at national level very few are conducted. Ryan & Deci (2002, pp. 19-20). CALL is concerned with different technological resources so can be motivational force, as the item appears students wish to react to, the propinquity of the response so the support that the student gets through visual or auditory signals. Ryan & Deci (2002, pp. 19-20).

Reading Comprehension

Conventional manuscript forms usually comprise of two kinds of media: print and two-dimensional graphics and Electronic manuscript can put together multiple number of symbols and various-media set-ups as well as audio and video clips, photographs, icons, cartoons, dynamic symbols, advertisements, virtual authentic atmosphere, Brunner & Tally, (1999); Reinking & ChanLin, (1994). When Images and sounds are integrated with manuscripts it creates novelty in transmission meaning, clearing up methods, and communicating interactively Downes & Fatouros, (1995). But readers have to be sharp enough to access internet to find out the desired material, without this know-how, readers could put great effort even to access all these multimedia representations. Generally, Web-based text atmosphere is interactive. Goldstone (2001) explained that authors of such texts have started to perform role more as facilitators by “*co building the framework, supplying missing features of the story structure, and pulling together discrete narrative strands*” (p.366). Texts on the Internet are creating interactive dynamic environments as contrasting to fixed expressions on a piece of paper. Digital internet based texts also supply chances to work together with other group by means of set in apparatus like digital discussion boards situations that, as result, offer contact to numerous and miscellaneous viewpoint.

Research Design & Methodology of the Study

The current research may as a result be best illustrated as a mixed method study, since it utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data to get its objectives where questionnaire was administered as tool in quantitative, where as interviews were conducted for qualitative study to know the opinions of 1st year students’ (Functional English at Mehran UET, Jamshoro Sindh) who have attended their English class and who are experienced of internet usage. Thirty students (male and female from 1st year classes from all disciplines of the university randomly selected who have experienced functional English class to respond to the questionnaire and four students from the same 30 students were again randomly picked up for interviews to make this research

more reliable. The participants were familiar with the use of ICT because they are engineering students they access internet for other courses.

Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers. (Brown, 2001)

The questionnaire was comprised of ten items and was designed and prepared in English. All the items were designed on a five-point Likert scale of agreement. The five-point Likert scale was employed as it is one of the most commonly accepted Likert scales in the education field.

As quantitative research method was used in this study so statistics, tables are developed to show the outcome where as four interviews were recorded for qualitative study.

Plan of data collection

With the purpose of understanding students' perception about learning functional English via Internet, a questionnaire was administered to the students shortly after the end of the first semester so as to gather their demographic information and their responses. The questionnaire carries two parts: individual' personal data; and ten 5-point-Likert-scale questions. Questionnaire items are as under:

| Items | Question number |
|---|-----------------|
| I use internet to search relevant reading material | Q 1 |
| I use internet to improve my reading comprehension. | Q 2 |
| I don't find any improvement in my reading comprehension by using internet. | Q 3 |
| I don't spend much time on internet to explore reading material. | Q 4 |
| I like to spend much time in exploring reading material online. | Q 5 |
| I feel easy to access reading material through books. | Q 6 |
| I feel easy to access reading material through internet. | Q 7 |
| Internet has helped me to improve my reading comprehension skills. | Q 8 |
| I get authentic information relevant to reading via internet. | Q 9 |
| There are many websites which help me to explore relevant reading material. | Q 10 |

Table 1: Questionnaire Items

Reliability of the Questionnaires

Questionnaires are experimental tools so they must be reliable having significant reliability (Dornyei, 2003, p 110), if there is lack of resources even then researcher must check the reliability of main aspects of the questionnaire that is 'internal consistency' (ibid, 2003). Internal consistency defines the 'homogeneity of the items' that makes the set of scales within the questionnaires. If the research instrument has reliability, researcher would be at ease and will feel protected (ibid, 2003, p 110).

The tool (questionnaire) which was used for this research fulfilled the requirements of reliability i.e. (a) It was used for multi-item scales rather than single items (b) There was accord with the items and they worked commonly in homogenous mode for measuring the same goal which perceptions of learners about internet assisted language learning class.

The Internal consistency of questionnaire is measured by Cronbach Alpha. The Alpha value was between 0 and 1. The Alpha value must be at least 0.70. If is not showing this significant value then it would not be considered reliable tool (questionnaire) i.e. the value 0.60 or less then that show low reliability (ibid, 2003, p112). Overall questionnaire’s reliability is shown in table 03.

Reliability Statistics

| | | |
|------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .724 | .728 | 10 |

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha value of items in the Questionnaire

Results

| Statements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Rank |
|---|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1. I use internet to search relevant reading material. | 3.8% | 11.5% | 34.6% | 26.9% | 23.1% | 7 |
| 2. I use internet to improve my reading comprehension. | 0 | 11.5% | 26.9% | 38.5% | 23.1% | 5 |
| 3. I don't find any improvement in my reading comprehension by using internet. | 0 | 19.2% | 57.7% | 15.4% | 7.7% | 8 |
| 4. I don't spend much time on internet to explore reading material. | 7.7% | 26.9% | 26.9% | 34.6% | 3.8% | 9 |
| 5. I like to spend much time in exploring reading material online. | 3.8% | 7.7% | 38.5% | 15.4% | 34.6% | 5 |
| 6. I feel easy to access reading material through books. | 7.7% | 26.9% | 30.8% | 30.8% | 3.8% | 10 |
| 7. I feel easy to access reading material through internet. | 3.8% | 3.8% | 42.3% | 15.4% | 34.6% | 2 |
| 8. Internet has helped me to improve my reading comprehension skills. | 3.8% | 3.8% | 30.8% | 38.5% | 23.1% | 2 |
| 9. I get authentic information relevant to reading via internet. | 0 | 3.8% | 57.7% | 15.4% | 23.1% | 1 |
| 10. There are many websites which help me to explore relevant reading material. | 3.8% | 3.8% | 23.1% | 30.8% | 38.5% | 2 |

(1—Strongly Disagree; 2—Strongly Disagree; 3—Agree; 4—Strongly Agree; and 5--Totally Agree)

Table 3: Results of questionnaire items responses

| Rank | Q# | Statement |
|------|----|---|
| 1 | 9 | I get authentic information relevant to reading via internet. |
| 2 | 10 | There are many websites which help me to explore relevant reading material. |
| 3 | 7 | I feel easy to access reading material through internet. |
| 4 | 8 | Internet has helped me to improve my reading comprehension skills. |
| 5 | 5 | I like to spend much time in exploring reading material online. |
| 6 | 2 | I use internet to improve my reading comprehension. |
| 7 | 1 | I use internet to search relevant reading material. |
| 8 | 3 | I don't find any improvement in my reading comprehension by using internet. |
| 9 | 4 | I don't spend much time on internet to explore reading material |
| 10 | 6 | I feel easy to access reading material through books. |

Table 4: Results of questionnaire (Rank by total sum)

Consistent with the quantitative data gathered by the questionnaire, the above 10 items got tremendously affirmative reaction from the learners. Evidently the pinnacle ranked were: statement 9 where students were very much agreed that they get authentic information relevant to reading via internet it shows they are willing to get genuine material and they get it using internet. Statements 10, 7, 8 have got same rank which are affirm in saying that internet; websites are providing truly a good material through which students are improving their reading comprehension. 5 ranked statements are 5, 2 where students are agreed with the ideas that they love to spend much time on internet for improving their reading skills. *I use internet to search relevant reading material*, statement has got 7th rank. Some statements are included in the questionnaire having opposite idea also to maintain the reliability of the tool which have got 8, 9, 10 position in percentage. All above results are showing that students are eager to use internet in their English class.

Interviews

For making this research more reliable and valid four interviews were conducted 03 students were randomly selected for the interview, the interview questionnaire enclosed 3 queries related with usage of internet in English language class, i.e. 1) Do you feel there is a need to incorporate internet in English class specially reading comprehension class? 2) Does Internet usage in English class improve your reading comprehension? 3) do you feel difference in conventional class and internet based computer assisted class?

Views of students regarding Q1: Q2:Q3:

S1: *“Ma’am learning English at engineering university, I feel it is very essential for us being Engineers to be taught by computers and internet because we, engineers are technical people we love to learn by technology. As English language is very necessary to learn so learning that in computer assisted language learning class make us more confident, we really feel difference because here we can search out authentic material which we can access within seconds, we want to learn English by using internet”.*

Student 1 is very much in favor of internet usage in English class and he mentions clearly that by the use of internet they are learning more. Same concept researcher has also mentioned in her literature review, According to Sadeghi, K., &Dousti, M., (2012) ‘CALL’ classes and technology helps to boost confidence.

S2: *“Madam I belong to the rural region where we had not enough exposure of technology as computer but I really want to learn English by computers because it is the need of today’s time. From books, we are definably getting the required information but when we do this on computer by internet usage we love it seems new”*

Student 2 is expressing the same idea as it is discussed: When Images and sounds are integrated with manuscripts it creates novelty in transmission meaning, clearing up methods, and communicating interactively Downes & Fatouros, (1995).

S3: *“Ma’am I always wait for our English class because we really enjoy learning in ‘CALL’ class it is because of new style it is because it’s not boring it is giving us novelty to explore new things to keep abreast with the world as to come equal with anyone. Reading comprehension through internet by different websites is new and interesting”*

Ryan & Deci (2002, pp. 19-20) says CALL is concerned with different technological resources so can be motivational force, as the item appears students wish to react to, the propinquity of the response so the support that the student gets through visual or auditory signals. Ryan &Deci (2002, pp. 19-20). As student 3 is saying I wait for my class so she is very much motivated towards this sort of learning. She finds it different and interactive rather boring.

Conclusion

This study clearly mentions the very idea of usage of internet in reading comprehension class. As the data was gathered and evaluated by quantitative and qualitative methods, the result shows students are eager to use internet in their English classes as they say via internet they enhance their confidence, they get authentic material, they access material easily, they find novelty and they become motivated towards learning language so, this method of incorporating technology must be adopted in every university where students can avail the opportunity to find their required materials easily.

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