

Technology in English Language Learning and Teaching

Yujie Liu

University of Durham, UK Durham University, Durham, DH1 3LE, UK

Abstract: The use of technology is becoming increasingly common in language teaching and learning. Although technology has brought certain benefits of both students and teachers, such as drawing students' attention and make class content more various; there still exists risks is technology is misused, so there are several challenges and measures are proposed in this essay.

Keywords: English language teaching; Technology; Internet.

Recent decades have witnessed the increasing importance of technology, which has been put into use in various area, and education is no exception. Governments in many countries have established policies to encourage and support the use of technology in education (Selwyn, 2012). According to Dudeney and Hockly, technology will eventually become a normal part in language teaching, because the accessibility of Internet is becoming increasingly common for individuals and technology can provide people more opportunities for authentic materials, especially for young learners, who grow up surrounded by technology, using technology to learn languages seems natural and integrated (2007). However, as technology bring a number of benefits to language learning, it can also contribute to certain negative effects on students' learning.

1. How does technology enhance learning English both in class and after class?

Since the emergence of massive technology, electronical tools have become necessary in the Knowledge age (Trilling and Hood, 1999), and a number of changes have been made in classroom. Firstly, in the past teachers needed to make flashcards or printed pictures and bring them to class if they want to illustrate, but now teachers can simply present any images or even videos through PowerPoint. Secondly, in the past teachers could only give instructions verbally or take some class time to write down them on the blackboard, but now they can use OHP to present materials and examples efficiently easily (Scrivener, 2012). Thirdly, the way of giving feedback, such as showing example answers after activities, has also been changed. In addition, technology also plays an important role in assisting students out of class. For example, students have the access to Internet so that they can browse for any study information and resources (Bulman and Fairlie, 2016). Here are some possible aspects where technology can help teaching and learning.

Firstly, being surrounded by technology since birth, students in 21st contrary are most "Digital natives" or "Net generation", and the existence of technology in students' lives has generated a completely different type of students in terms of the way they think, learn, and experience in the world (Hicks, 2011). Net generation have been accustomed to relying on technology in daily lives. Therefore, by making class involve technology, teachers can create the connection between students and digital world where students are familiar with, so technology in classroom is an effective attention keep and meets the needs of students in new generation (Hicks, 2011).

Secondly, by using technology and the Internet, both teachers and students can access more resources for authentic books and materials than before (Dudeney and Hockly, 2007). Internet has made the world a big village, people all over the world are becoming increasingly close with each other, so are the resources of all areas. There are many websites and apps now are available for users to search books, magazines, papers, and any other kind of materials all over the world. Besides authentic materials, there are also many other kinds of study resources on the Internet, such as videos, which students can find according to their preference and weakness of study.

Finally, technology offers various and sufficient means to practices English (Dudeney and Hockly, 2007), which can enhance students' learning both in class and out class. For learning English, there are many websites and apps for reciting words, play recordings, and even talking to native speakers. For example, there is an app called BaiCiZhan, which can help students remember words mainly from pictures. When users log in the app, they will be asked to choose their level according to their study stage (such as high school students, undergraduates, and postgraduates) and preference words book they would like to recite. Apps at other English learning area are also like this. Therefore, instead of boring and mechanical practice before, students now have hundreds of ways to practice their English.

2. Challenges and measures

It is true that technology has brought a large number of benefits to language learning and teaching, but there still exists potential risks and challenges which need to be solved. Here are some possible challenges and measures.

2.1 Some teachers may be misled by the technology trend and rely too much on it, which make them forget the the original purpose of using it – to facilitate teaching

There are some teachers who are big fun of technology, and use it too much in the classroom, even though sometimes the content can be better taught in traditional ways. They often consider that what technology I should use today, and then make their lesson plan. However, pedagogy should always determine the choice of technology and not the other way around (Erben, Ban and Castañeda, 2009). Teachers should never forget that technology is only a tool to assist teaching.

2.2 Being accustomed to fast-paced lifestyle caused by technology, the time which students concentrate on class now is not as long as before

Hicks points out that people are now used to get instantaneous gratification from technology and Internet, their attention spans appear to be shorter than before (2011). This is no doubt a negative effect which technology has brought to human, which is unrealistic to redo – it is unrealistic for teachers to think out ways to help students lengthen their attention spans. Thus, in order to let students focus on class content, teachers now need to make more effort to create class involve more attractive activities. For example, in the past teachers can simply start a lesson with a greeting and some topic-related questions, but now more and more teachers are using more interesting and technology-related ways to lead in a class, such as playing a fun video,

2.3 Teachers still lack professional training of using technology

The process of the adoption and implementation of an innovation requires substantial and sustained teachers' professional development (Kim et al., 2013), and the proficient use of technology requires professional targeted training (Fabry and Higgs, 1997). However, in China there is no systematic training and teaching about technology for teachers. If people choose teachers' professional majors in university, they will learn knowledge about the subject (Like English, Math, Biology), psychology knowledge about students, knowledge about planning lesson and classroom management and etc, but there are no special courses about how to use technology in teaching. Therefore, the widespread use of technology also needs technology-related courses added into curriculum.

2.4 In many countries the policies are against using technology in learning and teaching

The success of using technology widely in Education area depends heavily on the policies designed by the governments in educational sector, but there are a number of countries where electronical devices is still banned in classroom, especially for developing countries. In China, elementary and secondary school students are not allowed to bring mobile phones to campus; Schools are not allowed to use mobile phones to assign homework or require students to use them to complete homework. Although, other devices, like iPads, are not mentioned frequently, almost all the schools do the same to any other kinds of electronical equipment. Therefore, the rules really need to be changed if teachers and students really want to make full use of technology.

3. Conclusion

Technology has become an indispensable part of people's everyday life, and integration of technology and education is the inevitable trend of the future education. In order to achieve successful process of technology implementation and adoption in education, it is important for both learners and teachers to understand the impact of technology-enhanced learning (Price and Oliver, 2007). In teaching and learning English, the impact of technology is two-sided. Thus, while implementing technology in teaching, teachers need to make best use of it and prevent the negative impact of it. Also, parents can play a role in students' use of technology out of class. Most importantly, teachers should never forget that it is teaching and learning matter in education rather than technology. There is still a long way to go before technology and education are well combined, and all parties in society should make joint efforts to promote the enhancement in teaching and learning caused by technology.

References:

-
- [1] Bulman, G. and Fairlie, R.W. (2016) 'Technology and education: Computers, software, and the internet', in *Handbook of the Economics of Education* (Vol. 5, pp. 239-280). Elsevier.
 - [2] Dudeney, G. and Hockly, Nicky (2007) *How to teach English with technology*, Harlow: Pearson/Longman.
 - [3] Erben, T., Ban, R. and Castañeda, M. E. (2009) *Teaching English language learners through technology*. New York: Routledge.
 - [4] Fabry, D.L. and Higgs, J.R. (1997) 'Barriers to the effective use of technology in education: Current status', *Journal of educational computing research*, 17(4), pp.385-395.
 - [5] Hicks, S.D. (2011) 'Technology in today's classroom: Are you a tech-savvy teacher?', *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 84(5), pp.188-191.
 - [6] Kim, C., Kim, M.K., Lee, C., Spector, J.M. and DeMeester, K. (2013) 'Teacher beliefs and technology integration', *Teaching and teacher education*, 29, pp.76-85.
 - [7] Price, S. and Oliver, M. (2007) 'A framework for conceptualising the impact of technology on teaching and learning', *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 10(1), pp.16-27.
 - [8] Scrivener, J. (2012) *Classroom management techniques*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - [9] Selwyn, N. (2012) *Education in a digital world: Global perspectives on technology and education*. New York: Routledge.
 - [10] Trilling, B. and Hood, P. (1999) 'Learning, technology, and education reform in the knowledge age or" we're wired, webbed, and windowed, now what?"', in *Educational technology*, pp.5-18

Author information: Yujie Liu, gender: female, nationality: Han, title: no, master's degree, work unit, Durham University, through: Zaozhuang City, Shandong Province, Research direction: English teaching,