

Learning English through Web Technology

Sadhna Jha

Lingaya's Lalita Devi Institute Of Management And Sciences, Delhi

ABSTRACT

English is required in almost all fields of life. It is an international language and it is understood by almost everyone across the globe. It has become essential to learn and acquire all the skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking effectively and efficiently. Use of web technology is a powerful means to enhance our abilities, to think, to learn, to communicate and to use our brains creatively and logically. The aim of this paper is to discuss the role of web technology in learning English. The web based technology and internet connection in liberating users from routine tasks and empower them, for instance to focus on the creative and cognitive rather than traditional practice of learning. The paper is about innovation and excitement of language learning through web technology and learners to motivate in learning.

Keywords

English, Web technology, E-mail, Blog, Chatroom

1. INTRODUCTION

English is a West Germanic language that arose in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England and spread into what was to become south-east Scotland under the influence of the Anglian medieval kingdom of Northumbria. Following the economic, political, military, scientific, cultural, and colonial influence of Great Britain and the United Kingdom from the 18th century, via the British Empire, and of the United States since the mid-20th century, it has been widely dispersed around the world, become the leading language of international discourse, and has acquired use as lingua franca in many regions. It is widely learned as a second language and used as an official language of the European Union and many Commonwealth countries, as well as in many world organizations.

It is the third most natively spoken language in the world, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.

English has become the dominant international language in communication, science, business, aviation, entertainment, diplomacy and the internet. A working knowledge of English is required. It has become necessary for most countries today to teach English as one of the compulsory subjects at the school level besides the mother tongue. English language in India with all its uniqueness is not native to the soil, yet its importance can not be underestimated. It enjoys unlimited significance not only because it is a language of international corporate sector but also of the cyber world.

The use of technology in various fields has been so successful. In every step of our lives the significance of technology is seen and enjoyed these days. Technology is perhaps the best means to creating an environment conducive to learning. Technology can support teachers in making English language learning faster, easier, less painful, and more engaging, and helps create an optimal language learning

environment. The barrier of location for people in different parts of the world has been reduced by some of the latest technologies such as web, internet. The use of internet and web for the purpose of language learning and teaching has been gaining around since the phenomenal growth of web in the early 90s. A plethora of technologies have been adapted for the purpose of language learning since then. These range from the ubiquitous emails to the more recent instant messaging and mobile communication system. The present study attempts to discuss how Web-based technology and powerful internet connections provide various new possibilities for the development of English language learning. Learning English through the web and using new trends in education make students more willing to learn the language. Using these technologies, students learn English easier and faster than ever before. The main point of this study is to highlight the role of the current web technologies in English learning activities. Also, this study looks at the efficiency and effectiveness of Web-based English language learning tools and internet communication tools.

2. WEB-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Web-based language learning is language learning that involves the use of web and exploits web materials, resources, applications or tools. Web-based language learning is one of the success stories of the end of the 20th century. Over the last 15 years it has grown from fumbling infancy to youthful confidence. It was previously known as online learning, technology based education. The increasing availability of web-based application of language learning has created a new environment for language learners and teachers, one which can be seen as exciting and challenging. Web-based learning activities can improve a variety of basic language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Learners find it more enjoyable and easy to learn through various Internet communication tools, such as **e-mail, blog, chatrooms**.

3. USING INTERNET AS A RESOURCE

The WWW There are many ways in which the World Wide Web can be used for language learning. The first point of call when assessing the World Wide Web is the Internet Browser. This simply returns to the toolbar of an Internet Service Provider. In order to find a website, its usually necessary to type its full address beginning with `http:// www`, but a shortcut is just to type 'go' or 'find' followed by your key words. When the exact address of a website is not known, a variety of tools are available to help one search the WWW. These fall into categories, directories, search engines and metasearch tools.

People use directories to search the Web and to review and categorize the site by topic. **Yahoo** is the most popular version in different languages. Search engines are compiled automatically by Web 'spiders', automatic search tools which regularly visits sites and update their files. **Google** is thought by many to be the best, while **Altavista** is probably the biggest.

4. WEB-BASED RESOURCES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

There are many sources available for language learning available on the World Wide Web, including stand-alone course, integrated course, and integrative task-based exercises, online assignments. Felix, who provides excellent practical information on the use of ready-made sites of language-learning, argues that teachers can outsource significant part of their teaching to the Web.

As for English, **Susan Clarke's EFL page** contains grammar exercises that focus on parts of speech, clauses, and phrasal verbs. She also provides exercises writing skills, particularly business writing. The **Grammar Safari Website** contains activities in which learners look for words and grammar in context. It also suggests assignments that can be completed in order to practice using the grammar. **Dave's ESL café** offers a range of English language learning activities, including information and exercises on phrasal verbs, idioms and slang, as well as useful lesson plans for teachers of English. Another useful site is **onestopenglish.com** which is a very innovative and informative for both language teachers and learners. Some other very effective and useful sites are:

www.learnenglish.org.uk,

www.examenglish.com,

www.towerofenglish.com,

www.english-zone.com,

www.britishcouncil.org,

www.longman.co.uk

These sites can be useful for both the language teachers and learners. On the one hand they provide good number of classroom activities for teachers; on the other hand various online tests can be taken by learners to assess their language proficiency.

5. USING INTERNET FOR COMMUNICATING

5.1 E-Mail

E-mail is one of the easiest and most practical ways of enabling language students to get in contact with native speakers of the target language. For learners of English e-mail is an excellent way to communicate with their instructors because of its usefulness and easiness. A straight forward way to use email as a language learning tool is to see it as a provider of electronic pen. The main advantage is that response time is shorter, which can have important effect on motivation and interest of learners. A second possible advantage is that a more relaxed style of writing is generally deemed appropriate for emails. This means that students may be more likely to focus on communicating their ideas, rather than worrying too much about the more rigid structure of traditional letters. In some cases, the fact that they have managed to communicate their ideas using less than perfect language may provide an important boost for a student's confidence. Students may also feel that they are using real language that is used in the target country rather than the sometimes more artificial-sounding 'textbook' language.

5.2 Blogs:

Blogging or online diary is a form of personal communication and expression. Blogs are well suited to serve as online personal journals for students, particularly since they normally

enable uploading and linking of files. Language learners could use a personal blog, linked to a course, as an electronic portfolio, showing development over time. By publishing the blog on the internet, the students have the possibility of writing for their classmates. Blogs become communicative and interactive when participants write about various current social issues and post it on their blog inviting readers to post comments on them after reading.

5.3 Chat rooms:

Chat rooms are restricted places on the internet where people can communicate in real time. A number of people can type synchronous messages, reading, and replying to what others in the room are saying. Some chat rooms contain graphics and images that enable participants to be represented by animated characters. Overall these new procedures encourage learners to learn language with fun which they lack in a restricted classroom atmosphere cramming for examinations and writing infinite assignments.

However, the progress of web-based learning has not been without critics. There is a wide spread fallacy that increased use of web-based learning will lead to a reduction in the need for teachers; its advantages over traditional systems of learning has been questioned; its implementation is rendered difficult by the lack of resources, etc. Such a debate is healthy. It is quite normal that a new teaching and learning procedure should be discussed and challenged. But I would like to point out it here that the use of web in language learning creates a very innovative and encouraging atmosphere and its use both inside and outside the classroom will increase a lot in the near future. It's a great support to teachers as it facilitates language learning in various ways, promotes distance learning and through internet it gives users access to a whole wealth of resources which can stimulate learning.

6. TEACHER'S ROLE

Despite the dazzling progress of education through web technology when we observe a language learning classroom, we find seemingly unchanged learning activities. Although convinced that web resources and technology can enhance learning, language teachers remain unclear how to integrate it meaningfully into the existing curriculum. The potential of the internet as a language learning resources is considerable, yet teachers need to know what uses they want to make of it. In web-based learning the problem of information overload is likely to remain significant and language teachers will have to deal with difficult task of limiting the amount of information with which their students have to work. Unfamiliarity with constantly changing hardware and software can undermine confidence in the context of the classroom, when teachers are aware that their own time wasted is learner's time wasted. The context of many teachers attempting to assimilate computer into their practice has been lack of appropriate equipment, training and time to evaluate new applications. Coupled with uncertainties about genuine pedagogical purposes for computers, these reasons have caused teachers to remain wary on computer. For the development and effective implementation in language learning in web environment, there is a need for teachers to become active and critical web users and develop their own skills and strategies for selecting and managing web materials. Teachers need to be aware of the changing environment of web technologies and at the same time develop high quality web resources and use the resources through well-prepared web-based language learning activities. At the present scenario there is an urgent need for teacher training to promote effective language learning environment through web technologies.

Effective teacher training may include the following elements:

1. An analysis of teacher's current level of skills and some indications of what purposes they envisage for computer usage
2. Unlimited access to the equipment that is to be the focus of learning
3. Consideration of educational application of the technology
4. Time to practice skills, reflect on new knowledge and consider effective ways of integrating computer use to enhance pupil's learning in discussion with colleagues
5. Training teachers through conducting various web-based learning workshops, short-term courses

7. MOTIVATING LEARNERS

There are wide ranges of teaching style using more traditional teaching methods that can be highly motivating, but all too often such teachings are discarded when computer is introduced to classroom. It is true that with access to vast amount of information over the internet and on CD-ROMs, students alongside teachers share the role of exploring unchanged ground together, but this does not mean that the students have the ability to organize and manage their learning or to know what is useful to learn and what is not. If we leave students to discover on their own, then sometimes the result can be discouraging or at best confusing. The teacher's role in guiding the students when using computer can either enhance or distract from the motivating experiences that the students may have. The role of teacher shifts here to that of a facilitator, in motivating, encouraging the learners.

8. CONCLUSION

Last but not the least, this paper would like to highlight that there is no doubt in the interesting, innovative and encouraging role of web-based language learning environment. Web based technologies in language learning remain not an alternative but a complementary tool in reinforcing effective classroom activities. This paper would also suggest teachers to avoid being skeptical about the use of web in language teaching and begin to re-evaluate their teaching methods. The web resources can best assist teachers if it is seen not as a replacement for their work but as a supplement to it. Exposure to such a new, creative learning environment paves way to a unique learning atmosphere.

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