

DIGITAL MEDIA: RELEVANCE IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of information and web technologies, teaching English language can be shaped by technology. Modern students are 'netizens', 'digital natives' and 'digital beings' because their contact to digital media is initiated at early age. Therefore, it is imperative for the teachers to be equipped with digital knowledge to enhance the teaching learning process. This paper highlights the aim of modern education to converge English Language Teaching and technology. Facilitators have to be tech-savvy to supply the right use of technology to the students with proper monitoring and guidance for “what to watch” and “how much to watch”. Thus, students are saved from getting lost into the internet maze. The use of digital media in a language class “demonstrated creativity, thoughtful writing, organizational skill and powerful incidences of self-expression, even by students who were often reluctant to speak out in class.” The paper focuses on the use of internet media artifacts in teaching of English. The experience of analyzing these artifacts is so engaging to the students that by the end, even the most shy and hesitant students have no inhibitions to respond in front of others. When students watch short movies with the monitoring of the teacher, they analyze the purpose of the movie and their reactions push their English speaking skills without even getting conscious of it. Online courses and applications have made English learning easy with the direction of the teacher. Various word games promote language learning and benefit students and teachers. Online language tools perform online assessment and monitor student progress in the four language skills. A new

piece of technology is a translation earpiece where the spoken words of one language are translated as soon as the conversation begins. Though the perfection of this machine translation is not yet achieved yet it has got considerable accuracy. The paper contains a list of English resources that can make English class more productive and fruitful. The findings of the paper support the conclusion that the usage of digital media boosts the English language proficiency, and reduces the levels of cultural stress, academic difficulties, and negative emotions that some students are confronted with.

KEYWORDS: Digital, Education, English, Language Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Twenty first century Education can be defined fully by incorporating advanced technologies in English Language Teaching with more focus on learners' level and interest. "Integrating technology with face-to-face teacher time generally produces better academic outcomes than employing either technique alone." (Edutopia) A good language teaching approach calls for a balance in traditional language teaching materials and new digital media. Digital Media is more engaging and enriching than "linear, homogeneously sealed environment of paper-based communication" Drawing on research-based techniques of language teaching and multimedia learning, this paper presents the strategies for teaching English through digital media. It gives the students the opportunity to record and reflect on their own abilities and become independent and self-conscious to develop their language skills. Digital Media is a helpful tool in the hands of teachers who can strengthen their teaching resources and abilities.

Craig and Patten (2007) point out that digital media supports learners in expanding verbal interaction skills, increasing their vocabulary, and improving their reading comprehension. Furthermore, Internet access and social media develops students' intercultural skills and promotes global awareness. To add more, Warschauer and Healey (1998, as cited in Brown, 2001, p.145) assert that integrating digital technologies in the English language classroom allows for individualization in larger classes; facilitates multimodal practice; encourages collaboration; and increases the "fun" factors for students.

ONLINE COURSES

- (a) **Blogging:** Word-processing software is used to give the traditional notebook and pencil activity a new digital form. Such digital writing can be done online as a blog. Blogs (Weblog) are personal journal websites on which a user can type an entry, add images, video and links to other websites. Readers can post their comments on the blog. For beginners, the use of blogs have been found to be an engaging and effective way to promote writing skills (Richardson, 2006), specially when students provide feedback to the blog's writer (Chen et al., 2011) The most important features of blog are feedback and sharing mechanism. Blogs give access to the teacher, the class, the student's parents and the world.
- (b) **Websites:** Teachers can use websites like Folder Share, Stickam, Talk and Write, Tikiwiki, Google Docs and Spreadsheets.

For creating a back channel to connect the class, there is a website called <https://todaysmeet.com/>. It helps share digital materials, reinforce task setting, enables student sharing and collaborating, develops written communication skills and enable student participation

www.pinterest.co.uk

www.answergarden.ch is used for brainstorming and improving vocabulary. This website is used by students, teachers, conference and corporate audiences, creative teams, online crowds and mindmappers. It shows numerous answers in a glance. Teachers can use this website as an educational tool. Users create an Answergarden by entering a topic on the Create New AnswerGarden page. They can type any question which will be displayed on the screen and others can type their answers and then click the Submit option. This website stimulates brainstorming and students become responsible and draw on wider range of views. It also empowers and validates student input.

www.evernote.com enables digital note taking which is easy to organise and allows sharing and collaboration among the students.

www.diigo.com creates online library where users can bookmark their favourites. It provides social bookmarking, access bookmarks from any computer. It is easy to organise and allows sharing in groups.

www.Telegra.ph is a minimalist publishing tool that allows users to create richly formatted posts and make them available online. It helps create simple web pages to make digital worksheets. It enables materials easily available online. It is easy to access from anywhere and it broadens range of resources.

Online Storage is used to make one's teaching material available from anywhere. It keeps digital materials online and is easy to access. It helps editing online and sharing materials much easier. For example www.dropbox.com

- © **E-mail writing:** Many students of my class have started mailing me the file in which they do their language practice like paragraph writing, letter writing, grammar exercises. Emails have made communication more convenient among teachers and students.

SOFTWARES AND APPS

www.kids.youtube.com

- (i) : It is a great free app if the teachers work on mobile devices with young students. It allows them to give their students free range to search through You Tube clips without any inappropriate video material. There is also a parental guide to help the users use the app and ensure their students search the relevant topics.
- (ii) Ipods are one of the mobile media devices which enable users to produce, organise, deliver and use media. They can share texts, images, audio or video with their peers and teachers. Ipods can benefit users in improving their listening skills. There are many websites that include podcasts like:

www.freeclassicaudiobooks.com

www.librivox.com

www.classicpoetryload.com

www.segued.middlebury.edu/view/html/site/ipodls/node/853364

The activities included in these websites focus on improving students' English by enhancing vocabulary building, learning grammar and publishing students' works. Students can listen and read authentic materials such as news in English, songs, poems or vocabulary and translations.

Online language translators: An online translator supports learning words as they occur natural in real text and allows users to view bilingual versions of a text side by side so that they can use their first language knowledge to develop their English vocabulary. Users can paste text into the translator field, select the input and output languages and view the translation. For example, Bablefish, Google translator and Bing Translator.

Online Texts:

<http://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/>

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>

www.timeforkids.com

Teachers can also use digital posters or PowerPoint screen to show a splash of book cover images, screen captures of websites, movie trailers, and blogs to invite students' interest in specific authors, books, genres, popular culture and media. For example, a screen displaying a play that the class is reading, such as *The Merchant of Venice* links to several screens, one featuring Shakespeare's official website, others to enotes.com, sparknotes.com , another to a site with video clips from The Merchant of Venice movie and still another highlighting other plays and poems by Shakespeare.

VOCABULARY BUILDING STRATEGIES THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA: Vocabulary building is a dire need to develop the advanced literacy levels required in school and beyond. (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Graves &Watts-Taffe, 2008) Developing vocabulary depends on building connections between words and developing elaborate webs of meaning (Boulware- Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, & Joshi, 2007). Graphic organizers and visual displays highlight the relationships between words (Baumann& Kame'euni, 2004). The online dictionaries are very resourceful like www.thefreedictionary.com, www.reference.com, www.merriam-webster.com. Tools designed for students include Word Central from

Merriam-Webster, Back in School from Dictionary.com, and Yahoo Kids! American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.

There is an online word reference tool are useful teaching resource <https://www.visualthesaurus.com/> It also gives columns like Behind the Dictionary and Teachers at Work and teacher-created themed word lists. There are online dictionaries and thesauri which help students improve their understanding more than print references.

Wordle is a free web application that allows the users to create a word cloud based on the frequency of words in a particular text. It can be used to trigger students' thinking about the meaning, importance and relationship of words as they analyze, create and publish Wordles. To create a word cloud, users paste text into the applet and then manipulate the visual display by selecting the colour scheme, layout and font. Word clouds can be used to highlight keywords and themes to prepare students for reading, as well as prompt discussion after reading. Students actively engage with meaning as they draw on the background knowledge about words and concepts as well as on visual literacy skills. When students manipulate the word cloud's layout, colour and font, they integrate verbal and visual representations, it strengthens the multimedia learning effect (Fadel & Lemke, 2008) and develops an important digital literacy skill in our visual society. Following sites can be used to explore wordle creator:

www.wordle.net

www.tagxedo.com

www.worditout.com

http://www.abcya.com/word_clouds.htm

www.wordsift.org

GAMES

1. **Vocabulary Games:** Crossword puzzles, picture-word matches, word scrambles and eight letters in Search of a Word(creating words from eight letters within the time limit). Users can use the following websites to practise and improve vocabulary:

<https://www.vocabulary.co.il/>

<https://www.vocabulary.com/>

<http://freerice.com/#/english-vocabulary/1494>

SOCIAL MEDIA

- (a) **YouTube** : It is the world's largest video library. Teachers can exploit the following tools to make English language learning convenient for their students:

www.voicetube.com

- (iii) : It is a self-study tool for students that allows them to listen and study each individual sentence within a video. They can take and save notes about the vocabulary within the script. They can also listen and record themselves saying sentences from the script. Later they can compare to the original. This website also tracks their activity and shows them the number and list of videos they have watched and it shows their notes and history of translated words in their word bank. Some of the videos have quizzes but these only work in Chrome browser.
- (iv) www.youglish.com: This tool improves pronunciation. The user searches for a word, phrase and YouGlish finds an example in a YouTube video and takes the user directly to the part of the video where the phrase appears. The user can then listen to the phrase in the context and see the sentence that it appears in. The phrase and clip can be saved and shared through social media if the user registers on the site.
- (v) www.tubequizard.com: The users can select the area of their study, the kind of movie and even the accent they want to learn. This website will generate activities for them based around the subtitles. They can then listen, fill in gaps and check their answers. There is also a search engine where a particular phrase and a video containing that text can be searched.

- (vi) www.captiongenerator.com: This tool is used for exploiting clips that have no audible dialogue. Users can add captions to the clips and make up their own dialogue. This is indeed easy to do. They just add the URL to the video clip and then type in the captions. It lets users think about the link between language and context.

www.watchkin.com

- (vii) : This is a helpful tool for removing advertising and distractions from around the YouTube clip. While watching a clip, the surrounding clips often disturb the attention of the users. They can paste in the link to the video they want to see and WatchKin will produce a framed version of the clip. They can then generate a unique URL to the framed version and use that either in the class or when they link to videos in online or digital materials.
- (viii) www.reembed.com: This tool allows the teachers to create their customised video player with their own logo, colouring and choice of controls. This is useful if they are building video clips into an online course and they want others to look consistent and professional throughout the course. Once they have created their own player they can then just use it to generate an embed code for each of the videos in the course.
- (ix) www.peggo.tv: This tool is used to download and edit a clip from YouTube. It gives a number of options including trimming the video so they can only see a selected part of the clip, removing the audio so the video is silent, removing the visual part so you have only the sound track or just downloading the entire clip to their hard drive. It allows flexibility to the teacher with how he/she works with the different versions of the clip in the classroom or how he/she creates online tasks around the clip.

- (b) Facebook and Twitter:** Students can join various groups on social media where they can learn about new updates in language learning and express their own views on current topics of discussion.

- (c) **WhatsApp** : This mobile app can bring many changes in students' participation and responses. They can send videos and audios to their teachers and get their works reviewed. They can overcome the barriers of hesitation, indifference towards writing and bring new approach to learning language.
- (d) **Podcast**: A podcast is a series of audio or video files that can be played on a number of devices (mp3players or mobile phones or desktop computers) and are shared over the internet via a subscription service. Once downloaded, podcasts can be accessed anytime and anyplace. Teachers can use such up to date resources for their classes to encourage students to listen to audio materials on topics they are interested in and they can even make their own podcasts or ask their class to make some themselves. Users can use www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts

Podcasting can support principles advocated by several theories of learning such as the use of authentic materials, informal and lifelong learning, the use of learning objects for the provision of learning materials and just in time teaching. (Rossel-Aguilar, 2007)

Podcasting material can be monitored easily. It is portable, convenient to use and easy to access. Users can control the pace at which the information is delivered to them- using the pause button, for example. Podcasts can be accessed from iTunes website free of cost.

Other podcasts are:

www.podcastalley.com/top_podcasts.php?num=20&genre=7&year=2011&month=4

www.ipodder.org/podcasts

- (e) **LinkedIn and Academia.edu**: These communities of like-minded professional people working in the same industry/profession or having same interests. Teachers can use such platforms to build professional brand and create online reputation. They can share their insightful content and build recognition.

CONCLUSION

The above research supports the conclusion that using digital media can have

a significant impact on students' language learning skills when digital content is embedded in the curriculum in sustained and deliberate ways. It gives new avenues to teachers' instructional practices by engaging students in practising language skills, extend their thinking and assess students' knowledge. Digital Media enhances the English language proficiency and lessens the language, cultural, social and other academic difficulties faced during the learning process.

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