

## THE INTERNET IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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**Abstract.** *This article deals with the importance of integrating the internet into teaching foreign languages, the advantages and disadvantages of using these technologies, and solutions to some problems including some advice and tips for ELT teachers.*

**Keywords:** *internet, ELT, technology, pros and cons of internet, to share and exchange information.*

## ИНТЕРНЕТ В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

**Аннотация.** *В этой статье рассматривается важность интеграции Интернета в преподавание иностранных языков, преимущества и недостатки использования этих технологий, а также решения некоторых проблем, включая некоторые советы и подсказки для преподавателей ELT.*

**Ключевые слова:** *интернет, ELT, технологии, плюсы и минусы интернета, обмен информацией.*

## INTRODUCTION

The invention of new technologies usually causes a great change in particular areas of science, but there is one technology which has sparked an enormous revolution for all types of human activities. This technology is called the computer and it has been used for over fifty years. During this time the usage of computers has risen dramatically around the world. As a result, the people are able to share information with each other in ways they never could before.

The need for sharing and exchanging information led to the development of the powerful tool called the internet. Nowadays it is almost impossible to imagine our life without computers and the internet. These technologies are used in science, art, economics, education and many other fields of study. And these technologies are advancing the fields in which they have been integrated.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In terms of technological developments, the past century witnessed a lot of breakthroughs, and it is generally agreed that computers and the internet represent major creations. Moreover, the language that accompanied this technological revolution has been English and, at the beginning, English and computing were quite inseparable. Nowadays, even if this is no longer the case, digital skills and EFL skills are frequently associated and there are several points worth considering when approaching these concepts.

With the decline of the Communicative model, a new, task-based and project-based approach made its appearance. Furthermore, two incredibly important technologies were developed: multimedia (and hypermedia) and the internet. The former enabled students to handle a variety of media, such as text, graphics, and video; hypermedia made it possible to link them all together. These results in an involving and authentic learning environment, where students receive different kinds of input and different skills are integrated in the same activity (for

example visual and auditory skills). However, in the beginning, the programs including multimedia were expensive and not teaching oriented, and the quality was not good. This problem was overcome in the last years, thanks to the creation of a variety of good quality and affordable programs. As for the internet, it was a revolution in the way the computer could be used for language learning. Thanks to this new technology, learners are now able to communicate with native speakers easily and at any time, from any computer available. This communication can be synchronous, for example via chats, or asynchronous, when using emails or comments. In addition, the internet provides access to a wide range of authentic materials, which can be personalized for every student to suit both his interests and his level of proficiency. Furthermore, students can create and publish their own materials and receive feedback from the teacher, their peers, or any other internet user in the world.

## RESULTS

Over the past few years, the Internet has emerged as a prominent new technology. The influence of such a powerful technological tool has pervaded all aspects of the educational, business, and economic sectors of our world. Regardless of whether one uses the Internet or not, one must be clear about the fact that we have entered a new information age and the Internet is here to stay. Because the use of the Internet is widespread in numerous fields, without a doubt, it also carries great potential for educational use, specifically second and foreign language education. The Internet is the latest in a series of technological innovations for second language education. Those involved in the practice of English language teaching can get any kind of information in the internet. Internet also provides answers for almost all of their questions. Most teachers believe that they may get much benefit through the use of internet. They can use it as one way of getting resources for conducting their teaching or to get in touch with other English teachers from other places. They can use it as a medium to exchange information related to their teaching. Internet provides a low-cost method of making language learning more entertaining, it also represents important new forms of literacy needed in the 21st century. Internet also provides opportunities for students to interact 24 hours a day with native and nonnative speakers from around the world and it allows them to become autonomous lifelong learners who can find what they need when they need it.

Warschauer and Whittaker in Richards and Renandya propose several possible reasons for using the Internet in language teaching. (4:368) One rationale is found in the belief that the linguistic nature of online communication is desirable for promoting language learning. Another possible reason for using the Internet is that it creates optimal conditions for learning to write, since it provides an authentic audience for written communication. A third possible reason is that it can increase students' motivation. A fourth possible reason is the belief that learning computer skills is essential to students' future success, this reason suggests that it is not only a matter of using the Internet to learn English, but also of learning English to be able to function well on the Internet.

While the computer is now used in some form or another in most language classrooms, and is considered standard equipment, the Internet is also gradually being introduced in the second language classroom as teachers become more familiar with it. The Internet is a confederation of thousands of computers from various sectors of society such as education, business, government and the military. It is a network of thousands of computer networks. (5:12) Each individual system brings something different to the whole (databases, graphs, maps,

electronic journals, etc), and the end result is a vast accumulation of information. It is a worldwide network of computers that interact on a standardized set of protocols which act independently of particular computer operating systems, allowing for a variety of access methods to the Internet. For example, the Internet can be accessed from an IBM computer in a student's home in Uzbekistan, or from a Macintosh computer at a school in America. It can be used to both exchange information through electronic mail, newsgroups, list serves, professional on-line discussion groups, and so forth, as well as to retrieve information on a variety of topics through the World Wide Web.

Although the Internet has been available to most people, only recently have educators been realizing the potential the Internet can have in second and foreign language classrooms. The Internet has been used by some language instructors in creative ways - one of these innovations is using electronic mail (e-mail), a specific feature of the Internet. E-mail can encourage students to use computers in realistic, authentic situations in order to develop communicative, and thinking skills. E-mail is easy to use and even teachers intimidated by computers can quickly become adept at using e-mail with their students. Furthermore, even timid or inhibited students can benefit from the meaningful interaction and communication e-mail makes possible. Kroonenberg, for example, employed e-mail in her ESL classes at Hong Kong International School. She relates her initial experiences of working with two classes of ESL multinational students in grades 9-12, and a homogeneous group of summer school students involving Cantonese-speaking 14 and 15 year olds. The Dragon Bulletin Board System (BBS) using the TELIX communications software was established in order to allow students and teachers to send messages to each other, as well as make public entries on discussion conferences.

Kroonenberg believes this allows students to become familiar with the system and allows their ideas to flow. Writing on e-mail can be used to generate ideas about a topic, or can enable learners to free-write without any impositions. E-mail can also be used in various conference-type formats or to generate discussion. For example, Kroonenberg often provided students with topics of high interest in order to generate more writing. In fact, one student who was part of this project stated, "I usually get involved in the BBS because the subjects are interesting and I have a lot to say about them". (6:24) Writing topics often involved school issues or issues that were directly relevant to the students' lives. In other conference assignments, students are the main audience. Students read entries and then respond to them via e-mail. This allows each student to express their opinion. In this manner, all opinions are voiced and heard, something which may not always occur in oral discussions in the classroom. Such experiences, once again stimulate authentic communication and assist students in developing specific communication skills such as arguing, persuading, or defending a particular point.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Pros and Cons of using the Internet in ELT classes**

If you look at human's nature they tend to ignore changes in the beginning until they get used to those changes. And this usually happens with discoveries or inventions too. From the history every new technology seemed strange to people and they usually thought that they are harmful. But there are some people who are really curious and willing to try new things. And the world is developing because of these kind of people. And they know where there are advantages, there are disadvantages. But the point is who can make it work finding more advantages. If you just sit and think about disadvantages of new things you are not going to move forward anyways.

In order to avoid mistakes we should not stop working but we should learn from mistakes, try more new things and find more advantages but not forget disadvantages. We can take the internet as our example. It will be an endless discussion if I write about disadvantages and advantages of the internet. So I will write about pros and cons of using the internet particularly in ELT.

Writing about the internet and using it in ELT will not be complete without addressing the disadvantages or obstacles related to the use of the Internet in the language classroom. While the Internet and its various facets offer a great deal to the language learner, it is not without its problems. The nature of the Internet itself can be a disadvantage at times. When lines are busy due to many users, it may take time to access information or browse the Net and technical glitches themselves can lead to frustration. Lack of training and familiarity on part of the teachers can make it difficult to implement the Internet in the language classroom. This requires that school administrators budget for training in this area. Foreign language teachers are especially anxiety prone to computers since they often have little experience with computers. For the most part, computers in schools are used for business or computer science courses. Costs related to training, as well as on-line costs of using a provider are issues that may interfere with implementing such a technology in schools, especially in schools that have little funding. Censorship may also be a concern to language programs and instructors. The Internet offers access to all types of issues and topics, some of which are unsuitable for children, and this in itself may result in various problems. While some precautions can be taken at the present time, they are not full proof by any means. But anyways these drawbacks cannot be problems for the people who can find solution and can find more advantages than disadvantages of using the internet. And now it is time to write about advantages of using the internet in ELT classes.

While the Internet offers numerous benefits to the language learner, a few such possibilities are examined here, in the context of language learning. Perhaps one of the most essential pedagogical principles of language teaching is one that emphasizes the study of language in a cultural context. I believe that language and culture are inextricable and interdependent; Understanding the culture of the target language enhances understanding of the language. To this end, the Internet is a valuable resource to both language teachers and learners. As discussed previously, e-mail on the Internet allows language learners to communicate with native speakers. In this manner, the Internet facilitates the use of the specific language in an authentic setting. The Internet can also be used to acquire information from language resources for a variety of purposes. For example, students can access current information from countries around the world. They can obtain geographical, historical, social/cultural, economic, and political information from the countries in which the target language is spoken. Students can read web versions of daily newspapers and same-day news reports from sources such as the French Embassy's gopher service, the daily *Revue de Press.* (7:475) Such experiences can allow learners to participate in the culture of the target language, which in turn can enable them to further learn how cultural background influences one's view of the world.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Internet also serves as a medium for experiencing and presenting creative works. While students can peruse the information on the Net, they can also use it as a platform for their own work such as essays, poetry, or stories. Numerous public schools, for example, are making

use of the World Wide Web for publishing student work which can be accessed by other web users. Students therefore become not only consumers of content, but in fact generate the content.

As R.Mike describes, the use of the Internet has also been shown to promote higher order thinking skills. (8:38) A language teacher, for example, may instruct learners to search for specific information. Searching the Web requires logic skills. Once information has been obtained, the results must be reviewed which requires scanning, discarding, and evaluative judgment on part of the learner. The information must be put together to make a complete and coherent whole which entails the synthesis process. Such an endeavor permits students to practice reading skills and strategies. The Internet also promotes literacy for authentic purposes, as stated previously. In addition to being a supplement to reading materials, especially current information, when students are exploring the Net, they are essentially exploring the real world. Such browsing or exploration can also lead to incidental learning as they encounter a variety of information in this way. Communication with native speakers furthers literacy development for authentic purposes, enables language learners to compare student perspectives on an issue, and allows them to practice specific skills such as negotiating, persuading, clarifying meaning, requesting information, and engaging in true-life, authentic discussion. (20;129)

Promotion of literacy also occurs within a social context. The interaction that results from the above situations can lead to cooperative projects and increased communication between students from all over the world, in turn leading to the development of social skills. Finally, use of the Internet can promote computer skills and the technical and conceptual experiences of using a computer. Lastly, the Internet provides supplemental language activities which can provide students with additional practice in specific areas of language learning. These include reading tests and comprehension questions, grammar exercises, pronunciation exercises possible through the available multimedia capabilities, cloze tests, vocabulary exercises, and so forth.

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