

## **Computer an Instrument Effective in Better Understanding English Language and Literature**

**Dr. Yespal Singh**  
**Assistant Professor of English**  
**Government College, Rewari**

There is no doubt and question about it that English is the International Language. It is language of science, business, library as well as the language of computer. It is also the fact that English language played a very significant role in making of the device of computer popular but it is not a one way process. It is the computer which played equally crucial role in the study, understanding and propagation of English Language throughout the world.

The English Language is sometimes described as the lingua franca of computer science where as Latin and Greek are the principal sources of vocabulary for other sciences, computer science borrows more extensively from English. Due to the technical limitations of early computers, and the lack of international standards on the Internet, computer users were limited to using English and the Latin alphabet. However, this historical limitation is less present today. Most software products are localized in numerous languages and the use of the Unicode character encoding has resolved problems with non-Latin alphabets. English is seen as having this role due to the prominence of the United States and the United Kingdom, both English Speaking Nations, in development and popularization of computer systems, computer networking, Software and manufacturing.

Advances in computer related technology have made it easier for teachers and learners of English to access a wide range of resources in terms of authentic input and communication with native and non-native speakers of English throughout the world. From the early days of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), there has been great debate and discussion of how technologies can play a role in motivating and encouraging learners in learning a language (e.g., Warschauer, 1996), and as technologies have become more sophisticated, the growing range of uses of technology in and out of the classroom increases the potential for enhanced motivation. Teaching context may be a large population where one might expect that technological advances are less than those of many other countries around the world, including Europe and the United States. The experiences in discussions with colleagues and attending conferences, there are more commonalities than differences in problems that are encountered regarding implementing technology for learning purposes. For this reason, I am keeping this discussion at a more general level, as the implications are likely to be of relevance to teachers regardless of where they are based. As Dörnyei (1999: 525) very rightly argues, 'motivation is one of the most elusive concepts in applied linguistics and indeed in educational psychology in general'. There has been a great deal of discussion and debate about motivation in language learning over the past six decades or more, but in the last few years there have seen a renewed interest in motivation in the field, and a number of books have been published recently (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; 2011; Murray et al., 2011), laying proof to its importance. Increased motivation has often been given as the reason for the introduction and use of technology in

language 9 Technology and Motivation in English-Language Teaching and Learning Glenn Stockwell E. Ushioda (ed.), International Perspectives on Motivation © Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited 2013 Technology and Motivation in ELT Across Contexts 157 learning environments, but what is the nature of the relationship between motivation and technology? And what are the characteristics of the motivation for using technology for learning a second language? To deal these questions, it is important to examine research into CALL and how it explicitly and implicitly refers to motivation, not only in the learning process, but also in the choosing of technologies. Obviously, research into CALL is very broad, but there is a body of research which looks at why teachers use CALL, and how technology can help learners to build and maintain their motivation in learning English Language. Thus, this paper looks at how technology can be used in the English language classrooms, and how these uses can be linked to motivation. It begins with looking at general issues associated with technology and motivation, including a brief discussion of the so-called inherent motivational benefits of using technology. It then considers the issue of motivation for using technology from both the teacher's and learner's perspective, followed by an overview of communication technologies that have come into the mainstream in English-language teaching and learning, and how these can impact motivation. These include writing for a real audience through blogs and social networking tools (e.g., Lee, 2009) and the potential benefits of anonymity that may be seen in different types of communication tools such as virtual worlds (e.g., Deutschmann et al., 2009). The chapter continues with an examination of mobile technologies for language learning, and explores the concept of private and studying spaces (cf., Stockwell, 2010). The chapter concludes by considering the local and global issues associated with using technology for English-language learning, and how motivation may be affected by the technologies that are available in both more- and less-technologically advanced regions. Technology and motivation Inherent motivational effects of technology The issue of the inherent motivating effects of technology in education is hardly new, and teachers have long held the view that introducing new technologies into language learning environments has the potential to boost learner motivation. Apart from the novelty effect of engaging with a new technology (e.g., Fox, 1988), such claims were founded on the idea that computer-assisted instruction allowed for more individualised instruction and provided opportunities for learner control and rapid, non-judgemental feedback (see Warschauer, 1996 for a discussion). While much of the early research came from general education environments that did not focus specifically on second language learning, the predominantly drill-based vocabulary and grammar activities meant at the time that it maintained its relevance to computer-based language.

Computers have made a triumphal entry into education in the past decade, and only a dyed-in-the wool Luddite would deny that they have brought significant benefits to teachers and students alike. However, an uncritical use of computers can be just as disadvantageous to students as a refusal to have anything to do with them. In this article I discuss some of the ways that computers can be used in English language teaching, with a view to helping colleagues make the most of the opportunities they offer to ESL students.

It is helpful to think of the computer as having the following main roles in the language classroom:

- **teacher** - the computer teaches students new language
- **tester** - the computer tests students on language already learned
- **tool** - the computer assists students to do certain tasks
- **data source** - the computer provides students with the information they need to perform a particular task
- **communication facilitator** - the computer allows students to communicate with others in different locations

**Computer as teacher.** In the early days of computers and programmed learning, some students sat at a terminal for extended periods following an individualized learning program. Although we have come a long way from the rather naïve thought, held by some at that time, that the computer could eventually come to replace the teacher, there has been a return to a much more sophisticated kind of computerized teaching using multimedia CD ROMS. In such programs, students can listen to dialogues or watch video clips. They can click on pictures to call up the names of the objects they see. They can speak into the microphone and immediately hear a recording of what they have said. The program can keep a record of their progress, e.g. the vocabulary learned, and offer remedial help if necessary. Many of these CD ROM programs are offered as complete language courses. They require students to spend hours on their own in front of the computer screen, usually attached to a microphone headset. For this reason alone I prefer not to use them in my language teaching. Another of their serious drawbacks, in my view, is the fact that in many cases the course content and sequence is fixed. The teacher has no chance to include materials that are of interest and importance to the particular students in his or her class.

As an alternative to large CD ROM packages, there is an increasing number of useful sites on the World Wide Web, where students can get instruction and practice in language skills such as reading, listening and writing.

**Computer as a tester.** The computer is very good at what is known as *drill and practice*; it will tirelessly present the learner with questions and announce if the answer is right or wrong. In its primitive manifestations in this particular role in language teaching, it has been rightly criticised. The main reason for the criticism is simple: many early drill and practice programs were very unsophisticated; either multiple-choice or demanding a single word answer. They were not programmed to accept varying input and the only feedback they gave was *Right* or *Wrong*. So for example, if the computer expected the answer "*does not*" and the student typed "*doesn't*" or "*doesnot*" or "*does not*", she would have been told she was wrong without any further comment. It is not surprising that such programs gave computers a bad name with many language teachers. Unfortunately, there are now very many of these primitive *drill and kill* programs flooding the Internet.

Despite their obvious disadvantages, such programs are nevertheless popular with many students. This is probably because the student is in full control, the computer is extremely patient and gives private, unthreatening feedback. Most programs also keep the score and have cute animations and sounds, which many students like.

There are some programs which do offer more useful feedback than right or wrong, or that can accept varying input. Such programs blur the role of the computer as teacher or tester and can be recommended to students who enjoy learning grammar or vocabulary in this way. If two or more students sit at the same computer, then they can generate a fair amount of authentic communication while discussing the answers together.

**Computer as a tool.** It is in this area that I think the computer has been an unequivocal success in language teaching. Spreadsheets, databases, presentation slide generators, concordancers and web page producers all have their place in the language classroom, particularly in one where the main curricular focus is task-based or project-work. But in my opinion, by far the most important role of the computer in the language classroom is its use as a writing tool. It has played a significant part in the introduction of the writing process, by allowing students easily to produce multiple drafts of the same piece of work.. Students with messy handwriting can now do a piece of work to be proud of, and those with poor spelling skills can, after sufficient training in using the spell check, produce a piece of writing largely free of spelling mistakes.

**Computer as a data source.** I'm sure I don't need to say much about the Internet as a provider of information. Anyone who has done a search on the World Wide Web will know that there is already more information out there than an individual could process in hundred lifetimes, and the amount is growing by the second. This huge source of information is an indispensable resource for much project work, but there are serious negative implications. I shudder to think of how much time has been wasted and will continue to be wasted by students who aimlessly wander the Web with no particular aim in mind and with little or no guidance. I generally do not turn my students free to search the web for information. Instead, I find a few useful sites beforehand and tell the students to start there; anyone who finishes the task in hand can then be let loose! As an alternative to the Web, there are very many CD ROMs, e.g. encyclopaedias, that present information in a more compact, reliable and easily accessible form.

**Computer as communication facilitator.** The Internet is the principal medium by which students can communicate with others at a distance, (e.g. by e-mail or by participating in discussion forums). In fact at Frankfurt International School the single most popular use of computers by students in their free time is to write e-mails to their friends. Some teachers have set up joint projects with a school in another location and others encourage students to take part in discussion groups. There is no doubt that such activities are motivating for students and allow them to participate in many authentic language tasks. However, cautious teachers may wish to closely supervise their students' messages. Recent research has shown up the extremely primitive quality of much of the language used in electronic exchanges.

From above analysis it is quite evident that computer is playing an important and crucial role in learning and teaching of English Language by making language learning a new and spectacular experience. It is opening new avenues for language learners and scopes for further development for English Language.

## References

- Kerimbaeva B.T. et al. RUDN Journal of Informatization of Education, 2017, 14 (1), 108—113 111
- Kachru B. The alchemy of English: The spread, functions and models of nonnative Englishes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Phillipson R. English for the Glohe, or Only for Glohe-Trotters? The World of the EU // The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies. 2003.
- *The Internet and ELT* Eastment, D. 1999 The British Council This is a brief but useful overview of the issues concerning the use of the Internet in English language teaching.
- *CALL Environments* Egbert, J & Hanson-Smith, E (eds.) 1999 TESOL, Va Despite the unpromising title, this is a good and very comprehensive account of the use of computers in language teaching. It contains detailed discussions of the pedagogical value of the entire spectrum of computer-based language activities.
- *Dave Sperling's Internet Guide* Sperling, D. 1998 Prentice Hall, New Jersey
- This is a comprehensive listing of Internet sites for English language learners and teachers. Sperling also runs a very good ESL website called *Dave's ESL Café* at <http://www.eslcafe.com>.

.....