

Using Digital Technologies as a Learning Tool in the TESOL Classroom

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ABSTRACT

In teaching, teachers use technology in different ways. Some teachers use technology as a way of demonstrating a lesson in the classroom. Nowadays, technology has an important effect on the students' motivation and achievement toward learning English as a foreign language compared with traditional tools. The commonly used teaching tool in education was chalkboard. It is cheap and simple. It helps the teachers to provide visible support to words, and many other advantages. By the time, expensive and sophisticated technologies become main part in the teaching environment Using different methodologies in the classroom helps teachers to convey the content of lessons effectively, and also makes students concentrate on the lesson. Teachers need to be well-trained in using technology in classroom, and has the essential skills of good presentation. Power point presentation is one type of CALL by which the teacher can present images and texts with sound and simple animation. Like any teaching tool in TESOL classroom, 'power point presentation' has many advantages that will encourage EFL teachers to incorporate this technology in language teaching process in TESOL classroom. Another technology to be used in classroom is discussion board. It is an electronic communicative tool that used to share different kinds of messages such as comments, questions, answers, or announcements that could be accessible to the teacher and learners. The main advantage of discussion board is that participants can post their messages at any time. The most important benefit of using the Internet in TESOL classroom is that the availability of authentic documents to both teachers and learners. To sum up, technology is very important especially in TESOL classroom. Using Technology create live environment which motivate students to engage with the topic by dialogue, discussion.

Key words: Technology, teaching, TESOL classroom, Power point, discussion board

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Introduction

No one can deny the importance of technology in our life today. It is very important in all the dimensions of life such as education, health and medicine, business, entertainment, travelling, etc. All these dimensions have been changed effectively by the power of technology. It makes obviously a big difference between life nowadays compared with life in the past. In teaching, teachers use technology in different ways. Some teachers use technology as a way of demonstrating a lesson in the classroom. Some are using technology to make teaching valuable and to add external information to their students. Others use technology in the classroom to encourage students and to make learning easier compared with traditional teaching tools. Nowadays, technology has an important effect on the students' motivation and achievement toward learning English as a foreign language compared with traditional tools. Some students find learning English is challenging as they face problems in the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing). By using technology in TESOL classroom, teachers can help their students to overcome these problems successfully. It is reported that using multimedia and advanced technology to teach English language encouraged many students to learn English. The previous studies has proven that technology has improved the interaction between language learners and learning process. Online writing in web-based chat rooms and discussion board was the first integrating of English language as a second language with technology in early 1991's. Students' reaction was positive and they use it to develop their language skills. Students acknowledge that the classroom becomes enjoyable and exciting by using technology. Technology helps foreign students to listen English language from native speakers as well as understanding grammar. As a result of using technology in teaching English language, the students are involved in discussion and this develop speaking skill of the students.

Technology in education

With the development of technology, a big change happens in methods of teaching, especially in the field of higher education (Arsoy & Selimeglu, 2009). The commonly used teaching tool in education was chalkboard. It is cheap and simple. It helps the teachers to provide visible support to words, and many other advantages. Professors, teachers in the schools depended mainly on boards as a teaching tool (Frost & Fukami, 1997). Also, boards helps teachers to view pictures, charts, and tables. By the time, expensive and sophisticated technologies become main part in the teaching environment. The technologies that used in educational centres include overhead projectors, videotape players, power point, videodisc players, interactive whiteboard, and computer assisted learning (Monk, et al, 2003). Teachers are using these technologies in inventive ways to help students understand lessons and achieve their objectives (Thomas et al, 2009). Nowaczyk et al (1988, cited in Matsuo & Wangard, 2007) mentioned that using videos in the classroom makes students interesting and helps them to understand topics being discussed, but the materials become more understood if it is combined with text. Astleitner (2002, cited in Matsuo & Wangard, 2007) mentioned in findings of his studies that students were able to understand information that mentioned in audio recording lectures better than those mentioned by videos. Among the developed technologies is the invention of interactive white board. It enables the teacher to include different kinds of presentation content such as spreadsheet graphs, website diagrams, etc. Each technology has both advantages and disadvantage. One of the disadvantages of white board is that its high cost, and its sensitive service that should often be replaced if it is scratched.

Five teaching technologies by including power point, internet, projector, the lectures, and video were examined by Thomas (2009). To practice, they are used in combination such as using power point to show a video, and using internet to power point slides. Although, it is difficult to separate technology in an ordinary teaching situation, learners were asked to pay their attention on each of these technologies individually and write their feeling and observation on the application (Thomas, 2009)

Seth et al (2010) compared three kinds of technologies used in the classroom (power point presentation, blackboard, and overhead projector). He concluded that each technology has both pros and cons. By using blackboard and chalk in the classroom, direct communication between the teacher and students can be happened, and the students concentrate on the teacher and what she/he teaches, nothing confusing them. On the other hand, there are some disadvantages of using blackboard such as the limited space, especially when the teacher wants to draw graphs or diagrams. Another disadvantage is that sometimes student cannot read teacher's writing and they complain that blackboard becomes dirty quickly. On the other hand, students find themselves able to write notes when teacher uses overhead projector in the classroom, especially if the writing is clear. Although the teacher can provide more materials by using this technology, too much content is presented in a limit time.

Nowadays, it is considered that power point technology is the most common teaching aids used by teachers. Arsoy & Selimeglu (2009) mention some benefits of why power point is valuable. Among the benefits mentioned is teacher can update and modify the text easily, and he/she can draw diagrams by using different colours.

Using technology in the classroom:

Lecturers and teachers can use various technologies in teaching process. These technologies include podcast, webcast, and power point and so on. Using different methodologies in the classroom helps teachers to convey the content of lessons effectively, and also makes students concentrate on the lesson. However, Savoy et al (2009) commented that presenting teaching materials in a digital design does not always ensure the improvement in the students' performance. Seth et al (2010) mentioned in his study that no method of presenting a lesson is better than the other. Each teaching aid will be effective if it is used by well-trained teacher appropriately. Teachers need to be well-trained in using technology in classroom, and has the essential skills of good presentation. Most EFL learners face difficulties to master English language because there are different linguistic and cognitive aspects (Bray, Brown, & Green, 2004). In TESOL classroom, there are some cognitive or academic challenges that may be intervened with EFL learners' linguistic struggles. In order to treat these challenges, English language teacher can make use of different teaching approach and strategies to make teaching and learning English language more successful and understandable. Among the ways that EFL teacher can make learning English easier is the use of technology in the classroom. Technology has made dramatic changes in teaching process inside the classroom. By using technologies in the classroom, students will be able to get authentic learning. Technology has the ability to meet the needs of all students with different level: poor students, students with disabilities, advanced students to master the skills English language. It was reported in some studies that using technology is an effective way to improve the students' performance in maths, social studies, languages arts, and science. Many aspects will be developed through using technology in the classroom such as, students' attitude, students' confidence, students' writing skills. Teaching English or any other foreign language, especially large classes, is sometimes like a nightmare. A large numbers of teachers find that using technologies as teaching tools in TESOL classrooms is helpful. Many instructors states that using computer in the classroom plays an important role such as Emery (2006, p. 66) when he stating "computers are now as playing an important role in learning and are a familiar part of the educational and working environment". Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is one of the important educational technologies in TESOL classroom. It helps teachers to teach their students language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) in addition to grammar and vocabulary. CALL has a lot of programmes that need using of computer to teach students the foreign language in different ways.

Using power point presentation in TESOL classroom:

Power point presentation is one type of CALL by which the teacher can present images and texts with sound and simple animation. It assists language teachers with audio, visual and audio-visual effects during teaching in language classrooms. Bartsch & Cobern (2003) mention that, using of technology that transfers written information from computer to screen has begun more than fifteen years ago. Carlos (2008) illustrates in his study that the administrators and teachers describe power point as a very useful teaching aid and a valuable technology. Fisher (2003) mentioned that despite the fact that power point technology has been existing many years ago, it becomes the common used technology in ESL classrooms, and it should be invested to teach a foreign language like English. Power point presentation is a presentation software (PS) by which combination of images, texts, sounds and graphs is possible in order to make developed multimedia presentations (Gordon, 2007, p. 192). Many instructors describe power point technology as "enhances instruction and motivates students to learn" (Harrison, 1998, P. 9). Also, Masom & Hynka (1998) believe that power point is a productive teaching tool. EFL teachers should be able to know how a teaching tool like power point presentation can be effective in skills and process of learning in TESOL classrooms. Like any teaching tool in TESOL classroom, 'power point presentation' has many advantages that will encourage EFL teachers to incorporate this technology in language teaching process in TESOL classroom.

However, students did not like using power point in the classroom as they thought that they less participated (Carlos, 2008). It was suggested that if teachers lacked confidence with using power point in the classroom, teaching time will be wasted (Young, 2004). Many students comment that the performance of some teachers who used power point in the classroom as a teaching tool became worse because they concentrated on the technology itself rather than the content. Students also felt that some teachers used to use traditional teaching

tools such as blackboards and chalks and their performance was better than by using power point. In addition, they said that they sometimes felt asleep especially when the light was off.

Advantages of using power point presentation in TESOL classrooms:

Many of language teachers from different levels in education are continually describing power point presentation as an excellent tool to transform their teaching. Using this technology helps teachers of English language to solve the problems that face in TESOL classroom. Additionally, it helps EFL learners to understand the complicated topics as the English language is foreign. Moreover, TESOL teachers can find visual, audio, audio-visual in the use of power point in the classroom, which assists the teacher to make complicated ideas easy for EFL to be understood as a result of these features. It is also useful teaching aid to change TESOL classroom into interactive one. The following are some of the advantages of using PowerPoint presentation:

- Using power point presentation will encourage note-taking skill which is a vital transferable skill to learn a foreign language like English. To do this, EFL can provide learners with outline structures that need explanation or handout that are 'interactive'.
- Some scholars comment that power point presentation is a suitable tool for poor speakers. It changes complicated information to easy bullet points.
- It helps the teacher to be able to use graphics and engage interests of students through multimedia presentation.
- It is pointed out that by using power point in the classroom, the teacher can provide readable and clear texts, diagrams, and graphs with good quality.
- Students have access to the information and they can review it as they want. This will classroom improves students' learning of the language.
- visual aids can be provided such as videos, images, or animations.
- It is helpful for teachers to summarize the important information of explained material, and display assignment's information.
- . It is a good program that can be used for drilling and practice, which are essential ways to teach English language to foreign students.
- power point presentation is useful for oral skill as it can connect audio with written sentences and words.
- Teachers can do some activities such as applying some dictation activities that develop both writing skill and students' memory.
- It is a way to save time in TESOL classroom through creating slides to show the lesson instead of using boards.
- Teachers can make presentation more interesting by adding cartons or clipart (Alas et al, 2009)

Stannard (2006) advised English language teachers to use this website [www.matchware.net/en/default.htm]. This website helps teachers to design a mind map connected to the lesson through a program called "Open Mind", adding images, videos, audios and other information. After that, the teacher can save the mind map in a file and transfer it into power point. Using these files in the classrooms encourages both teachers and students working together. If the teacher use power point presentation in the classroom without inserting images, sounds, animation, and videos, the use of this technology will be ineffective. This will lead the decrease of EFL learners' motivation.

Using discussion board in TESOL classroom:

Discussion board is an electronic communicative tool that used to share different kinds of messages such as comments, questions, answers, or announcements that could be accessible to the teacher and learners. In educational use, discussion board is commonly a part of course management system e.g. blackboard. A message is called 'post' which is varied in content and circulated among students and the teacher. A message that initiates a conversation is named 'a topic'. A thread means a series of messages that response to the topic. It is useful to divide a discussion board into forums and categories which offer efficient ways of organising discussion according to main topics. In discussion board, participants do not participate together as it is "asynchronous" in nature. Messages that contain web links, images, media file attachments are supported in some discussion boards. The main advantage of discussion board is that participants can post their messages at any time.

Students can easily reply to a comment, or they can defer the reply to a later time. Sometimes, students can just read the comments without a reply. Also, because the students participate through electronic discussion board, EFL learners will be able to know more academic terms from peer participation (Egbert & Simich-Dudgeon, 2001). The meaning social context of discussion board will encourage students' skills of critical thinking (Ovando, Collier, Combs, 2003).

The role of discussion board to enhance ESL learners:

- It offers an opportunity for shy students or EFL learners who could not participate in the classroom to articulate their ideas comfortably.
- It is a way that EFL teacher can optimize time in the classroom through providing
- It helps students to engage in critical discussion which requires deeper thinking than listening to the lecture simply.
- The students can pose their questions and get feedback from the teacher and their peers.
- It provides the students with an opportunity of sharing references and information with each other.
- Discussion board can provide an archive contains all the discussions that are useful for students to review.

The role of the teacher when using discussion board:

The teacher in TESOL classroom can do a lot to make an efficient use of discussion board, for example:

- The teacher should clarify what is the aim of using discussion board in TESOL classroom.
- Explain to the students the levels of participation, and how be evaluated and assessed.
- State limit of postings length.
- The teacher can refer to posts in discussion board to discuss in the classroom.
- The teacher can provide the students with a syllabus containing information about the use of discussion board.
- EFL teacher can use discussion board as way of distributing feedback in oral and written form, so that student will be able to read about their errors and hear how to correct them.

Types of discussion board that teacher can consider for her/his classroom:

The teacher can divide discussion board into types to encourage using it successfully in the classroom. discussion board types include the following:

- A Notice board: it is used for course announcements.
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): it is used to answer students repeated questions about the course, research, etc.
- General queries: it is the category that used for general queries.
- Course discussion: it contains topics that moderated by the teachers.
- Assignment discussion board: it is a forum in which the students can ask question about the assignment and the difficulties or obstacles they face with the assignment.

Using Internet in TESOL classroom:

The most important benefit of using the Internet in TESOL classroom is that the availability of authentic documents to both teachers and learners. The big collection of multiple multimedia provides different ways to develop learning and teaching the foreign language in content-based classroom. Crystal (2006) mentioned that "Spoken language currently has only a limited presence on the Internet, through the use of sound clips, films, and video; but the use of speech will undoubtedly grow as technology develops, and it will not be long before we see the routine use of interactive voice (and video) dialogues, speech synthesis to provide a spoken representation of what is on a screen or to give vocal support to a graphic presentation, and automatic speech recognition to enable users to interact verbally with sites"

Two types of internet that can be used in TESOL classroom:

- **Webquest** : it is a learning task and the teacher gives the students a scenario and the role of the students is to complete the task through using different websites as references. The main aim of using this kind of internet in TESOL classroom is to help students acquire the language and develop it. In order to achieve this goal successfully, EFL teacher should choose webquest activities that have five components. The first component is the introduction which mention the stage and the question to the learners. Second component is identifying the task and the describing its outcome. Thirdly, stating the specific steps that a learner should follow to complete the task and provide the learner with useful online resources to be used if the learner wishes. The fourth component is evaluation in which the learner informed how to be assessed. The last stage is to summarize the students' achievement and provide extra activities.
- **Web pages**: they are documents that may include text, animation, graphics, audio or video published to the internet. Anyone is able to create a web page. It is essential for a teacher when using web pages in the classroom is to analyze them critically in terms of appropriateness and accuracy. Using this kind of technology will help the students to improve their writing by editing and revising it as their work is created for authentic audience. This also will improve students' learning of inserting images, videos or audios in their writing.

Conclusion:

To sum up, I think that using technology in very important especially in TESOL classroom. Using Technology create live environment which motivate students to engage with the topic by dialogue, discussion. Schmid (2008) mentioned that using multimedia resources in the classroom attracted students' attention and increased it. Technology has the ability to facilitate language learning process such as concentration, attention, and motivation between the students. It can improve students' ability to learn vocabulary successfully, as well as developing reading and writing skills of English language. Even though using technology in TESOL classroom is very important and productive, designing and planning the lesson is more important. The teacher need to know essential skills that enable her/him to use technology effectively. An important skill is the ability of the teacher to manage the classroom and the students while using technology. Another important skill is the good timing for using technology. Sometimes, teachers need to make a combination between technology and text book in the classroom, as text books have important information that will help the students in language learning. Many instructors mention that by using technology in the classroom, they could use unique ideas that could not be available anywhere else. Teachers are able to use various ways to teach English language through the use of activities with technology in the classroom. This increase students' confidence to use English language. Beside the advantages of using technology in TESOL classroom, there are some disadvantages. These include translation on line, cheating, copying website content or plagiarizing through using Google research. Finally, to implement technology in TESOL classroom, language teachers should take in their account the students, the right technology to be used, and teaching methodology.

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