

Role of Computers in Teaching and Learning English Language

دور الحاسب الآلي في تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

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الملخص:

في العصر الحديث للعلوم والتكنولوجيا، تلعب أجهزة الكمبيوتر دورًا حيويًا في كل مناحي الحياة، ويمكن رؤية استخدام أجهزة الكمبيوتر على نطاق واسع في مجالات مثل الإدارة الإلكترونية للخدمات المختلفة المقدمة في قطاعات الخدمات الحكومية والخاصة، والرعاية الصحية، وأبحاث الفضاء، واكتشاف الجرائم، ومنصات التواصل الاجتماعي والشبكات المختلفة، ولا يعد قطاع التعليم استثناءً في توظيف أجهزة الكمبيوتر لتحقيق أهدافه بطريقة فعالة وميسرة، وعلى الرغم من استخدام أجهزة الكمبيوتر في نقل المعرفة في المجالات المتعلقة بتكنولوجيا المعلومات في المراحل الأولى، إلا أن استخدام أجهزة الكمبيوتر وجد طريقة تدريجيًا في تدريس جميع التخصصات الأكاديمية. تلقي هذه الورقة الضوء على دور الحاسب الآلي في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية على المستوى المدرسي وبشكل رئيسي مزايا استخدام الحاسب الآلي في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. بالإضافة إلى تسهيل نطق الأصوات المختلفة للغة الإنجليزية باستخدام بعض البرامج التعليمية المعتمدة، يمكن استخدام أجهزة الكمبيوتر في تسهيل تعليم المهارات المتكاملة للغة الإنجليزية (أي: مهارات الاستماع والتحدث والقراءة والكتابة). أجريت الدراسة في مدرسة ذات النطاقين الثانوية الواقعة ببلدية براك بمنطقة وادي الشاطئ، والتقى الباحث بخمسة من معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الذين يقومون بتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في المدرسة وتم استخدام أسلوب المقابلة لجمع البيانات على شكل أفكار أعرب عنها المشاركون فيما يتعلق بدور أجهزة الكمبيوتر في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل عام وفي مدرستهم بشكل خاص. تحتوي هذه الورقة على مقدمة ومراجعة الأدبيات والمنهجية والنتائج والمناقشة والاستنتاج كأقسام رئيسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحاسب الآلي، تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، النطق، المهارات المتكاملة، طريقة المقابلة.

Abstract

In the modern age of science and technology, computers play a vital role in every walk of life. The usage of computers can be widely seen in fields like e-governance of different services offered in government and private service sectors, healthcare, space research, crime detection and different social networking and communication platforms. Education sector is not an exception in employing the computers to deliver its objectives in an effective and entertaining way. Though computers were used in imparting knowledge of areas concerned to information technology in the initial stages, gradually the usage of computers found its way in the teaching of all disciplines of academics. This paper sheds light on the role of computers in teaching English language at school level mainly the advantages of using computers in teaching English language. In addition to facilitating the pronunciation of different sounds of English language by using certain authorized educational software, computers can be used in facilitating teaching the integrated skills of English language (viz.) listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The study was conducted at Dat Alntakeen Secondary School located in Brack, Wadi Al shatti region of Libya. The researcher met five English teachers teaching English at the school and interview method was used to collect data in the form of ideas expressed by the participants regarding the role of computers in English language teaching in general and at their school in particular. This paper contains introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussion and conclusion as the major sections.

Key words: Computers, Teaching English, Pronunciation, Integrated skills, Interview method

Introduction

In the present day globalized world, computers are used everywhere. Computers are used in education field as well. Computers are helpful in many ways for both teachers and students. Computer has become one of the best teaching aids in the modern times facilitating the teaching process. Learning through computers motivates learners and improves creative skills of the individuals. It also helps to improve the collaboration skills among the learners.

In learning a new language, vocabulary plays a vital role. Once, an individual is aware of basic vocabulary that is used in the day to day communication, that individual will be able to communicate with the speakers of that language. Computers are used in learning vocabulary by using different authentic software. After learning the basic vocabulary, one needs to be fluent and be able to comprehend the meaning of the words he or she comes across. Students have been able to improve their sight word vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Computer based reading instruction also allows for ‘increased interaction with texts, attention to the individual needs, and increased independence through an ability to read text they would not otherwise be able to read’ (Case & Truscott, 1999).

Computers are a big help to listen and practice the English sounds. It is known to all that the EFL learners are under the influence of their mother tongue while learning a foreign language. It affects the pronunciation and the grammatical structures of the sentences as well. When they learn while listening to the pronunciation of Standard English by using certain software or CDs, the learners will come to know how to reduce their mother tongue influence and they can neutralize their English accent. In the same way, the learners will also come to know how the sentences in English language differ from the sentences of their first language in terms of word order and structures of sentences. Grammar skills can also be demonstrated and reinforced using computers (Lewis, 1997).

Using computers in writing English improves the writing skills of the learners. When learners type any text on computers, computers will highlight the spelling and grammar errors in sentences with a red colored underline. It means computers facilitate self-learning and self-correction of spellings and grammatical errors of sentences. In traditional method of learning writing English, these corrections are not identified until the teacher checks the writing of the learners. Using computers in learning writing in English also facilitates the learners to scroll the text up and down to check for additions or deletions if any or to make some text bold, italicized or highlighted by underlining etc. Giving tasks based on day to day life activities is the best practice to encourage the learners to write something in English. Simple messages to friends or writing emails may facilitate their practicing writing without thinking a lot about the ideas. Practicing writing electronic mails on

computer is an interesting idea to improve the learner's writing skills. This idea is presented by Mireia Trenchs (1996) in her case studies conducted on different students. She found the students more interested on writing electronic mails on computer rather than their writing letters on papers.

Learning English language using computers is considered an alternative to the teacher in a traditional classroom. The computer can be a valuable supplement to the traditional curriculum of the English language classroom by promoting verbal communication and the acquisition of English-students need to learn vocabulary in context and with visual clues to help them understand. Computers can provide this rich environment.

The present study was conducted at Dat Alntakeen Secondary School located in Brack town of Wadi Al shatti region in Libya. The English course books prescribed for students at this school comprises some units. Each unit focuses on vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading and writing aspects of English language. The course books are provided with CDs which are helpful in solving the exercises given in the course book. Hence, this study is aimed at focusing on the use of computers at the school in teaching English and the advantages of using computers in teaching and learning English.

Objective

The objective of this research is to list out the advantages of using computers in teaching English language at school level.

Statement of the problem

Computers are used in every field in the modern times of science and technology. This research paper mentions the effective use of computers in teaching English language to learners at school level

Research questions

This paper tries to answer the following two questions

1. What are the minimum requirements needed to use computers in English language teaching?
2. What are the advantages of using computers in English language teaching and learning?

Significance of the study

In the modern world of science and technology, computers are used everywhere. To go with the flow, we should take care of our children to make them computer literates. Using computers in teaching and learning English in

classroom is useful in many ways. Learning vocabulary, correct pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills can be obtained with ease are by using computers.

Literature review

The following are the some of the earlier studies conducted by different authors on the role of computers in teaching English.

Sadeghi (2013) performed a study towards using Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). This study showed that Japanese EFL learners improved their perception and production of English consonants by using CALL. The results obtained from the above studies indicate that computers are a good way of learning and teaching English pronunciation and provide enjoyable and exciting activities for both learners and teachers. Some researchers have investigated the use of computers for facilitating the teaching of the English language. This was seen in improving their pronunciation. Neri, Cucchiarini, and Strike (2006) studied using the computer for teaching pronunciation. The findings indicated that computer technology helped Dutch learners improve their production of trained Dutch segments. The findings indicated that computer technology helped Dutch learners improve their production of the trained Dutch segments.

A massive amount of new technologies in the 20th and 21st century were developed to enhance the teaching process by providing various teaching tools. This was supported by what Omar reported in his research when he said; the emergence of educational technology imposed a lot of variables in all cognitive and practical aspects, and educational technology became used in various fields to form a powerful tool for keeping and processing of information and transfer (Alsharhan, 2000).

Using computers in learning promotes interactive approach among the learners. While using computers, learners are often seen interacting with their peers rather than when they learn in the traditional ways. Using computers in learning lets the elders and other family members at home also to interfere the learners' learning and share the knowledge with the learner. Technology can also be used to improve parent involvement in their child's education while improving the parents' literacy as well. (Landerholm, et al. 2000)

The findings of the study (Rallis, Helen, 2000) was that computers helped the teaching process in different ways, such as it replaces chalkboard; PowerPoint

replaces slides, pre-prepared overhead transparencies, and even video, class email alias for the instructor to provide updates and reminders to students and email students copies of work developed in class.

Salaza (2005) carried out a study aimed at finding out the use of technology in teaching English language learners, and examining the beliefs of teachers regarding technological access in the classroom and teaching efficacy toward using technology for bilingual learners. A survey was conducted on a sample consisted of 161 bilingual educational and ESL teachers. The findings showed that teachers considered themselves able to encounter the linguistic challenges that result from using technology. Data suggested that teachers who frequently use computer outside the school had a high degree of confidence in using technology inside the classroom.

For educational technology to be more effective this requires the engagement of ELL teachers not as full controller of classroom environment, but otherwise as facilitator which ease the process of learning to the students. This was supported by the view of Omer in his research when he reported that educational technology can be effective only when the teacher's role becomes as facilitator where the learning process through planning and guiding the lesson (Brandl, 2002).

Chapelle and Grgurovic (2013) reported that Computer Assisted Language Learning abbreviated as CALL refers to the use of technology in language instruction. CALL appears to prove that it is more effective and supportive for instructors when compared with face to face classroom. Kadel, (2005) reported that teachers with positive attitude towards technology tend to integrate technology in their classroom more successfully. In other words, when teachers have knowledge about the use of black board this enhances the teaching process where the teacher uses all the different tools available and address all learners different level.

(Atkins & Vasu, 2000; Kadel, 2005) reported that for the process of teaching through technology to be successful and fulfills its domains the most important element that is the teacher's positive attitudes are significant since their knowledge and attitude both influence their level of success in integrating CALL. Computer technology not only develops the teaching process but also provides an opportunity for the teacher to develop their performance by providing access to have contact with native speakers of the

language. This works on enhancing both teachers' content knowledge and their pedagogical knowledge.

While working on computers, the learner will understand the errors he is committing as the computer highlights the errors and the learner himself can work on the corrections or he can take the initiative by seeking the help either from the teacher or the fellow learners in the classroom. Computer technology will play a significant part in supporting the learner-centered inquiry process (Kwok-Wing and Lai, 1993). Using computers in English language teaching also facilitates the collaborative skills among the learners.

The studies mentioned above show that advanced computer technology broadly supports English language teaching in different linguistic areas. Computer different programs supported the teaching process and facilitated teachers' tasks, which fulfills the designed goals of teachers, which is what this study tries to investigate.

Methodology

The researcher used interview method to collect data required and summed up the data by using qualitative method of research. The researcher interviewed English teachers working at 'Dat Alntakeen Secondary School' in Brack town located in Wadi Al shatti region, Libya. Five English teachers participated in the interview. The researcher met them individually to get their opinion and suggestions in using computers in teaching English at school in general.

Results and discussion

The following results were found after sorting out the main ideas expressed by the respondents briefly. The English course books prescribed for the students at the school are of good standard.

All the lessons were divided as units and each unit contained the topics meant for learning and improving the learners English language skills in terms of vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading and writing areas. CDs are provided with the course books and those CDs were particularly meant for listening tasks prescribed in the course books. It is quite natural for the EFL students to have their mother tongue influence on English mostly on the sound system of English language. When the students listen to the CDs, they can understand the correct pronunciation of English sounds and come out of the mother tongue influence. But, the school was not provided with an English

language lab where students can use computers to listen to the audio of the listening tasks prescribed in the course books. All the respondents expressed that there was a need of a language lab at schools to engage learners in learning English language skills. They opined that they need a lab with few computers and headsets in the initial stage as the software was available in the form of CDs along with the books.

Using computers in teaching English in classroom motivates the students to participate with enthusiasm as learners are naturally prone to learn things by doing an activity rather than paying attention to the lectures delivered in traditional method

Computers can be used in English language learning in terms of learning vocabulary, grammar, and the four integrated skills learning, speaking, reading and writing by using different authentic software.

It helps the teachers and students also to improve their technological skills and editing skills by using computers for different purposes of copying, pasting, deleting, highlighting etc. It is a globalized scenario of using computers in English language teaching to facilitate learning the integrated skills of English language. The remarkable feature of using computer in learning English language is to learn things online. Using computers in English language teaching also facilitates the classroom management as it promotes the learner centric environment while learning.

By using computers in English language teaching with an internet connection also improves the knowledge and skills of both the teachers and the students in learning through the platforms like zoom, Google meet, classroom etc

Using computers in English language teaching improves the students' creative skills. They can present the same topic of their learning in different ways with their own creativity. Computers in English language learning also encourage students to work with collaboration with their peers. It also helps learners to understand the errors they commit while writing English sentences in terms of spellings and grammar structures etc. Computers can be used in conducting tests and assess the level of the students. They are the best alternative to the teachers in classroom or computers facilitate the learning different aspects of English language learning with an ease.

Conclusion

Using computers in English language teaching motivates the learners better than it does with the traditional method. It is learner centric and attracts the learners' attention for a long span of time. It serves as a tool to improve the learners' English language skills in different areas of English language like vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also facilitates the collaborative skills among the learners. Taking all the advantages of using computers in English language teaching and learning discussed in the findings section of this paper in to consideration, the researcher believes that it is an urgent need of the hour to establish English language labs at every school to enable the learners to learn English language skills with ease by using computers. Finally, the researcher also believes that this research paper can be considered a basis for further future research on the related topic.

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