The Role and Impact of Internet in Learning and Using a Language

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Every new piece of technology that comes to the fore today claims to improve our lives for the better. It promises to increase our productivity level with a greater speed, the quality of our work through greater intelligence eventually promises a complete transformation of our lives. Information technology has become the need of the hour. It is the most sought after subject now. There is an imperative need felt by everyone to keep pace with the changing the world. Technology has made inroads in the field of education and materials which were once printed matter can now be accessed directly on one's computer in internet. This paper aims to explore the need and importance of the internet in language learning.

INTRODUCTION

India has witnessed an explosive growth of computer and the internet. It is estimated now that more than 23 million users are making use of this facility every day. It is more evident support for the learners motivates better performance. Hence in this age of technology if the internet is put to use as a support system, a lot of problems can be solved. Learners who are interested in acquiring additional knowledge beyond the prescribed textbook or those who want to develop their reading and writing have ample opportunities because of the availability of varied materials on the net. The internet provides an opportunity for the learners to internet around the globe.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

This paper explores the use of internet, for language learning. The researcher does not intend to look at the internet as a replacement for the traditional teaching methods in present education system. Hence this research article tries to find out the gap between the formal education and non-formal learning. This paper would help one to find out whether the internet was bringing about in a change in the learning during the non-formal learning process.

ROLE OF ENGLISH

The rapid growth in the usage of English around the world has influenced a lot in the scientific developments especially in modern technologies. For instance:

- The most popular language is English

- About 75% of the world's mail, telexes and cables are in English.
- Approximately 60% of the world's radio programs are in English.
- About 90% of all Internet traffic is in English.

ENGLISH AND INTERNET

Jean E. Conacher and Frederic Rover quote in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning* that the internet constitutes an important pedagogical tool which operates in an individualized and flexible learning and teaching environment. Out of the many teenagers, who use the Internet, and a million others coming online each year, almost 90 percent are happy to be entertained by story tellers on the World Wide Web.

The most used language on Internet is English. Although the total number of native English speakers in the world is about 322 million, English is spoken as a second language by up to 1.2 billion people around the world. They make their contribution to the Internet in their own language as well as in English (Global Reach).

WORLD ON-LINE POPULATION

The Figures in the table - 1 explain how the usage of English on internet has undergone a massive growth from the year 2000-18. This shows that the demand for English is gradually increasing day by day and the growth of English and its usage of world's population are higher than any other languages across the globe.

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS
DEC 31, 2017 - Update

World Regions	Population (2018 Est.)	Population % of World	Internet Users 31 Dec 2017	Penetration Rate (% Pop.)	Growth 2000-2018	Internet Users %
Africa	1,287,914,329	16.9 %	453,329,534	35.2 %	9,941 %	10.9 %
Asia	4,207,588,157	55.1 %	2,023,630,194	48.1 %	1,670 %	48.7 %
Europe	827,650,849	10.8 %	704,833,752	85.2 %	570 %	17.0 %
Latin America / Caribbean	652,047,996	8.5 %	437,001,277	67.0 %	2,318 %	10.5 %
Middle East	254,438,981	3.3 %	164,037,259	64.5 %	4,893 %	3.9 %
North America	363,844,662	4.8 %	345,660,847	95.0 %	219 %	8.3 %
Oceania / Australia	41,273,454	0.6 %	28,439,277	68.9 %	273 %	0.7 %
WORLD TOTAL	7,634,758,428	100.0 %	4,156,932,140	54.4 %	1,052 %	100.0 %

Table. 01 - Internet Usage and World Population Statistics Source: Nielsen Online

LANGUAGES USED ON INTERNET

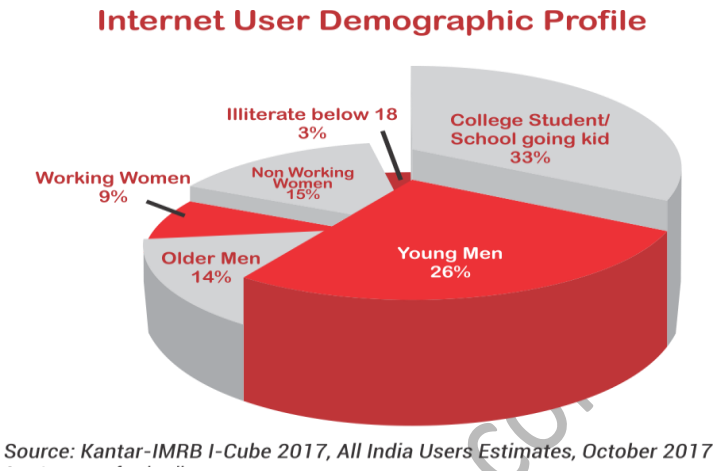
The table – 2 explains how English is used by the majority of people in the world and the users' percentage is higher when comparing to other languages spoken in world total population.

	Internet access (M)	%'age world online pop.	Year 2000 (proj'd) (M)	Total pop. (M)	GDP ($B)	%'age world economy	GDP per capita	Net Hosts
English	129[1]	57.4%	160	322	$10,780	32%		
Non-English	95.6	42.6%	167	5,630	$22,930	68%		
European Languages (non-English)	59.3	26.4%		1,063	$10,550	31%		
Czech	0.27 [2]			10.3	$27		$11.1	74
Dutch	4.4 [3]		7	20	$518		$20.7	668
Finnish	1.6 [4]			5	$151		$20	513
French	9.3 [5]	4.2%	16	72	$1620	4.8%	$24	812
German	14 [6]	6.2%	25	98	$2240	6.6%	$25	1621
Greek	0.26 [7]			12	$96		$7.5	52
Hungarian	0.31 [8]			15	$35		$7.5	84
Italian	5.7 [9]	2.5%	10.6	57	$1210	3.6%	$20.5	349
Polish	1.0 [10]			44	$79		$2.5	109
Portuguese	3.4 [11]	1.5%		170	$1088	3.2%	$6.5	265
Russian	1.4 [12]		5	170	692	2.0%	$5.2	166
Danish	1.7 [13]			5	$165		$22.6	280
Icelandic	0.38 [13]							
Norwegian	1.5 [13]			4	$154		$26.2	319
Swedish	3.9 [13]		4	10	$249		$20.8	534
Scandinavian languages (total)	7.5 [13]	3.3%	8	19.25	$568	1.7%		
Slovak	0.51 [14]			5.4	$46.3		$8.6	
Spanish General Stats. Data: España en la red	9.6 [15]	4.3%		332	$2015	6.0%	$6	510
Turkish	0.15 [16]			59	$388		$6.1	33
TOTAL EUROPEAN LANGUAGES (excl. English)	59.3	26.4%		1,450	$10,550	31%		6328

Table. 2 Global Internet Statistics (by Language)

INTERNET USER

The figure explains that most of the internet users in India use internet as a medium for communication such as e-mail and chat (on-line interaction). I-Cube (2017) explains that the accessibility of internet user by college student/School going kid is 33%, Young men is 26%, Older men is 14%, Working women use internet by 9% and non-working use internet by 15%. This shows the college students uses the internet at the maximum for their studies, assignments, projects etc.,



Source: Kantar-IMRB I-Cube 2017, All India Users Estimates, October 2017

EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

The technological developments just outlined are causing educators to rethink not only how learning might be approached but, as a result of these very developments, how new learning outcomes will be both possible and necessary. Global communications within intimate learning communities will create opportunities for cross-cultural knowledge development.

The knowledge era and the accompanying new economy have recognized and placed increased value on thinking and learning abilities. The challenge is to turn e-information into human knowledge. This is not a technological problem but a social challenge that requires an educational solution. That solution lies in the integration of meaningful educational approaches with innovative technological enablers. At the intersection of this quest is e-learning, with its ability to create rich communities of inquiry in an asynchronous, anytime, anyplace context.

NEED OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a means to transmit information. This simplistic approach does not consider the inherent characteristic, capabilities, or potential and e-learning has to be re-defined in our approach of learning.

Communication technology has assisted the development of a new type of community – a community of interest where members share a common need or interest. Communication

technology provides additional advantages by allowing us to locate sources of information on the world wide web or within the college's online resources as well as being able to quickly to communicate with tutors and other learners.

TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

The term "technology' means 'knowledge about scientific or industrial methods and the use of these methods for a purpose.' It also implies machinery and equipment used or developed as a result of this knowledge. With the tremendous growth of information and scientific development and communication, awareness too has increased and with it the demand for education. This demand can be met satisfactorily only with the use of technology.

Saraswathi Rao (2004) quoted in her M. Phil thesis of Moore (1995) refers to models explaining how educator will respond to new technologies.

- The minimal change model in which the instruction makes no fundamental change but merely use technology as an instructional aid.
- The marginal change model, in which the pedagogy and organization of education remain unchanged and students are added on to conventionally taught.

'Technology in education' embraces every possible means by which information can be presented. It is concerned with the 'gadgetry' of education and training such as television, language laboratories and the various projected media. In other words, technology in education is basically the popular impression of what educational technology is all about, namely audiovisual aids. The general field of audio visual aids is itself composed of two related but distinguish areas namely hardware and software. The hardware side is concerned with the actual equipment – overhead projects, slide projectors, tape recorders, videocassette recorders, television, monitors, microcomputers etc. The software on the other hand, is concerned with the various items that used in conjunction with this equipment – such as overhead transparencies, slides, audiotapes, video recordings and computer programs.

THE TECHNOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Fred Percival and Henry Ellington referred that the most important part of educational technology is to help improve the overall competence of the teaching/learning process. In education and training, improved efficiency can manifest itself in many ways, for example:

- Increasing the quality of learning, or the degree of mastery;
- Decreasing the time taken for learners to attain desire goals;

- Increasing the capacity of teachers in terms of numbers of learners taught, without reducing the quality of learning;
- Reducing costs, without effecting quality.

Technology can be used to supplement traditional teaching methods for other pedagogical considerations as well. For instance, multimedia facilitates the shift from a teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered one. The image of the teacher standing in front of the class and lecturing his or her students while all they do is listen and put down mechanically his or her words is becoming more and more obsolete. Especially in language teaching, where communicative proficiency is paramount, this shift to a student-centered classroom is a very important one.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

A 'technology of education' approach to educational technology thus involves a systematic, scientific approach to a problem together with the application of approach scientific research, both from 'hard' sciences such as physics and electronics and from social sciences such as psychology and sociology. In applying a technology of education approach, changes are not made to a system for their own but only good educational reasons that are generally based on scientific research.

It is as a technology of education that most practitioners view educational technology today. Within this concept, technology in education is seen mainly as one of the possible means to an end, with appropriate and software being selected or designed to back up the particular strategy that is decided to adopt in order to achieve a given set of educational aims and objectives. The relations between various aspects of educational technology discussed are shown in schematic form in figure 1.

Source: A Handbook of Educational Technology Pg No. 14

TECHNOLOGY A TOOL TO ENHANCE LANGUAGE LEARNING

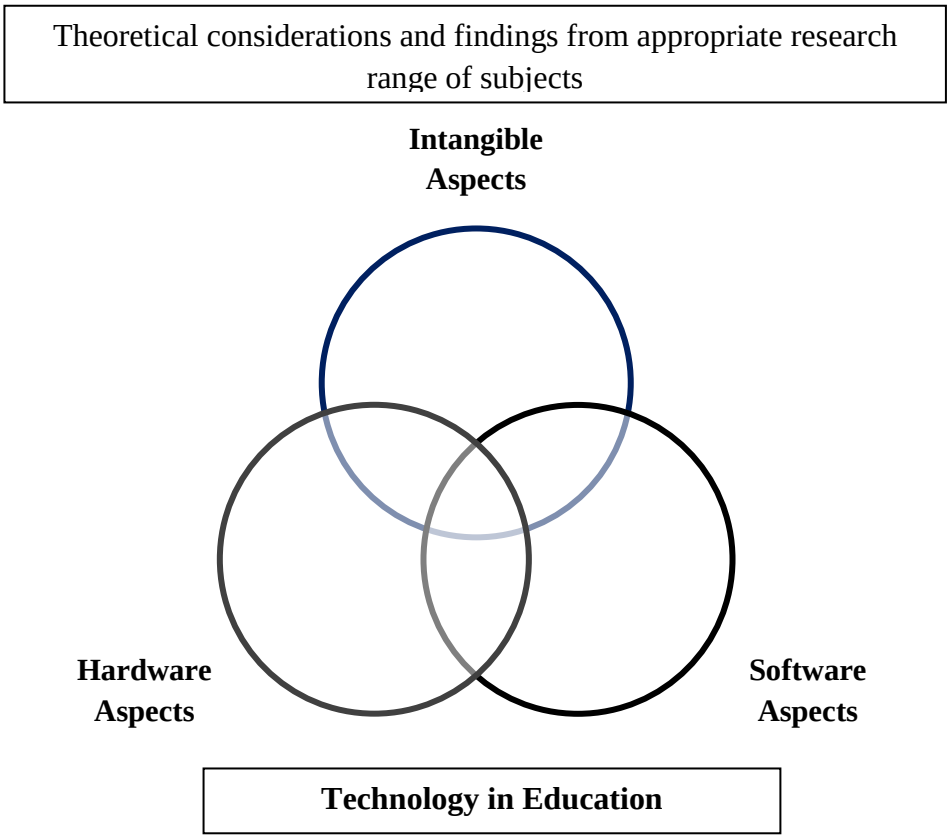


Fig. 1 The relationships between different aspects

According to Prof. Pretti Kumar - Poti Sreeramulu, Telugu University, Hyderabad quoted in EDU Tracks in *Mobile-Assisted English Learning*, "Technology also plays an enormous role in English's Global triumph. Eighty percent of the electronically sorted information in the world is in English. As technologies continue to evolve, so does their propensity to shrink in size. New technologies are helping people pick up the language. Other technologies that hold the capacity for language learning include PDAs, multimedia, cellular phones, MP3 players, DVD players and digital dictionaries".(87)

WORLD WIDE WEB

When one talks of the computer in education, the World Wide Web has to be discussed. The World Wide Web or www is a multimedia resource and communication tool based on hypertext, a system of clickable links. When you click on a highlighted word or picture, you are magically transported to that location or perhaps the next page in a document or another document altogether. Links are also used to view large pictures and to download video and audio files to your computer. Obviously there are many advantages to learning on the Web.

EXCLUSIVE INFORMATION: COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Communication on the Internet takes us away from the labyrinth of the World Wide Web and into the area of the Internet that stimulated its development and growth in the first place – the newsgroup, bulletin board and email facilities. Here is to be found the exchange of ideas and opinions, gossip, arguments, friendship, enmity, philosophy and trivia – a huge amount of it material exclusive available on the internet.

ADVANTAGE OF WEB-BASED LEARNING

Bryn Holmes and John Gardener (2006) refer to those traditional books is arguably not an adequate vehicle for dealing with e-learning in that the printed page has considerable limitation when it comes to illustrating its interactional features and power. E-learning requires different types of engagement, categorized in the framework of key practices of skills illustrated in the petals of the e-learning 'flower'. This enables the learners to search, select, test, explore, collaborate, create, discuss and understand etc.

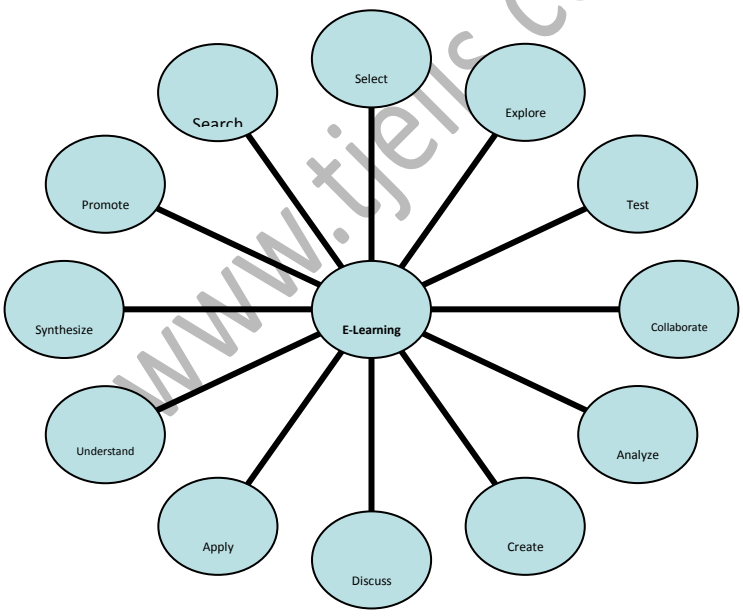


Fig. 2 A flower petal framework (non-hierarchical) for e-learning practices and skills
Source: Bryn Holmes and John Gardner

INCREASING LEARNER ACCESSIBILITY

The internet can be usefully described as a resource for information gathering purposes, and as a medium through which learning takes place. Language learners can exploit the many internet applications such as discussion in chat rooms, groups, e-mail, Usenet, the World Wide web, etc. to develop and enhance a wide selection of communicative strategies.

For example, students may access internet-based materials primarily to retrieve, adapt and present them: for content (as a basis for project or essay work); for linguistic or cultural value (text analysis and specialist vocabulary); for language learning exercises (Grammar drills, close tests); for interaction with other language learners (e-mail based correspondence, virtual classrooms), etc.

UPDATING OF LEARNING MATERIALS

The internet provides immediate, cost-effective and wide-ranging access to authentic language materials, irrespective of the level and location of language learners. This potentially promotes the democratization of the learning process and allows those who would otherwise have little opportunity to visit the target country, or to immerse themselves in the language and culture, to do so from afar. The internet's flexibility, accessibility and user-friendliness means that it can be used with care as an intrinsic element of self-directed learning and also support, for example Task based learning, Tandem learning or group work.

STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH

Students have different perceptual learning styles—different sensor preferences for processing information (Kinsella, 1995). Some students, categorized as auditory learners, tend to process information through listening to instruction via lectures, tapes, or films. Other learners prefer to process information by reading printed material silently, while still others receive information better by association with charts, images, and graphs. These learners are categorized as visual/verbal and visual/nonverbal learners, respectively.

Fred Percival and Henry Ellington (1984: 35) argues that While conventional teaching strategies are strongly dominated by the teacher and by institutional constraints, student-centered strategies are designed to provide the student with a highly flexible system of learning which is geared to individual life and learning styles. In such strategies, the teacher and the institution play supportive, rather than central roles.

A wide range of approaches has been developed and used at different levels of education. These vary from systems designed to individualized learning within an existening educational or training environment by extensive use of resource-based learning, to systems where practically all of the conventional barriers to educational opportunity have been removed, so that a potential student can be any age or background, and can study in places, and at times, which suit the individual rather than the institution. Such systems are called open learning systems.

INTERNET AS A TOOL THAT SUPPORTS LEARNING

Saraswathi Rao quotes the references of the following people as follows:

Education all over the world in this modern era has moved from being teacher-centered to learner-centered with the growth of information and Communication technologies in all fields of life. Teachers, even in traditional face-to-face educational institutions acknowledge the usefulness of technology to enhance their teaching strategies but educators should consider how the new technologies can be used to improve their techniques before adopting them (Adrian Kirkwood1998)

Miller (1995) is of the option that 'the real issue is not the impact of technology on the curriculum or learning but the emerging relationships among technology, the curriculum and the learner'. The scholar becomes guide rather then the owner of knowledge-real power rests in our ability to find, analyze and use information critically to make decisions, solve problems and respond effectively to new situations. In fact, the emergence of new technologies in recent years has increased the number of options available for the integration of various media in the delivery of educational programmes.

The paradigm shift in education according to Otto Peters (1999) involves four types of interaction

- One alone: where the students work by accessing the information available on the World Wide Web.
- One to One: where students interact with one another through electronic mail (e-mail) or chat.
- One to many: where the teacher interacts with many students at the same time and delivers lectures or conducts symposiums.
- Many to many: where the students debate with one another on various topics or where there is brainstorming.

TOOLS OF THE INTERNET

EMAIL

This is an electronic postal service where message travel at great speeds people across the globe can send and receive messages in minutes. It is also a fast and convenient way of sending messages back and forth many times a day. The snail mail or regular postal service is so slow in comparison that anyone who has computer prefers this reliable cost effect mode of communication which can be used from the comfort of one's own home. Another advantage is

that we can send enormous documents as 'attachment'. Although this form of communication is basically text based it is possible to attach large files, graphics or sounds to these notes. Some e-mail programmes even feature voice mail. So you can listen to your message.

MAILING

The system of newsgroup is a worldwide network to open discussion on thousands of subjects. They are open in the sense that they are not usually supervised or moderate and can be read and debated by anyone who is interested.

CHAT

This programme is a very popular way to communicate in real time. That is whatever you type will be immediately visible on the screen to the other participants on their computers. You can chat to strangers around the world who share your hobbies or talents or interests or even arrange to meet family or friends for a virtual reunion.

CONFERENCING AND INSTANT MESSAGING

One of the most popular forms of communication online is via chat, which is real-time conversation via text on screen, voice or even video. Such communication is akin to telephone conversations, with users seeing or hearing messages as they occur and responding quickly. As explained earlier, such chat is often referred to as IRC[1], but most chat really occurs via web-based chat room in proprietary chat room such as those found on AOL[2], or increasingly through instant messaging.

SOCIAL NETWORK COMMUNITIES

A social network service focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interest and activities of others. Most social network services are web based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as E-mail and instant messaging services. Orkut, Hi5, Tagged, Facebook websites are being used regularly by millions of people, and it now seems that social networking will be an enduring part of everyday life. The main types of social networking services are those which contain directories of some categories (such as former classmates).

[1] Internet Relay Chat

[2] America Online, the largest commercial online service in the world, which merged with Time Warmer in 2000. AOL Time Warmer has become the largest media corporation to domain the Internet.

RESEARCHING VIA THE INTERNET

The Internet is a remarkable resources for research – a huge international library – although one frequency lacking in quality control with the proviso in mind, the Net also provides materials from many of the most respected and important institutions in the world, institutions that most people would not have been able to use previously. What is more, much of the information provided is freely available, in a form accessible to anyone with a computer and Internet Connection.

CONCLUSION

The learners have to exhibit new capabilities. He/she has to become more independent as an on-line learning environment can provide a mode of learning that empowers students. All he has to do is learn how to quickly retrieve data, choose what is relevant from the vast sources of information, browse, navigate or guided tour in a virtual classroom or to chat with other students in virtual seminar.

Using the internet for any kind of learning gives a learner a lot of space and independence. The learner has a lot of time to reflect on the information he has garnered. It is of special advantage to students who are inhibited by visual learner. Web materials are used to support course and facilitate to learner's access to resources in a more flexible way. Initially the use of the internet and making it an obligatory part of education may be met with a lot of resistance and reluctance. Using the internet the demand for quality education will be increased.

The usage of internet has emerged as the single most powerful vehicle for providing access to unlimited information. The internet is an inseparable part of today's engineering educational system. The dependency on the Internet and its services is increasing day by day and the users of engineering college(s) too are depending more and more on the Internet for their various educational purposes. The Internet facility has enabled the students to enhance their academic excellence by providing them the latest information and access to the worldwide information.

The information on the Internet is not usually available in an organized way and the users are unable to get pin- pointed information from the Internet. In order to make the Internet more beneficial, the library staff who have acquired a good deal of efficiency in the collection, organization and retrieval of information should feel duty-bound to see that the users are able to obtain right information at the right time. For this, they should organize and classify the information on a Website in such a way that the users are able to find easily the information they

need for their studies and research purposes. The library services supplemented by Internet services can prove a great boon to the users in getting the right information at the right time.

To sum up, educational technology involves a clinical, systematic analysis of the entire teaching and learning process in an attempt to maximize its effectiveness. It creates a new opportunities for both educators and learners to enrich their teaching and learning experiences, through virtual environment that support not just the delivery but also the exploration and application of information and the promotion of new knowledge.

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