



IMPLEMENTING ICT IN IMPROVING RECEPTIVE SKILLS OF ESP LEARNERS

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Using technology in language teaching process is not new. Actually, technology has been in language teaching process for decades – anyone can argue for centuries, if we can consider the blackboard as a technology. Type recorders, language laboratories and video have been in use since the 1960s and 1970s, and are still used in classrooms around the world.

In the process of teaching English for Specific Purposes there are some difficulties such as adaptation to the sphere the students are engaged. Though students are familiar with their own specialty, they find it difficult to understand the texts and speech on a particular specification. In this situation ICT comes to help them improve their adaptation to it.

Computer-based materials for language teaching, often referred to as CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), appeared in the early 1980s. Early CALL programs typically required learners to respond to stimuli on the computer screen and to carry out tasks such as filling in gapped texts, matching sentence halves and doing multiple-choice activities. Probably one of the best-known early CALL activities is that of text reconstruction, where an entire text is blanked out and the learner recreates it by typing in words. For all of these activities the computer then offers the learner feedback, ranging from simply pointing out whether the answer is correct or incorrect to providing more sophisticated feedback, such as showing why the learner is mistaken and offering remedial activities. The CALL approach is one that is still found on many published CD-ROMs for language teaching.

As access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has become more widespread, so CALL has moved beyond the use of computer programs to embrace the use of the Internet and web-based tools. The term TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning) appeared in the 1990s, in response to the growing possibilities offered by the Internet and communications technology.

Although the use of ICT by language teachers is still not widespread, the use of technology in the classroom is becoming increasingly important, and it will become a normal part of ELT practice in the coming years. There are many reasons for this:

- Internet access – either in private homes, or at Internet cafes - is becoming increasingly available to learners.

- Younger learners are growing up with technology, and it is a natural and integrated part of their lives. For these learners the use of technology is a way to bring the outside world into the classroom. And some of these younger learners will in turn become teachers themselves.



- English, as an international language, is being used in technologically mediated contexts.
- Technology, especially the Internet, presents us with new opportunities for authentic tasks and materials, as well as access to a wealth of ready-made ELT materials.
- The Internet offers excellent opportunities for collaboration and communication between learners who are geographically dispersed.
- Technology is offered with published materials such as coursebooks and resource books for teachers.
- Learners increasingly expect language schools to integrate technology into teaching.
- Technology offers new ways for practicing language and assessing performance.
- Technology is becoming increasingly mobile. It can be used not only in the classroom, lecture hall, computer room or self-access centre, it can also be used at home, on the way to school and in Internet cafes.
- Using a range of ICT tools can give learners exposure to and practice in all of the four main language skills – speaking, listening, writing and reading.

The contexts in which teachers are working with technology can vary widely and the access that teachers have to computers – the so-called digital divide – will affect what we can do with our classes in terms of implementing technology. A general lack of ICT training for teachers also means that we still have some way to go until the normalisation of technology in language teaching, where the use of technology in teaching becomes as natural as the use of books or pens and paper.

Many people are afraid of new technology and, with the increasing presence of the Internet and computers, the term technophobe has appeared to refer to those of us who might be wary of these new developments. More recently, the term digital native has been coined to refer to someone who grows up using technology, and who thus feels comfortable and confident with it – typically today's children. Their parents, on the other hand, tend to be digital immigrants, who have come late to the world of technology, if at all. In many cases, teachers are the digital immigrants and our younger students are the digital natives.

Think about yourself. Where do you stand? How confident do you feel about using the Internet and computers? Although there is a tendency to call computer users either technophobes or technogeeks (a term for a technology enthusiast), the truth is that most of us probably fall somewhere between the two extremes.

A large part of the negative attitudes teachers have towards technology is usually the result of a lack of confidence, a lack of facilities or a lack of training, resulting in an inability to see the benefit of using technologies in the classroom. It is also often the case that teachers may not be fully in control of their work situations. A teacher may want to use more technology in their teaching, but the school may not have the facilities, or, on the other hand, a teacher may be instructed to start using technology for which they feel unprepared or untrained.

There are a few of the more negative comments we can hear from teachers in some schools of our country:

- I can never get into the computer room in class time – it's always being used.
- Using computers isn't interactive. My students could do computer work at home.



- I don't know anything about technology!
- My students knows much more about computers than I do.
- Why use computers anyway? We've got a perfectly good coursebook.
- I don't like them so I don't see why I should use them in the classroom.
- I'd like to use more, but preparing materials is so time consuming.

The following responses can be answers in a way to these comments:

1. Timetable when you are going to use the computer room well in advance, and use a booking form which covers several months or a term. Put this booking form on the door of the computer room so that all teachers and learners can see when the room will be used, and by whom. You can use the computer room regularly for project work, or regular self-study work. This can easily be timetabled in advance. You might also want to negotiate with the school about the possibility of having one computer in your classroom. Some activities can be done using a single computer in the classroom.

2. Some computer-based work can be done alone, for example using CD-ROMs, but a lot of ideas for using technology and the Internet involve pair- and small-group work. The ideal scenario is to have one computer available per pair of learners, but many activities can also be carried out using a single computer with a whole class, or with small groups of learners (three to four) per computer.

3. This is an often-heard remark, and reflects a very real lack of training in the classroom use of technology in ELT. When pressed, teachers usually admit that they do in fact know a bit about technology – they usually know how to use email, a word processing program and the Internet. This knowledge is certainly enough to get started with using technology in the classroom, as you will see in this book. The lack of ICT training in ELT is an issue which is slowly being addressed by training bodies, and there are also several online teacher development groups dedicated to exploring and learning about the use of technology in the classroom for teachers to join.

4. This remark is often true for teachers who teach younger adults, or young learners, and who, like the teacher making comment 3, may have received no training in the use of technology. However, having learners in the class who know more about technology than you do is no bad thing. When starting to use technology in the classroom, teachers can rely on these more technologically knowledgeable learners for help and support. Learners are usually delighted to be called upon to help out, and to get a chance to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in this area.

5. The use of technology in the classroom does not replace using traditional materials such as a black/whiteboard or a coursebook – rather, technology tools are used to complement and enhance regular classroom work. Imagine that a unit in the coursebook deals with animals in danger of extinction. Technology can be used to do complementary activities such as a data collection email project, or a webquest on animals in danger of extinction or even to create a podcast on the topic. The teacher can produce additional electronic materials to review coursebook material on the topic, too.

6. This dislike and fear of computers is often expressed by teachers who have had negative experiences with technology in the past. The best way to address the situation is to make teachers aware that they already have certain technical skills – they probably know how to use a tape recorder in the classroom, for example, and often already use technology in their personal lives, such as an MP3 player, the Internet or email. In other



words, rather than dismissing very real fears, these need to be acknowledged and addressed. The technophobic teacher needs to be encouraged to get started by implementing simple, undemanding technology with learners. Using a ready-made webquest from the Internet, for example, is a good way to start. Teachers also need to realise that technology does and will break down occasionally, and that it's always good to have a backup plan that doesn't require the use of technology. Also, providing good training in the use of technology in the classroom through face-to-face workshops or online courses is key to encouraging the long-term acceptance and use of technology by technophobic teachers.

7. Making new materials from scratch can be time-consuming, both for paper-based classes and for classes using technology. Teachers need to collaborate in schools and pool resources and lesson plans, as well as use the technology-based resources that most commercial coursebooks provide nowadays. Typically, a coursebook will have its own web pages on the publisher's website, a list of recommended websites to visit for each unit, a CD-ROM and/or DVD, and occasionally teacher support online, in the form of frequently asked questions (FAQs), or discussion forums.

Using websites in the classroom. In this chapter we look at the basic skillset needed for effective use of the Internet with our students and take a closer look at the process for introducing the Internet into our teaching.

Using websites is one of the easiest and least stressful ways of getting started with technology in the classroom. There is a large and constantly expanding collection of resources on the web, at a variety of levels and covering an amazing array of topics. You can choose from authentic (written for Internet surfers in general) sources or ELT-specific sites (made by, and for, teachers), monolingual or multilingual sites, sites with multimedia, or just simple text, for those on slower connections.

The web is a source of content which can be used as a window on the wider world outside your class, and is – of course – a readily available collection of authentic material. As such, it is a much larger repository of content than would previously have been readily available to you and your students.

Collaboration like this can help to reduce the time you spend searching for good materials and the time spent preparing activities or making worksheets. Just as the Internet is becoming more of a collaborative medium, so should your use of it in your teaching.

The technology needed to use the Internet for teaching is relatively limited and the chances of something going wrong are greatly reduced over more complex technology approaches such as attempting to carry out live chat or video-conferencing sessions.

Another advantage of this tool is that you don't necessarily have to rely on a constant Internet connection if you bear in mind that it is possible to save local copies of websites on your computer, or print out potentially useful pages for later use. Indeed, you can use web pages in the classroom in a variety of ways:

- as printed pages, with no computers. Although printing is not necessarily the cheapest option, it is certainly a viable one in places where there may be limited access to the Internet. Indeed, a lot of activities using web pages will only necessitate the printing of one or two pages, which can subsequently be photocopied.



It's important that both you and your learners see the use of the Internet as an intrinsic part of the learning process, rather than as an occasional activity which has nothing to do with their regular study programme. With some learners there may be some resistance to regular computer use in, the classroom. We have often found, for example, that professional people view computers as work tools rather than as resources for learning. It is vital that they appreciate that this is a useful, as well as an entertaining, tool in the classroom and that it can contribute to their language development in a variety of ways, for example by giving them the opportunity to build vocabulary or improve their listening skills. Lower-level classes can be engaged with visual and multimedia materials, the use of songs and other video materials.

ELT websites or authentic websites? Our choice of website will depend largely on what we want to achieve with it. Many teachers tend to steer clear of authentic websites, and by this we mean any site not created with the language learner in mind, believing that their students will find them too difficult. But, as with all authentic materials, the level and language challenges posed by these sites can be largely mitigated by the type of task you expect your learners to carry out.

A well-designed task will allow your learners to deal with authentic sites, guiding them through not only the text, but also the layout and navigation problems that may otherwise impact on their learning experience.

Of course there are plenty of ELT websites which provide content that your learners can use, for example language practice activities they can do on their own. They provide valuable opportunities for more controlled language work and are often a great help to learners who need to brush up on certain aspects of the language or to prepare for an exam. Such sites are often ideal for homework, access to the Internet permitting.

In this work, we focused on the use of ICT and software tools in improving learners' receptive (reading and listening) skills. In the first chapter, general information about the problems of implementing ICT to improving Receptive skills, as well as the web-based technologies and sources of teaching and learning foreign languages and some software tools were described.



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