



## IDENTIFYING THE EFFICIENT USE OF THE TECHNOLOGY IN ENGLISH TEACHING

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### Abstract

The rapid rising and development of Information Technology offers many chances for both teachers and students. It is true that “computers will no doubt continue to be an important and powerful tool for communication among people all over the world...” in order to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century communicative competence using a computer will be necessary for students including English second language and foreign language students” (Kim, 1997). It is also proved that technology offers solutions to pedagogical problems; however, each benefit it brings about hides potential drawbacks if teachers and students rely so much or overuse it. In order to make more efficient use of the technology in English teaching, some cautiousness about potential difficulties which an approach reliant on technology will be mentioned.

**Keywords:** Technology, Teaching Methodology, language learning

### Introduction

The rapid rising and development of Information Technology offers many chances for both teachers and students. It is true that “computers will no doubt continue to be an important and powerful tool for communication among people all over the world...” in order to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century communicative competence using a computer will be necessary for students including English second language and foreign language students” (Kim, 1997). It is also proved that technology offers solutions to pedagogical problems; however, each benefit it brings about hides potential drawbacks if teachers and students rely so much or overuse it. In order to make more efficient use of the technology in English

teaching, some cautiousness about potential difficulties which an approach reliant on technology will be mentioned.

### Content

The four main advantages claimed by the new technologies based on Maley’s attitude (*Technology: bane or boon?*) will be discussed in this paper. In each benefit which technology brings about, some potential difficulties will also be discussed.

**The first advantage is that** student motivation is significantly enhanced. This is undoubtedly the case in most instances. It can be denied that technologies bring about so much motivation for students in learning language. Students are motivated by powerful computers, text-reconstruction software,

concordance software, telecommunications, and multimedia simulation software, World Wide Web, etc. In which, computer is a powerful tool for students learning because it can provide online environment which prepares students for international cross-cultural communication which are increasingly required for success in academic, vocational, or personal life (Warschauer and Meskill, 2000). Moreover, computer-based grammar checkers and spell checkers represent potentially powerful ways to provide feedback to students' written output (Jacobs & Rodgers, 1999). One more remarkable benefit which multimedia brings about is that video materials can bring natural and context-rich linguistic and cultural materials to the learner, while the Internet enables the learner to access authentic news and literature in the target language, which can reflect current cultural changes more effectively than printed sources (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Hanson-Smith, 1999).

However, if teachers and students have not been taught how to use them efficiently and effectively, then students might end up becoming lazy, static, and isolated or they may even end up using computers like toys (Kim, 1997). Kramsch (1997) also supported this idea, "the computer screen resembles a television screen and is also used for commercial and entertainment purposes, the danger is that the learners adopt an uncritical attitude towards the visual and linguistic information they receive on their computer screen". Besides, if totally dependent on multimedia devices during teaching, the teachers may be turned into slaves to the multimedia and cannot play the leading role in teaching (Xu, 2010). It is observed in some classes that a lot of teachers are active in multimedia technology application so that they are much engaged in searching information and working out courseware. In class, they are standing by the computer and students are fixing their attention only on the screen, and therefore, there is no eye contact between teachers and students. In this case, students become demotivated by the technology.

In short, teachers and students should be taught how to use technologies efficiently and effectively in order to get student motivation; in other word, students can use hints provided by the

computer as scaffolds for the acquisition process (Warschauer and Meskill, 2000).

**The second advantage is that** it enables students to access vast reserves of information in different formats (audio, print, visual, etc.) in ways not open to traditional delivery systems. This is also true. But it may also entail fragmentation of attention and time wasting, unless carefully controlled.

It is agreed that technology is an enormous database for language learning. The range of media supported by computer and communications technology assists a matching of the mode of presentation of information or instructional material to the need to be served. This can include: text, graphics, photographic, audio, video and computer, internet (Sandery, 1993). In which, video materials can bring natural and context-rich linguistic and cultural materials to the learner, while the Internet enables the learner to access authentic news and literature in the target language, which can reflect current cultural changes more effectively than printed sources (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Hanson-Smith, 1999). In addition, graphics, photographic, audio, video helps classroom more lively.

In a nutshell, information is potentially infinite; time is not (Maley). If students get difficulties in looking for some useful pieces of information in enormous reserves of information, it is time for teacher's help. Hence, it is teacher's responsibility to instruct their students to know what is worth learning and why? and for what purposes? (Kramsch, 1997)

**The third advantage is that** it enables learners to work independently, at their own pace, with material at an appropriate level. This is also true, although it is also true that independent work can be organized in the absence of advanced methodology too.

This viewpoint is also discussed by Kramsch (1997) that an intellectually attractive argument has been made that the new technology will set learners free from the academic, disciplinary stranglehold over knowledge, as the internet is already freeing its users..., and as e-mail is freeing users from postal fees. Thus, learners can learn directly at the source

from the primary database. Moreover, students also have more chance to self-study and self-correct during their learning process. The writing process is another area where computers have added a great deal of value (Warschauer, 2000). Most word-processors now come with spelling checkers, giving weak spellers some help in finding their errors and recognizing the correct spelling from a list of options. However, if students rely so much on word-processor program, they will become subjective and passive; thus, get many difficulties in correcting spelling mistakes without this. In his article "*Technology: Bane or boon?*", Maley showed that sometimes it is simply that the innovation falls short of the results intended, as for example, when students using a word-processor writing program do no better than others who are using pen and paper.

I totally agree with the viewpoint that "the liberation tool can only set you free if you know where you are going and what worlds you want to settle". Again, it is teacher's responsibility to instruct their students to know what is worth learning and why? and for what purposes? (Kramsch, 1997)

**The fourth advantage is that** it offers unparalleled opportunities for interactions – between students and the machine, between students and teachers and between fellow students or students in distant locations. It is also true, and one of the most exciting applications of e-mail is the opportunity to interact with students from other cultures (Maley).

There are many supporting standpoints about opportunities for interactions that technology brings about. Kim (1997), addressed that the computer will be not only a device to provide an artificial educational environment such as providing cultural information or linguistic pattern drill exercises using software but also a powerful device to make the learner make real contact with the target language environment and people.

In my opinion, with the use of technology, interactions are lively because there is sound, color, images, pictures and movement. Kim (1997) also believed that for language students, computers will have a very powerful function because authentic

communication can be realized through chatting in cyber space or exchanging e-mail through internet.

There exist some problems that if teachers are totally dependent on technology, it results in lack of communication between teachers and students, replacement of teachers' voice by computer sound, and teachers' analysis by visual image and students' few chances for speaking communication (Xu, 2010). He also added that with the favorable atmosphere by the mutual communication between teachers and students fading away, and sound and image of multimedia affecting students' initiative to think and speak, English class turns to courseware show and students are made viewers rather than the participants of class activities.

In a word, teachers should make the most use of chance for students to speak and improve their communicative competence. Furthermore, students should not use internet, especially chatting and e-mail, just for fun but for their own learning with the proper awareness of technology.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, technology can serve a variety of uses for language teaching and learning, and remains an important part of our lives. It cannot be ignored and will not go away (Kim, 1997). However, even intelligent machines remain machines. The more they act as machines, the more teachers should act as teachers (Kramsch, 1997). Therefore, with the rapid development of technology, teachers have more responsibilities in making the most use of its usefulness and maximally reducing its disadvantages. Kim (1997) stated that teachers, administrators, researchers, parents, software publisher, hardware manufacturers, policy makers and students all have to work together first to understand *technicism* and then to understand and learn ways to turn on the power of computers. Especially, teachers should also be responsible for teaching students with their true role as educators (Kramsch, 1997).

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