

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH

In today's world, it would be impossible to find an area of life that has not been affected by the process of digitization. In other words, modern technology has permeated our society, and that includes education, as well. However, there is still a lot of potential in that field that has not been taken advantage of, and that situation should be remedied in the future, as there are certain benefits of digital education.

Nowadays, digital classrooms employ modern technology and communications to provide students with information. They use that information online, or in a traditional classroom with their teachers and fellow students to learn new lessons. Moreover, modern technology enables teachers to introduce elements of gamification into the education process, which should improve student motivation and information retention, as well as their ability to do their own research and work in teams. It also allows for individualization of learning and encourages students to seek out the content that they like.

It is obvious that technology is very much part of language learning throughout the world at all different levels. It is possible to see traditional computers in labs, teachers and students walking around with laptops or tablet PCs, and a lot of people have mobile phones that are capable of doing rather more than the mainframe computers that started computer-assisted language learning in the 1960s. What is still sometimes an issue is the reliability of these technologies for classroom use. On the other hand, it is argued that digital technologies are ideally placed to help teachers working with learners, and learners working independently, to complete the necessary tasks that make their language development possible [1].

When we talk about integrating information and communications technology (ICT) in our teaching, we mean thinking about the best available tools for language teaching and learning. Writing on the board and using pens, pencils, paper and books may be the best tools for the job, but it is clear that digital skills are important for education and employment in the 21st century. This article will consider the use of ICT for teaching and learning English to emphasize the necessity of developing digital literacy.

To begin with, let us point out that technology provides certain opportunities for teaching and learning English. The following list offers an overview of some of the affordances of technology for language education:

- Provides multimodal language activities in which reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are

integrated, not isolated, thereby accommodating the strengths of different learners;

- Reduces language learning anxiety and increases motivation and participation;

- Enables learners to collaborate and build communities;

- Allows learners to construct a new social identity online which may give them confidence to interact with native speakers;

- Provides access to large collections of authentic language that can be used by teachers to create authentic learning activities;

- Develops learner autonomy and allows learners to explore and engage in meaningful, authentic language practice with native speakers via computer-mediated communication tools such as texting, chats, e-mail, online discussions, blogging, wikis, and web-based word processing;

- Enables computer-adaptive testing which improves test security and prevents cheating;

- Allows for real-time feedback on assessments;

- Enables automated feedback on written tasks via automated writing evaluation and chatbots, which can be created by teachers for text chat practice; also enables spoken feedback via automated speech recognition ;

- Facilitates one-on-one language advising/language support between teachers and students via online access [2].

It is a matter of common knowledge that grabbing students' attention and keeping everyone active during the class is very important, but also very difficult to accomplish. In order to make classes more interactive, fun, and educative at the same time, teachers should pay attention to new teaching methods and tools. Hundreds of digital education tools have been created with the purpose of giving autonomy to the student, improving the administration of academic processes, encouraging collaboration, and facilitating communication between teachers and learners. Let us consider some popular digital tools that are used for teaching and learning English in the world today.

Edmodo is an educational tool that connects teachers and students, and is assimilated into a social network. In this one, teachers can create online collaborative groups, administer and provide educational materials, measure student performance, and communicate with parents, among other functions. Edmodo has more than 34 million users who connect to create a learning process that is more enriching,

personalized, and aligned with the opportunities brought by technology and the digital environment. Edmodo also allows teachers and students from all over the world to share knowledge and resources with each other. One of the features of this tool is the ability to share any type of content with other users and get access to materials that others decided to share.

TED-ED is an educational platform that allows creating educational lessons with the collaboration of teachers, students, animators – generally people who want to expand knowledge and good ideas. This website allows democratizing access to information, both for teachers and students. Here, people can have an active participation in the learning process of others.

Storybird aims to promote writing and reading skills in students through storytelling. In this tool, teachers can create interactive and artistic books online through a simple and easy to use interface. The stories created can be embedded in blogs, sent by email, and printed, among other options. In Storybird, teachers can also create projects with students, give constant feedback, and organize classes and grades.

Kahoot! is an educational platform that is based on games and questions. Through this tool, teachers can create questionnaires, discussions, or surveys that complement academic lessons. The material is projected in the classroom and questions are answered by students while playing and learning at the same time. Kahoot! promotes game-based learning, which increases student engagement and creates a dynamic, social, and fun educational environment [3]. This type of learning experience can really keep the whole class engaged, as each student joins the game via their smart devices while the results appear on a shared screen for everyone to see. Forming multiple teams can build a competitive atmosphere which students would enjoy. In addition, the online nature of Kahoot! allows teachers to involve even those students that are unable to attend the class, but are willing to participate in the game. Furthermore, teachers could assign homework using this tool, and have instant access to results [4].

Google Classroom allows teachers to organize their class, interact with students, grade their work and check on their progress. As it is available on smart devices and only requires a Google account, Google Classroom brings in a certain amount of flexibility to both teachers and students. The teacher is able to create quizzes, assign essays, tests, and even create a class calendar with important dates, so students could always stay updated. The teacher has access to students' ongoing work and has the ability to provide insightful feedback. This tool is a virtual classroom that is always open [4].

Duolingo is an interactive language-learning platform. Language courses are high quality, designed and implemented with experts and native speakers to create a great approach to language learning.

Dictionary.com is one of the most popular dictionary apps. It offers loads of features and is simple to use. Providing quick access to definitions and their pronunciation, this app also provides users with access to dozens of language translations and even offers

colloquial language and idiomatic expressions. For those interested in building their vocabulary, Dictionary.com also offers a word of the day. This app is an invaluable digital learning tool and can be used without an Internet connection.

Exam Vocabulary Builder helps students to build a stronger vocabulary through games, quizzes, and such functions as audio pronunciation.

Coursera offers hundreds of Massive Open Online Courses to anyone interested in gaining basic understanding of a wide array of topics and subjects. It provides online studies in 12 different categories and learners can receive verified certificates for their online achievements. Many universities have even recognized Coursera credit and allow students to complete online courses as part of their regular degree programs at university [5].

In conclusion it is worth noting that higher education worldwide is at a historic crossroads. With more than 300 million people entering the workforce in the next 10 years, universities urgently need to augment their capacity to meet the aspirations of a young and growing demographic. With the digital era taking over, it is important to include digital and online tools into the learning process. Students rely on smart devices more than on conventional learning methods. Keeping up with this trend allows teachers to better understand students and their needs. Additionally, these tools change the way people teach and learn English and make the learning process more interactive. They provide creative freedom, endless resources and learning materials, and the possibility to teach students from all corners of the globe. Integrating technology into the curriculum not only provides students with the opportunity to expand their skills and succeed academically, it also prepares them for the real-world upon graduation.

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