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THE USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

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In recent times, the global shift to online education is more than just a convenient way of learning. It has truly transformed the way knowledge is accessed and delivered. Unlike traditional classrooms that often bind students to a strict timetable, with set lecture hours, mandatory attendance, and unyielding deadlines, online learning allows for a more adaptable approach. Learners today have the freedom to study at their own pace while balancing their professional, personal, and academic commitments. In effect, online learning has democratized access to high-quality education by bringing in learners from remote locations, diverse economic backgrounds, and varied learning requirements into the mainstream.

The most important aspect of online education is the ability to set your own learning pace. In a typical classroom, the instructor sets the tempo of lessons, which may not suit everyone. Some students might need a little extra time to absorb complex concepts, while others prefer to move quickly through familiar material. Online courses accommodate both learning styles and allow learners to revisit lessons, pause when needed, and progress according to their comfort level. This tailored approach is particularly beneficial for working professionals looking to upskill while managing full-time jobs and parents balancing household responsibilities. It not only enriches the learning journey but also boosts engagement and retention.

Beyond pacing, asynchronous learning removes the constraints of fixed class schedules. This eliminates geographical barriers and empowers learners from any part of the world to access top-tier programs without relocation. Learners hailing from remote areas and even emerging markets are now free to enroll in courses that once were out of their reach. By virtue of this systemic design, these virtual classrooms now also stand as a beacon of cultural diversity. With global and diverse perspectives converging, it makes a case for learners to have an engaging and enriching learning experience. Additionally, students from different time zones can join the same program without the inconvenience of attending live sessions at odd hours [1].

The integration of online learning in today's modern, fast-paced lifestyle has been successful to a great extent. With mobile-first platforms enabling learning on the go and bite-sized learning modules paving the way for microlearning, the flexibility quotient has raised the bar for everyone. To further optimize the study schedules, AI-powered learning paths are enabling a deeper level of personalization for students.

The second pillar, and a key reason behind the rising popularity of e-learning platforms, is the ease with which learners can access online courses. More often than not, a physical institution might not be the best option because of geographic, financial,

or even physical limitations. But the advent of online education has not only eliminated these barriers but also opened doors for individuals who might otherwise struggle to pursue formal education.

Accessibility is also visible in the way online education has been able to bridge the digital divide while promoting inclusive learning. Not all learners have access to high-end laptops or desktops. Mobile-first online courses narrow this gap by optimizing materials for smartphones or tablets and using lightweight apps that can run smoothly on such low-end devices. Many platforms allow for offline access to the course material for students with inconsistent internet connections.

In terms of inclusivity, online courses are designed to accommodate diverse needs. AI-powered screen readers and voice assistants have been incorporated into learning systems to help visually impaired students navigate the courses. Likewise, transcripts and subtitles support for hearing-impaired students, and customizable interfaces for learners with ADHD, dyslexia, or autism have eased the learning process for these individuals.

Affordable education is another aspect that ensures that flexibility and accessibility go hand in hand. When compared to the traditional system, operating costs of conventional universities are usually associated with high tuition fees, transportation costs, and materials expenses. On the other hand, the overhead costs for online courses are significantly lower. Many platforms facilitate subscription-based models that grant access to multiple courses for a fraction of the price of traditional programs. Some even offer free certifications, thereby opening new career pathways without requiring expensive degrees.

The evolution of online education continues to reshape how students learn. Today, e-learning is not just about gaining skills that matter. It is increasingly becoming a direct bridge to employment. Many courses now incorporate live projects, case studies, and direct partnerships with companies to facilitate real-world experience. AI-driven career matching tools further enhance job prospects by connecting learners to opportunities that align with their interests and qualifications.

With advancements in technology, the horizon of online education is poised to expand. We can expect an influx of a significant number of learners to turn to online courses. This growing demand for flexible learning options signals a shift towards a wholly student-centered approach. Thus, the frontrunners in the edtech space will be those who invest in innovation while prioritizing inclusive learning experiences [1].

It should be clarified that the student-centered approach is a teaching and learning method that places the needs and interests of students at the center of the educational process. It emphasizes engagement, collaboration, and student autonomy, aiming to create a learning environment that supports, challenges, and aligns with students' needs and goals. This approach has a positive impact on student motivation, active engagement, and improved learning outcomes, especially in online and distance learning settings.

Modern education strives for active learning, where students become the center of the educational process and develop their skills and competencies. However, the implementation of this concept is difficult due to various problems, including a lack of

infrastructure and limited resources. Despite this, the use of modern information technologies, especially distance learning, provides enormous opportunities for the application of this concept, where the teacher plays the role of a mentor, helping students develop learning motivation and stimulating their independent learning activities. In the realm of education, there is a significant discourse surrounding the idea of prioritizing students in the learning process, involving them actively, and tailoring educational experiences to their needs and interests. Numerous studies explore diverse facets of this educational approach. These investigations delve into topics such as crafting learning environments that revolve around the learner and the hurdles faced when translating this concept into practical implementation.

It is worth noting that student-centered learning involves active student participation in the educational process and the ability for students to choose what, when, where, and how they will learn. The student-centered approach to e-learning involves orienting the educational process towards the needs and interests of students. This approach assumes that students actively participate in their own learning, define their learning goals, choose ways to achieve these goals, and independently assess their progress. In the context of the accessibility of e-learning, the student-centered approach can be used to identify accessibility issues that cannot be automatically detected. In a student-centered e-learning environment, various tools and technologies are used to help students acquire knowledge in a more interactive and effective format. For example, chats, forums, web conferences, online quizzes, and assignments allow students to communicate and collaborate with each other, exchange ideas, and receive feedback from teachers and fellow students. Advanced methods, tools, and technologies are applied to create a student-centered learning process on electronic platforms. Special attention is given to the use of machine learning methods and data analysis to personalize the educational process according to each student's needs and level of knowledge.

In the age of the Internet, traditional lectures are becoming less appealing to students, leading to a decrease in their motivation for learning and exam performance. However, widespread adoption of student-centered teaching methods aimed at addressing this issue faces certain obstacles, such as: (1) difficulties related to preparing materials for e-learning; (2) significant additional time required for active online communication with students; (3) students' resistance to taking an active role in their own learning; (4) insufficient confidence of teachers that the student-centered approach covers all necessary topics. To overcome the mentioned obstacles and improve students' performance, the following measures can be taken: (1) improving student-teacher relationships; (2) using inductive and counterintuitive approaches to introduce new concepts; (3) using puzzle-based quizzes integrated with peer learning; (4) using the audience response system; (5) replacing some lectures with educational programs; (6) reducing the course duration; and (7) utilizing a graphic tablet.

Student-centered e-learning involves using technologies that allow teachers and students to personalize learning. Courses are developed considering the interests and needs of students, which can enhance their motivation and learning efficiency. Student-centered e-learning also involves the use of interactive teaching methods such as

assignments, cases, group discussions, and presentations, which enable students to actively participate in the learning process. Student-centered e-learning helps ensure a high level of individualization in education and enhances learning effectiveness. As a result, students can receive quality education that meets their needs and helps them achieve their learning goals [2]. It has been established that online courses require the application of more effective learner-centered teaching methods. This approach allows students to choose assignments they prefer, including both traditional projects and more active actions such as demonstrations or skill mastery.

It should be emphasized that digital technology can never be the teacher of the future. It will be the teacher's assistant, playing a supportive role which can have a valuable impact on learning outcomes. Technology can handle tasks that a teacher cannot do – whether through lack of time, or resources – and can add real value to the classroom. It is important for teachers to understand that a positive, proactive relationship with technology can help them and their learners. To achieve these outcomes, however, teachers need to expand and maintain their knowledge of learning technologies and develop their ability to critically assess digital learning tools in order to identify those that offer the greatest benefit to their students.

A fundamental role for the teacher is to foster social learning. Social learning features interaction, discussion, and collaboration between students. It creates a positive interpersonal learning climate. It involves taking a flexible and interactive approach which encourages engagement across the class, while also retaining a 'real-time' sensitivity to individual needs. As this type of learning is focused on the application of knowledge, it also encourages higher-order thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation, or – in the case of language learning – the development of communicative competence. Current digital technologies cannot enable this type of social and collaborative learning as well as a teacher can, since such learning environments are highly dependent on the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and their class. Technology, instead, delivers learning content in an 'atomistic' way, where learning is broken down into discrete 'atoms' which (it is assumed) eventually come together to create 'learning'. Current technologies are unable to handle the complexities and deliver the benefits of social learning.

That is not to say that technology is irrelevant in a socially collaborative learning environment. In terms of classroom administration, for example, technology can provide enhanced record keeping, greatly improving the teacher's analysis of student performance, especially the identification of skills which could be improved by deliberate practice. This is where technology can really help. Deliberate practice to consolidate knowledge is considered essential for learning, but is challenging to implement at the classroom level as it is time-consuming and requires specific focus on individual learners.

Digital tools allow students to practise discrete language skills repeatedly (for example, specific grammar points or vocabulary), and for as long as they want or need to. Adaptive learning technologies – where tasks are adjusted according to ongoing student performance – can further extend deliberate practice. Teachers naturally adapt the content they use based on the ability of specific learners, but that is difficult to do

for individual learners; technology can provide adaptive learning experiences on a larger scale in an automated manner (but on limited domains of knowledge). Technology can also add value with marking of student work, and can provide feedback on student writing and aspects of speaking. An example is "Write and Improve", a writing development and feedback tool which is free for learners to use. By marking students' work, technology can reduce the administrative burden on teachers and give them more time for classroom teaching. However, it cannot offer the depth or nuance a teacher can provide.

On-demand learning combined with instant feedback, delivered quickly and on a large scale, is a major advantage of language learning technology. Practice is vitally important for the individual, but it is a real challenge for time-poor teachers who often have to deal with large classes, so the ability to access digital tools and feedback represents a significant expansion in learning opportunities and should theoretically lead to accelerated progress. The best digital tools will provide learning without any human biases and teacher burnout, while also generating invaluable 'big data' on learning and progression. This data is already being used to improve the efficiency and accuracy of digital tools [3].

It is a matter of common knowledge that English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. People use it for work, travel, and study. But not everyone speaks it the same way. English is used in many ways across the world. Some people speak English as their first language, while others learn it later. Global English is not one single version of the language. Instead, it is a way of using English that allows people from different countries to communicate easily. Because English is spoken in English-speaking countries and by millions of people learning English, it has changed over time. Words, pronunciation, and even grammar rules can be different depending on where you are. The important thing is that global English helps people understand each other, even if they speak in different ways.

English is a common language for people from different countries. It helps them work, study, and travel without having to learn multiple languages. For example, a company in Japan might have employees from France, India, and Brazil. Instead of learning each other's languages, they use English to communicate. Universities, airlines, and international events also rely on English.

Many people learn English as a second language to improve job opportunities, study abroad, or travel more easily. Global English makes this possible by keeping communication clear and simple across cultures. Global English is different from British English or American English because it focuses on understanding rather than following grammar rules. To highlight the peculiarities of global English, it is necessary to list the following key features:

1. Simple and clear sentence structure. Global English follows a basic sentence order: subject – verb – object. This makes communication easier to understand for people who speak English as a second language.

2. Short and direct sentences. Using short sentences helps people understand information quickly. In some English-speaking countries, long sentences are common. But in global English, shorter sentences make messages clearer.

3. No idioms or slang. Idioms and slang can be confusing for people who learn English as a second language. Global English avoids them so that messages are clear to everyone.

Although global English makes communication easier, it is not perfect. One challenge is vocabulary. Some words mean different things in different countries. For example, British English uses "lift," while American English uses "elevator." Another challenge is that some workplaces and schools still expect formal, traditional English. This can make it harder for people who use simpler, global English to be understood or taken seriously. But even with these differences, the goal is still the same. People use English to connect, not to follow strict rules. As long as people stay open to different ways of speaking, communication can work.

Global English is always changing. More people are using it, and that shapes how it sounds and how it is spoken. As more people learn and use English, the language will continue to change. Over time, this will make global English even simpler and more flexible. Ultimately, English is about connection, not perfection. The focus will always be on making communication clear and easy for everyone.

Technology is also helping. Online courses, AI tools, and social media are showing people different ways of speaking English. For example, with British Council English Online, students can learn English in a way that is clear, practical, and flexible. The courses help learners build confidence in real-life communication, whether they are speaking, writing, or improving their grammar. Students can learn at their own pace with flexible online lessons from professional teachers to refine their grammar, speak more confidently, or feel comfortable using English in different situations [4].

ESL instructors use various methods and tactics, such as communicative language teaching, task-based language instruction, and multiple resources. The instruction aims to assist non-native speakers in mastering English so they may pursue their personal and professional objectives in English-speaking settings.

To help learners and teachers, the following list of ESL podcasts, YouTube channels, and other websites should be taken into consideration.

British Council offers its series of podcasts for learners at pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. The episodes are divided into different sections, from fictional drama and jokes to quizzes and language advice. Learners can improve their listening comprehension and develop their vocabulary. Each recording has a transcript and interactive exercises to help learners understand and use the language.

Splendid Speaking supports advanced learners of English who want to develop their top-level speaking skills and communication strategies. Each podcast features a recording of non-native speakers of English carrying out short tasks individually or in pairs, such as making presentations or taking part in discussions. Each recording contains expert feedback on the speaker's performance. The Splendid Speaking website offers its newsletter, which gives automatic access to transcripts of all podcasts. Students studying for IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, Cambridge CAE, CPE, or BEC will find these recordings useful in preparation for their Speaking exam.

Learning English is VOA's multimedia source of news and information for millions of English learners worldwide. Learning English began as Special English,

which Voice of America launched in 1959. Special English newscasts and features were a primary fixture of VOA's international shortwave broadcasts for more than half a century. In 2014, their line of products was expanded to include more English teaching materials, and the service became known as Learning English. 'Let's Learn English' – Level 1 and Level 2 programs are designed for beginning English learners by certified American English teachers. 'Ask a Teacher' is a new program where learners can ask questions and teachers answer them. 'News Words' is a short video explaining a word or term used in news stories. Learners can absorb American English through content drawn from 'U.S. and World News', 'Health and Lifestyle', 'Science and Technology', 'Arts and Culture', and other topics. Learners can build vocabulary, strengthen speaking skills, and improve the ability to communicate for work, school, and everyday life. Audio programs and captioned videos – 'English in a Minute', 'English @ the Movies', 'Everyday Grammar TV', and 'Learning English TV' – are written using vocabulary at the upper-beginner and intermediate level. The programs are read one-third slower than normal English speed. Online texts, MP3s, and podcasts let students read, listen, and learn American English and much more. Advanced English learners can read classic literature with 'American Stories', learn idioms and expressions with 'Words and Their Stories', study with 'Everyday Grammar', and follow innovations and trends in 'Education' in the U.S. and around the world. 'Let's Teach English' and 'News Literacy' are free online training programs for advanced learners and English teachers. Learning English programs are also broadcast on the radio and satellite TV.

Business English Pod offers audio and video business English lessons covering a wide range of common topics, situations, and skills, including: presentations, telephoning, negotiating, conversation, travel, meetings, interviews, vocabulary, idioms, and more. Their goal is to teach natural and effective business English. Learners will be able to face different business and work situations with confidence and skill.

BBC Learning English helps learners improve their language skills with regular videos. This YouTube channel offers an amazing playlist on English words, pronunciation, grammar, business English, quick learning tips, and more. The channel also features recorded workshops with English experts that can benefit the learners extensively. The channel posts a new video daily to help learners learn English.

HELP (Helpful English Learning Place) started when schools were shut down due to COVID-19 and is one of the most popular English learning channels on YouTube. Created by English teachers, it aims to make online English learning easy and accessible for students worldwide. The videos are helpful for both students and teachers. Teachers can use these videos in their classrooms as a means to introduce or review vocabulary and sentence structures, or as a means to engage their students.

Perfect English Grammar offers free exercises and explanations to learn and understand grammar. This blog features a vast collection of short, interactive English grammar exercises that will test students on various topics. The blog's interactive and engaging format makes tricky grammar rules fun to learn.

Real English Conversations is a must-read blog for students who are struggling with spoken English. They will find many informative resources covering various topics that can help them communicate in the real world. This blog focuses on using specific techniques and activities to improve speaking fluency, listening skills, and confidence [5].

It should be stressed that the above-mentioned resources help teachers improve their teaching practices and students improve their English. The move towards digital learning in schools and colleges was well underway even before the pandemic. We have also seen better presentations, unbiased evaluations, and online exam monitoring done on autopilot. But when it comes to classroom learning, educators constantly look for new ways to make learning fun and engaging. For example, Cambridge International School has already hopped on the bandwagon of advanced methods of learning with high-tech spaces and systems, while some are still trying to figure out a way to bring affordable technology into the learning space, especially in regions that still need to get the hang of tech in education.

Obviously, how we teach and learn is rapidly changing, and traditional methods are falling behind. The current generation is all about trends and experimenting – social media is entertaining and provides informational content on the go. There is a constant urge to stay updated with the newest trends. Popular platforms like YouTube and Instagram provide easily consumable information through long videos and bite-sized courses. More than 60 percent of our youth today spend an average of up to 3 hours on social media, either for entertainment or to consume information. And so, with a similar mindset of trying out new things, educators can look for ways to enhance classroom learning experiences while keeping a budget in mind. Given this tech-savvy generation's dwindling attention span, one way of making learning fun is through gamification. The idea of gamification sparks curiosity and promotes healthy competition, and the best part is that learning a concept has never been so fruitful. To transform classroom learning into a fun and interactive environment, such platforms as Kahoot, Classcraft, and Duolingo can be used.

One of the most competitive and fun classroom quizzes can be held using Kahoot. It is an online learning-based gaming platform where educators can host multiple-choice quizzes. The platform is about quick responses, keeping students focused, and creating an environment of fair and healthy competition among peers. Weekly quizzes can help monitor the students' learning progress.

Classcraft provides an immersive learning experience along with classroom management strategies. Each student can select their character and have unique abilities. Educators must design the tasks, which are usually story-driven. Students must apply the concepts they have learnt and solve problems more creatively. This platform promotes creative and critical thinking and is often commended by educators who want to make their learning sessions more creative. A plus would be that Classcraft provides parental access to understand their child's performance.

Duolingo provides the best gamified learning experience, especially for third-language (or foreign language) subjects. The platform helps educators with insights to monitor every student's progress. Creating virtual classrooms has never been seamless,

and Duolingo always finds a way to make learning a new language fun. In addition, educators can create assignments focusing on improving particular skills, and students earn points and badges, which will help them stay motivated to do more. The best part about the platform is that teachers can sign in for absolutely free. Thus, making learning fun while also choosing a platform that does not burden any budget is definitely something that educators and institutions can look forward to.

With the strong advocacy towards digital learning platforms, it is possible to consider the above tools to enhance learning with an interactive approach. Revamping learning avenues will help every student become more involved and inspire and motivate educators to become comfortable with technology in the teaching space. All it takes is a small initiative to change learning experiences – and it does not even involve a budget constraint [6].

Effective classroom engagement strategies are gaining momentum in higher education. Engaging and enriching the teaching-learning experience is the need of the hour. Smart boards are positively revolutionizing classroom engagement. They help to disseminate knowledge in an interactive manner by facilitating the digital content display, thereby enriching the teaching-learning experience. Every learner should benefit from such features of a smart board-enabled classroom as effective visual learning, enhanced classroom engagement, enhanced access to digital resources, experiential learning, enhanced digital literacy, enhanced adaptability to diverse learning skills, and effective collaborative learning.

In a conventional setup, the students are bound to imagine the concepts in accordance with their own capabilities. When assisted with smart boards, they get a clear idea through audio-video visuals, thereby gaining much more conceptual clarity of core themes. The smart board-assisted teaching and learning process helps to correlate learning with real-time applications, which helps retain the significant aspects of learning for a longer period. All these aspects help the teaching-learning community to meet the diversified learning needs of 21st-century learners. According to a 2017 Journal of Educational Computing Research study, the integration of smart boards in lessons led to a 20–25 percent improvement in levels 1 and 2 of revised Bloom's taxonomy, that is, in understanding and information retention compared to traditional teaching methods [7]. Students engage more actively with lessons when they can manipulate and annotate content on the board themselves, leading to better participatory learning. Smartboard usage helps integrate ICT usage in every classroom in a smarter way. It also promotes inclusivity and accessibility in education.

Academically, there is no restriction on using smart boards, but at the end of the day, management needs to take a call due to the cost involved. Based on the need, smart boards should be used to integrate technology in every possible way in the classroom. However, successful implementation depends on the behavioural intention of the concerned stakeholders. It needs proper training, intention to use technology, and thoughtful integration into the curriculum to bring practical usage and leverage the benefits accordingly. The implementation reviews at many places are positive regarding effective classroom engagement.

It is often the case that technology is warmly welcomed by students but not by teachers, whether because they lack the skills to use it properly, doubt its real value, or see it as a threat to their professional status. However, in the language classroom, technology can play a highly productive role, provided that it is mediated by a skilled teacher equipped with both language learning expertise and knowledge of digital tools. Teachers must learn how to assess and critique technology in order to identify those tools best placed to make a real contribution to the classroom. By being more proactive and engaged with technology, and more responsive to its benefits, teachers will maintain their role at the centre of language learning, and help shape a digital future that actively benefits everyone.

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