TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: *The integration of technology in English Language Teaching (ELT) has reshaped instructional practices, offering new opportunities for learner engagement and autonomy. From computer-assisted language learning (CALL) to mobile applications, online platforms, and virtual classrooms, technology provides diverse tools that facilitate communication, interaction, and collaboration. This paper examines the role of technology in ELT, highlighting its theoretical foundations, practical applications, and potential limitations. By drawing on recent scholarship, it argues that technology, when thoughtfully integrated, enhances both the effectiveness of language instruction and learner motivation. However, challenges such as digital inequality, teacher preparedness, and over-reliance on technology must be addressed to maximize its benefits.*

Introduction

The 21st century has seen a paradigm shift in education, largely influenced by the rapid advancement of digital technologies. In English Language Teaching (ELT), these innovations have significantly altered classroom practices, promoting interactive and learner-centered environments (Harmer, 2015). Technology offers tools that enable authentic communication, provide access to real-world resources, and facilitate individualized learning.

Traditional approaches such as the grammar-translation method or audiolingual drills have often emphasized accuracy at the expense of communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In contrast, technology supports methodologies such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL), which focus on meaning-making and real-life application (Ellis, 2003). This article explores the theoretical rationale for integrating technology in ELT, its practical applications, and the challenges associated with its use.

Theoretical Background

The use of technology in ELT is grounded in constructivist theories, which emphasize learning through active engagement and interaction (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Brown (2007) highlights that meaningful language learning requires opportunities for authentic communication, and technology creates virtual spaces for such interaction.

Ellis (2003) argues that task-based frameworks are particularly well-suited to technology integration, as online tools allow learners to engage in collaborative problem-solving and project-based activities. Similarly, Harmer (2015) notes that technology aligns with learner-centered pedagogies by enabling personalization, autonomy, and flexibility.

Thus, technology is not merely an add-on to traditional teaching but a medium that transforms pedagogical approaches, aligning them with the communicative and interactive nature of language learning.

Practical Applications in ELT

Technology provides a wide range of applications in English teaching, from enhancing traditional classroom practices to enabling online learning.

1. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). CALL software and online platforms provide grammar exercises, vocabulary practice, and listening comprehension tasks. These resources allow for immediate feedback and individualized learning pathways (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

2. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Smartphones and apps such as Duolingo, Quizlet, and Kahoot! enable learners to practice English on the go. These tools promote continuous engagement beyond the classroom.

3. Multimedia and Authentic Materials. Videos, podcasts, and online articles expose learners to authentic language use. Harmer (2015) emphasizes that such resources enhance listening and cultural awareness, making language learning more relevant.

4. Online Communication Platforms. Tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Classroom support synchronous and asynchronous communication. Learners can participate in discussions, presentations, and collaborative projects that mirror real-world communication.

5. Virtual and Augmented Reality. Emerging technologies create immersive environments where learners can practice English in simulated contexts, such as virtual debates or role-play scenarios.

These applications demonstrate that technology fosters the integration of the four language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—while also promoting motivation and learner autonomy.

Benefits of Technology Integration

Technology enhances ELT in multiple ways:

Increased motivation and engagement. Interactive platforms gamify learning, making it enjoyable (Brown, 2007).

Access to authentic input. Learners encounter real-world English in diverse contexts, supporting communicative competence (Ellis, 2003).

Personalization. Adaptive software tailors instruction to learners' needs, ensuring differentiated support (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Collaboration. Online platforms encourage group work and peer feedback, key components of communicative approaches (Harmer, 2015).

Flexibility. Technology supports blended and fully online learning, increasing accessibility to English education worldwide.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite its benefits, integrating technology into ELT poses several challenges.

Digital divide. Unequal access to technology can exacerbate educational inequalities, particularly in under-resourced contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Teacher preparedness. Effective technology integration requires training. Teachers unfamiliar with digital tools may struggle to incorporate them meaningfully (Brown, 2007).

Over-reliance on technology. While technology supports learning, it should not replace human interaction, which remains essential for language development (Harmer, 2015).

Assessment alignment. Traditional exams may not capture the communicative and collaborative skills fostered by technology-enhanced tasks (Ellis, 2003).

Technical issues. Connectivity problems and software limitations can disrupt learning and reduce classroom efficiency.

Thus, while technology offers transformative potential, its success depends on thoughtful implementation and institutional support.

Conclusion

Technology has revolutionized English Language Teaching by enhancing learner engagement, providing authentic resources, and supporting communicative pedagogies such as CLT and TBL. Its applications range from CALL and MALL to virtual reality and online platforms, all of which foster motivation and learner autonomy. However, challenges such as teacher training, digital inequality, and assessment limitations highlight the need for careful and context-sensitive integration. When thoughtfully applied, technology serves not merely as a tool but as a catalyst for reimagining English language education in the 21st century.

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