Technology and its Importance in Teaching Foreign Language Skills

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Annotation: This article deals with the issue of the integration of technology into language teaching and its role in improving writing and reading skills in foreign language classes. There were introduced the importance of technological tools and some practical implementations in using them for enhancing learners' writing and reading skill. The ideas were proved by the facts that student's skills can be significantly increased by various technological tools such as wikis, quick pen, questionary as well as blogging. Practicality of using blogs is proved by given activities and lesson plans as well. These tools help to form and develop students` communicative competences, linguistic, pragmatic, socio-linguistic and strategic as well as their writing and reading skills.

Keywords: Technology, Computer assisted language learning, communicative language teaching, practical application;

Introduction. Technology is evolving rapidly in the past two decades. Many are familiar with technology and gradually becoming digital natives. In this technological era, the application of technology has eased our ways in various fields of work particularly in the education field. Technology has also proven its effectiveness in language teaching which includes as a source of motivation and provides room for authentic learning. Our country draws a special attention to strengthening learning and teaching foreign languages of our youth targeting at forming conditions and chance for fostering international collaboration and communication, widely and effectively using the advance achievements of the world civilization and the information sources as well as providing their integration into the world mutual society.

Nowadays, in Uzbekistan the results of nation - wide reforms in the sphere of education basing on the laws as "On Education" and "National Program of Personnel Training" create an opportunity for our youth gaining qualitative education in the thousands of new educational institutions. Created conditions in the field of education serve for bringing up well – educated, modern, intelligently thoughtful, intellectually and harmoniously developed generation, who get complete professional preparation.

On December 10, 2012 the implementation of the Presidential Decree № 1875 on "The measures of strengthening the system of learning foreign languages" created the basis for reforming on teaching foreign languages According to the decree, starting from 2013/2014 school year foreign languages gradually throughout the country will be taught from the first year of schooling in the form of the lessons games and speaking games continuing to learning the alphabet reading, spelling, in the second year(grade). [1]

As a result the following concluding remarks and recommendations can be recorded:
➢ Theory and practice in the foreign language learning can be matched together by the usage of modern technology.
➢ Modern technical ways should be followed for effective learning and teaching of the second language.
➢ Foreign language teachers should encourage their students to use technology in developing the language skills.

Technology is no longer foreign to the earth's citizens. Technology has played its role in multiple fields of work, particularly in education. During the last two decades, the implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language education has become a real

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topic of interest. The use of technology has become significant in the teaching and learning process in and out of class. Technology opens a window of improvement in language learning. Not only that, technology allows teachers to enhance classroom activities and language learning process. This shows that there is a brand-new era which assigns challenging responsibilities for modern teachers. The traditional teaching method has been changed drastically with extraordinary access to technology. The implementation of technology has provided options for a more interesting and productive teaching and learning sessions predominantly in language learning.

According to Shyamlee and Phil, technology has provided significant drivers for both social and linguistic change. With English as an international language and its development around the world, English is used as a second language in a country such as India and Malaysia. To some people, English acts as their first language. English has become the language for instruction and curriculum in many countries. As the number of foreign language learners' increases, new teaching methods have been implemented to test the effectiveness of the teaching process. [2] Language is one of the most substantial elements in communication.

Students utilize different parts of foreign language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing for their proficiency and communication. Research has found multiple shreds of evidences of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) on students. Rosicka and Mayerova stated that the purpose of the new era of education is to make the current and upcoming generation active participants in society with the implementation of technology.

Harwati stated that the current generation is being called digital natives as they have a high level of computer literacy. It would be utterly unimaginable if the new era of education does not implement technology as a medium of communication and exchanging ideas. Using computers as learning tools can promote efficient learning when learners are engaged in knowledge construction, collaboration, and reflection.

The use of ICT in the education field has been increasing. Educational technologies promised to change the way teachers teach and students learn forever the white canvas of language teaching and learning has experienced major creativity and changes over the decade with the emerging of a new era of education and technology. Technology has transformed the field of education, lower and higher education, which has a great impact on the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching. As time changed, teachings changed too. The technology implementation is defined as "the process of determining which electronic tools and which methods from implementing them are the most appropriate responses to give classroom situations and problems". [3]

Computer assisted language learning (CALL) has become normalized in the educational process. The key to a successful use of technology in teaching and learning session not only lies in hardware or software but also in our human ability as teachers have to plan, design and implement effective educational activities. Educational multimedia is currently being used commonly in teaching and learning of English language. Another commonly used element in the digital era as part of technology would be social media. Social media augments the learning experience by allowing the learners and teachers to connect and interact in a more innovative and interesting way. Social media such as Facebook, Blog, Instagram, e-mail and Twitter provide a platform where users can interact and exchange ideas as well as to find answers through collaboration and discussion. With the help of technology, students' view on learning has shifted. New and more advanced technologies are not only transforming the way the students' view learning but also transforming the way "educators think about education and literacy". These tools are also continuing to grow and transform literacy instruction" and they also helping students to "internalize lifelong skills needed for success in this global society. Technology will not substitute great teachers but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational. Educational technologies are becoming increasingly important and promise to change the way students learn and teachers teach. However, technology has been around in language teaching for decades. For example, the blackboard, as a form of technology, has been used for centuries. Tape recorders, language labs and videos have been in use since the 1960s and 1970s, and are still used in classrooms around the world. [4] The use of technology in the classroom is becoming increasingly

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important for the presentation of authentic materials and hopefully it will become a normal part of ELT practice in the coming years. Yet teacher training programs often ignore training in the use of ICT, and teachers are often far less skilled than their own students when it comes to using current technology.

It is a good time to consider the power of current technological advances. Increasingly, communication and information technologies have become part of our everyday lives. The use of computers is increasing day by day, because they are used in many fields to make our lives easier. Computers can present crucial information and offer effective tutorial instruction. Computers also connect us with other people, store vast amounts of data, and provide us with access and entertainment. In the technology literature, learning theories have offered different views regarding the use of computer technology. For instance, behaviorism proposed that learning from technologies means using computers for drill and practice, because learning, according to this view, is a matter of imitation and practice. Thus, the behavioral view strongly advocated that the role of adults in learning is important, as they provide a model by which children learn through imitation; the adults also encourage children to continue using computer technology by providing them with positive reinforcement. In contrast to behaviorism, the socioconstructivist theory suggests that if the learner learns with computer technology, the role of the computer is to foster, scaffold, and enhance learning in meaningful ways. When learning with technology, a learner should be given many opportunities to create, test, and reverse their hypotheses. Therefore, teachers have a responsibility to provide learners with these experiences to promote their development.

Technology in general is becoming increasingly important in our personal and professional lives. Dictionaries and scholars have offered a variety of definitions. The Merriam-Webster dictionary, for example, defines technology as "the practical application of knowledge especially in a particular area". Technology is also considered as a body of knowledge used to create tools and develop skills, and as the combination of scientific method and material to meet an objective or solve a problem. Most of these definitions broadly define technology as the knowledge, skills, methods, and techniques used to accomplish specific practical tasks. Educational technologies, in this sense, promise to change forever the way students learn and teachers teach. However, technology in language teaching is not new. It has been around in language teaching for decades. For example, the blackboard, as a form of technology, has been used for centuries. Tape recorders, language labs and videos have been in use since the 1960s and 1970s, and are still used in classrooms around the world. [5]

Almost every type of language teaching has had its own technologies to support it. Language teachers who followed the Grammar-translation method, in which teachers explained grammatical rules and students performed translation, relied on the blackboard in most of their teaching. In contrast, the audio-tape was the perfect medium for the Audio-lingual method, which emphasized learning through oral repetition. In the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a shift towards communicative language teaching, which emphasizes student engagement in authentic, meaningful interaction. This has led to the application of how to best integrate technology into the classroom.

In spite of the fact that the use of Information and communication Technology (ICT) by language teachers is still not widespread, the use of technology in the classroom is becoming increasingly important for the presentation of authentic materials and hopefully it will become a normal part of foreign language teaching practice in the coming years. Yet teacher training programs often ignore training in the use of ICT, and teachers are often far less skilled than their own students when it comes to using current technology.

Apart from the benefits of using technology in class, there should also be mentioned the motivation that it gives to learners. With the constant advancement of technology, many ESL teachers have adopted a more fun and interesting teaching techniques to ensure exciting lessons. Motivation is the key and has been known as one of the factors that influence success in second language learning.

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According to Ng and Ng, motivation is known as s stimulant to achieve a specific target. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is the two types of motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be found within the individual and related to the sense of wellbeing whereas extrinsic motivation comes from outside the individual. [6]

Based on a study by Morat, Shaari, and Abidin (2016), the implementation of technology showed sustainability in the students' motivation to learn. A study conducted by Blachowicz, Bates, Berne, Bridgman, Chaney, and Perney to observe the technology used by the students, to observe the dynamics and teacher-centered choices in technology use, to look at the student learning and to learn about student and teacher perceptions and beliefs on technology. The results showed that the students were motivated and attentive when working in their task.

In summary, the emergence computer technologies have created new opportunities and challenges in the field of foreign language learning. Teaching foreign language could not be isolated or separated from implementing technology tools such as blogs. As a result of conducting research on the use of technology tools for enhancing learners' reading and writing skills in English we came up to the following conclusions:

- ✓ The use of blog technology in a foreign language classroom helps teacher be abreast of current educational technologies, organize the process of learning, create opportunities to practice the language, increase learning interest develop writing skills and promote communication skills. Moreover, learners can come into intercultural communication with native speakers and thus receive reliable information about culture of another country, young people's lives, their interests and hobbies, etc.
- ✓ Reading, as one of the receptive skills, should be dealt in our curriculum in a different way. In addition, adopting technology in teaching English language creates a new atmosphere in our classrooms. Blogs, as one of the most important tools in web 2.0, could be an effective tool in developing students' autonomy.
- ✓ Blogs could be used as a starting point in their understanding of the wider concept of autonomy. The learner feels he has his own freedom to learn independently. Moreover, students feel more motivated to learn a foreign language if they are given this freedom of choice.
- ✓ Using blogs enhances learners' achievements in reading skills and that using blogs is an effective technique for leading classroom discussions as students increase their achievement level.
- ✓ Blogs provide learning with an environment for autonomous learning and knowledge and information sharing. Blog activities are one way of moving students from being dependent on their teachers during the class toward independent learning. When the learner feels that he is not able to do well in on language skill he can depend on himself. However, it will be difficult to leave them alone. Using blogs is the way to achieve such independency.

In light of the finding of the present study, it offers several recommendations regarding the use blogs for language teaching and learning. First, teachers can use one type of blogs like teacher's blog to increase knowledge. Second, this research proved the effectiveness of blog in developing reading skills. In addition, it could be used to investigate listening and speaking skills. Third, blogs could be used as a student's e- portfolio. They could attach their videos, home assignments, and their writings. While blogs can be useful, it is important to note that they are just tools and not the objective itself. They are not for everyone or for all classes and need to be made an integral part of the course design. However, the use of blogs as a learning tool seems to be low-cost with high-returns. While more research needs to be done as to how blogs can more effectively be used, it is a given that technology will continue to influence learning.

Conclusion. Our experiences in using classroom blogs have been overwhelmingly positive. While student acceptance of technology in the classroom requires its perceived usefulness and ease of use, students do tend to learn best when they need information that they can put to use immediately. Blogs are an effective an efficient method of allowing students to access information as it is needed and to make connections between explicit knowledge from textbooks and tacit

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knowledge gained as students see how others can and are using the knowledge being shared. Blogs also introduce students to online learning communities so they can access and evaluate information, and construct new learning paradigms for themselves. Finally, effectively modeling ways to use blogs as a teaching and learning tool is a useful skill for our students to have as they embark on their journey of life-long learning.

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A Bi-Monthly, Peer Reviewed International Journal
Volume 6

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