

INTERNET TECHNOLOGY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract

Learning a second language in this modern era is growing like a habit in the minds of the young learners. If a person wants to learn a language, he has to join in a coaching centre or any tutorial. This was the condition before two or three decades. He has to spend most of his time with the teacher who teaches the language to him. In this highly developed technological world, it is a known fact that nobody can survive by knowing only one vernacular at present. Even if he wants to go to his neighboring state, he has to get mastery over their language or at least he has to know the spoken form of it. Now everything is changed like the tables turned. The total world is relying on internet resources for all their clarifications and learning. Hence it seems inevitable to lead a life without internet.

This paper is going to work on the uses of internet and it presents how languages are being learnt by the modern generation through web technology. It also focuses on some of the websites which are offering language learning services to the mass.

Key words : Internet, language acquisition.

Introduction

“A definition of language,” observed the British cultural critic, Raymond Williams, “is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world”.

That is because language permeates every aspect of human experience, and creates as well as reflects images of that experience. It is almost impossible to imagine human life without it. Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words to communicate. Learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking. Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language and into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting. Total commitment, total involvement, total physical, intellectual and emotional responses are necessary to successfully send and receive messages in a second language. Many variables are involved in the acquisition process. Language learning is not a set of easy steps that can be programmed in a quick do-it-yourself kit. So much is at stake that courses in foreign languages are often inadequate training grounds, in and of themselves, for the successful learning of a second language.

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Teacher Assisted Language Learning (TALL)

Teacher is the God in this approach. The learner has to believe his teacher for everything. The teacher is an important person in the classroom. He/she has a great influence over the students, in terms of motivation, confidence, attitudes to learning, beliefs about learning, and social morals. It has been said that a good teacher can produce great results from even the worst programme, and that a bad teacher will make even the best programme fail.

- The teacher is a transmitter of knowledge.
- The teacher is a controller of learning.
- The teacher is a facilitator of learning.
- The teacher is a language resource.
- Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

The emergence of CALL can trace back to the mid 1950s when technology began to be integrated into language instruction. According to Davies & Higgins, the term computer-assisted language learning (CALL) came from computer-assisted language instruction or CALI, reflecting its origins as a subset of the general term computer-assisted instruction or CAI. The term CALI seemed to

imply a focus on a teacher-centered approach, whereas language teachers are more inclined to prefer a student-centered approach.

CALI, therefore, began to be replaced by CALL which focuses on learning rather than instruction.

Levy (1997) succinctly defined CALL as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning”. It embraces a wide range of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), applications, and approaches to teaching and learning foreign languages.

Internet Assisted Language Learning (IALL)

It is common to observe students on campus who are helping their friends using cell phones or iPhones, or searching and working on the internet using net books or small laptops. They are often busy with these mobile devices while they wait for class to begin. Even during a class, their fingers, eyes and sometimes ears are occupied by these daily technological routines. These small devices become a link to their peers, and testing, watching or listening via these small devices becomes a fundamental part of their daily language consumption and production. So, these interactions with handy devices become routine in their lives. It is predictable that in the near

future, with the development of cheaper and more convenient small devices, everybody might make these routines natural.

Language Learning Web Sites (livemocha.com)

The modern generation students are highly skilled in using the resources available in the Websites. www.babbel.com, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages>, www.edufind.com, www.languageguide.org, www.languageimpact.com, www.wordchamp.com, www.speaklanguages.co.uk are some of the popular language learning sites. www.livemocha.com is one such website where the students can login themselves and learn the language freely. Livemocha is the world's most popular language learning site. It is a commercial online language learning community, providing instructional materials in 38 languages and a platform for speakers to interact with and help each other learn new languages. According to the site, it has approximately 12 million registered members from 196 countries around the globe. Over 400,000 users visit the site daily.

Livemocha calls itself the largest language learning community in the world. In many ways it operates like a social networking site, and the basic ethos of the system is peer-to-peer: registered members can engage in synchronous and asynchronous communication, make a personal profile, connect with a circle of friends, upload content (there is a page dedicated to cultural

exchange), contribute translations and help expand the base of available languages, and review other members' work, such as recorded dialogues from lessons. It has been referred to as "the Facebook of foreign languages," and its potential impact on conventional language teaching compared to that of Wikipedia on the traditional encyclopedia. One reviewer of the site observed,

"With its unparalleled ability to connect people throughout the world, (the Internet) is changing the way that many people learn languages. There is still no way to avoid the hard slog through vocabulary lists and grammar rules, but the books, tapes and even CDs of yesteryear are being replaced by e-mail, video chats and social networks." The main advantages of this new web-based educational approach are argued to include: easy and convenient access to native speakers' exposure to how people actually speak the language, including slang,

colloquialisms and everyday conversation; increased motivation and confidence through social contacts; and, the creation of a massive pool of expertise on a wide variety of languages. Criticisms tend to focus on the weak points of crowdsourcing: there is no way to prevent sloppy or inadequate feedback, and the quality of translated content can be uneven.

The topic of the impact of the Internet on language study is starting to elicit scholarly study, though it is often noted that there is a lack of empirical data to thoroughly evaluate the new methodologies. In one of the most comprehensive assessments to date, Meei-Ling Liaw writes: "Livemocha, with its carefully designed learning materials and integration of Web 2.0 technologies into learning

activities, creates an interactive, authentic, and meaningful language learning environment that many traditional language instruction contexts cannot provide. Despite some of the specific

The Challenge

concerns discussed in relation to Livemocha, the social networking aspect of the system undoubtedly plays a key role in making the learning interesting and attractive to its users worldwide.”

Conclusion

There are differences in language learning aptitude, and sometimes even highly motivated learners encounter great difficulties in improving their mastery of the language. So, it is suggested to use the website like www.livemocha.com to learn the languages without any risk for free of cost. The learners have to do

only one thing that they have to register themselves using their e-mail id with livemocha.com. Then they can start using their lessons. Everything they offer for free of cost. So, the learners are requested to make use of the websites to get mastery over the languages.

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