Analysis of Options Promoting Education of English Through ICT

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ABSTRACT

The twenty-first century has witnessed great development in information and communication technologies (ICT) which have influenced educational process at an unprecedented pace by changing the traditional teaching environment, learning forms, teaching content and teacher-student interactivity. In this article, we will outline some current popular ICT tools and some future popular ones in education and focus on the impacts of ICT on education of English, aiming to enlighten educators to effectively capitalize on these ICT tools in education of English.

During the processing of this study, theoretical methods were used – mainly research takes and findings from papers included in Web of Science and SCOPUS databases. The findings were compared and analyzed in order to deduce new conclusions. Also, a method of induction was also applied.

It turns out that modern technology provide a wide range of ICT integration in teaching of English language. However, there are many obstacles which prevent its successful introduction into the teaching. In spite of the fact that ICT integration into education is beneficial, it is possible to come across various difficulties in the integration process, e.g. the lack of qualified language teachers who know how to use modern technology, or the education policy which supports the employment of ICT in the educational process.

Keywords: ICT; Education of English; Web of Science.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of ICT has penetrated into every aspect of social life. Education as an integrate part of people’s life is also exponentially effected by ICT tools. It is difficult, to the point of impossibility, to lecture or be lectured without the help of ICT in current era pervading with advanced digital technologies that, emerging in an endless stream, are beneficial to pedagogical development. Therefore, there is a need to understand how these ICT could facilitate English learning and teaching. With such knowledge, educators and language instructors will be able to carry out creative methods for effective use of ICT.

METHODS USED

During the processing of this study, theoretical methods were used—mainly research takes and findings from papers included in Web of Science and SCOPUS databases. The findings were compared and analyzed in order to deduce new conclusions.

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are counted of the frequency and sequencing of particular words, phrases, or concepts (1). M. Q. Patton (2) also

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demonstrates that texts with exactly the same number of specific concepts can easily have quite different meanings, once the relations among concepts are taken into account. Thus, a "network" analysis is required (3).

**SOME ICT TOOLS APPLIED IN EDUCATION OF ENGLISH**

**MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)**

MOOC is an online learning and communication platform. It offers people an opportunity to learn their intended courses without geographical restriction and time restriction. It is worth to mention that MOOC contains online forums where learners can post messages and share ideas, which play a significant role in improving students’ motivation to learn (4). Interaction is vital to learning. Students’ motivation and outcome of learning will be enhanced through participation and engagement in learning process (5).

This feature of MOOCs facilitates English learning. Especially, for ESP (English Special Purpose) learning, MOOCs can help solve the problem of scarcities of professional teachers in some countries in that the requirements of teachers of ESP are demanding. They are not only proficient in English but also masters of the professional knowledge of a certain subject. Due to this, in some countries, especially in some developing countries, the number of this kind of teachers is inadequate. In this case, MOOCs can solve this problem efficiently and effectively.

**IPad-assisted English learning and teaching**

Since its inception in 2010, the iPad has attracted many users for its portability and connectivity. And due to its excellent features and rich education resource, it allows for many educated guesses. There are many Apps in App store that contribute to English classroom teaching and learning. For the sake of space, we just discuss a few of them.

**App for English learning**

For English learning, vocabularies are essential. There are various kinds of English dictionaries from primary to high-level education to suit students’ demand in App store. Serving as mobile-based e-dictionary, the iPad enables people to learn vocabularies anytime and anywhere without carrying heavy paper dictionary. There are many Apps for vocabulary learning. Take the App called “WordPower” as an example, by combining sound and pictures in the process of English vocabulary learning, the App improves students’ English vocabulary acquisition and enhances students’ English learning motivation (6). Another App “SpellBoard” facilitates students to practice English spelling drill anytime and anywhere.

Massive reading is also important to improve English study. There are a rich number of English novels in App store. Besides, through iTunes U, people can study many courses lectured in English from all over the world, which is conducive to improve English listening skills. As mentioned forth, interaction is important to language learning. Under the traditional education pattern, the interaction of English learning usually takes place in classroom. Consequently, outside the classroom or during school holidays, interactional chance is fewer. For its connectivity and mobility, iPad does great contribution in encouraging students to engage in interactive communication by setting up an online communication group, a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Especially for English L2 learners, in most case, the interactional opportunities are even much fewer out of classroom (7). In such contexts, iPad offers an opportunity for continued English L2 interaction in time of disconnection.

IPad can also foster students’ learning initiative and interest by synthesizing formal and informal learning (8). Study by Wong and Looi indicates students’ great interest in learning
process by using mobile device. In the study, students were lectured English prepositions and idioms in formal classroom. Then each of them was assigned a mobile device with feature of digital camera to take photos around the campus to illustrate the newly learned prepositions and idioms and shared their pictures with their peers. It is found that students show great engagement in learning for this method enables students to learn knowledge in an authentic context so that it could enhance motivation of learning that is closely relate to the outcome of study.

App for English teaching

In traditional classroom, teachers have to find teaching materials such as videos, pictures, sound, etc. and add them into courseware to make an English class interesting and dynamic, which is time-consuming. Now, with the help of iPad, preparing class courseware become easier and more efficient. What a teacher needs to do is to download the suitable App for teaching in App store, then displays the contents on to a projector via an adapter cable connecting the iPad and the projector or via apple TV using Airplay to display the content in the iPad to a projector (9). As the iPad is with built-in digital camera, in an English writing class, teachers can also use this method to display students’ writings on to a projector through photographing students’ writing works written in Whiteboard (another App in iPad). When one student introduces his/her writing, other students can see the pictures or characters or scene in the writing. There are many other APPs that can be used in English teaching classroom. The iBooks Author is a textbook editing software. Teachers and producers can edit electronic text-book by it, which helps to pave ways to paperless classroom. The App Explain Everything enables teachers to make classroom videos and upload them on to web space so that students can listen again if they miss some important knowledge points in the classroom.

Talking pen or reading pen

Based on optical image recognition technology and digital sound technology, talking pen or reading pen is an international intelligent learning tool universally used in education, especially in language learning. Being portable and convenient, it is popular with learners. It functions as reading tool, repeating tool as well as recording tool. As it can identify the sound of vocabularies and sentences in a textbook, talking pen remedies the boring of traditional textbook by adding dynamic elements into learning process to enhance learning interest. In addition, by recording his/her pronunciation and comparing with the reading coming from reading pen, students can find improvement.

Facebook

Facebook is currently regarded as the most popular social media. It users spread all over the world. Research conducted by Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan et al (10) indicates that ”FB could be utilized as an online environment to facilitate the learning of English”. He pointed out that most features in FB are in English, due to this, people have to understand English in order to participate in the activities and functions. For instance, one has to refer to dictionary when receiving comments that they do not understand from their friends. As a social media, FB develops communication and interaction that aforementioned is vital to language learning by providing a communicative platform. In terms of English writing skills, as people write to communicate, FB also benefits people’s English writing skills (ibid).

There are some applications in Facebook that can develop English teaching and learning. For instance, the application called Courses in Facebook can help students from any university join a particular course by linking a course link that is usually created by an instructor.
Instructors also can post documents, discussion topics there. This helps join students to each other, and faculty to students, in an unprecedented way (11). Other applications such as Group also have this function.

By providing an authentic context, Facebook enhances students’ engagement in interacting with other fellow students and teachers. A growing number of teachers have come to realize that Facebook is a noteworthy learning and learning tool.

**Game-based learning**

Today’s teenagers are crazy about digital games. Games are not only fun, they can be educational too (12). Studies by Shahriarpour & Kafi (12) illustrate that by using a digital game named L.A. Noire, students can improve their English vocabulary learning retention as well as learning motivation. By comparing with traditional ways of memorizing vocabulary which is usually done by the way of rote learning that is dull and boring so students’ motivation of learning English suffer. The L.A. Noire video game is popular among teenagers. It is a detective game and player acts as a policeman solving cases by finding a series of clues. That it can foster students’ engagement in English vocabulary learning lies in its unique devise: students have to know the unknown vocabulary for continuing the game. So they have to look for dictionary to get the meaning of vocabularies. This strategy enlarges their vocabularies. What’s more, game-based learning helps students learn vocabularies in a meaningful way, which makes vocabulary root in their long term memory (ibid). This gives enlightenment to educators and language instructors to devise digital games that can combine English study and game playing.

**Virtual reality**

Virtual reality technology, emerging at the end of twentieth century, is a new comprehensive information technology as it integrates many information technologies, such as digital image processing technology, computer graphics technology, multimedia technology and sensor technology, etc. Due to this, its visual and sound effect is three-dimensional interaction instead of two dimensional interaction which traditional CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) is characterized by. As a result, it can build a virtual, realistic teaching environment in which students can learn a particular course with virtual peers, teachers anytime and anywhere. And also, students can interact with their fellow peers and can ask question. In this sense, it seems to be a real class. For teachers, they can also use virtual reality technology to make their teaching more dynamic. For instance, if they lecture a lesson called Disney Land. By using virtual reality technology, students will experience the realistic scene of Disneyland. The dynamic image of Disneyland will help students to memory vocabularies relating to Disneyland such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, etc.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In this paper, we illustrate some ICT tools and their applications in education of English. Among the ICT we discussed, their application in education of English is not limited to what mentioned in this paper. In another word, we just list out some main applications of them. We envisage more and more ICT will come into being with the development of new technology and be applied into English learning and teaching. Our future task is to find out new applications of existent ICT and the coming new ICT in education. However, it may encounter obstacles in real practices of integrating ICT into education despite that fact that it is
beneficial to education. The obstacles include the scarcity of trained language instructors who are informed of how to use the digital technologies and the education policy of promoting the use of ICT in educational setting.

REFERENCES