



## LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT



Development in technology over the years has helped man by creating solutions to most of his problems. In particular, technology has made people save time by doing things according to their convenience but in the easiest possible way. Apart from the technical side, technology changes have also helped man in the field of education.

Learning English has become a major task for most of the people due to various reasons and this process of learning the language has become so simple with the rapid changes and development in technology. Learning English or acquiring the language is much possible through the use of radio, TV, computers, internet, social networks, mobile phones and many more. This use of technology in learning the language, gained importance mainly because of the influence it has had on the English language learners thereby enabling them to explore this new idea and develop their four basic skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing at ease.

This paper analyses the different technologies that can be used to learn English, the rise in need for technology and the advantages and disadvantages of using it to learn the language.

**Keywords:** *Technology, Technology Development, Learning English.*



## INTRODUCTION

Technology and its rapid development have helped man to perform his desired actions at ease. Technology devices can be defined as any product or device designed for practical purposes. The development of technology is obvious because of the numerous changes in use of electronic devices by man in the recent years. From the use of computers, the trend changed to the use of mobile phones, then came the use of internet, social networks, podcasts and mobile applications. Men and women have turned out to be fast moving by making the maximum use of technological innovations to perform their desired actions at anytime and at any place.

The progress of technology has brought significant changes and development almost in every field which distinctly includes the field of education. 21<sup>st</sup> century has become a time where English has turned out to be the medium of instruction in most of the educational institutions and has become the language of communication in almost every place. People are trying their best to learn the language for various reasons like employability, to maintain a level of standard in the society, to try to learn subject matters and etc. But learning language by attending regular classes at specific time intervals is not what the individual of this century desires for. Learning English which is of a major task for most of the ESL (English as a Second Language) learners has become simple with the development of technology. Language could be learnt through different devices or means of technology. Starting from radio, television to the present day mobile applications, language could be learnt or acquired from any applications of technology. These applications not just help in learning the language, but in depth help one to develop the four basic skills of language - listening, speaking, reading and writing, which plays equal importance in the development of a language. The development of one skill helps to build the other skill. In whole, with the rise in technological innovations, English can be learnt easily by an ESL learner at his/her convenience and not necessarily be learnt only in a classroom. "Technological innovations have changed language learning radically from the old-

fashioned image of pupils learning lists of verbs out of textbooks." (Williams) It has paved way for one to learn language by two main sources - CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) and MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning).

## COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

CALL includes a blend of pedagogies and methodologies both in teaching and learning a language which in turn makes it to be referred to as 'blended learning' at times. Initially CALL was used by learners in a way where the computers served to be more as an instructor, but over the years the developments in CALL led to virtual learning to take place where the teacher and the student could have face-to-face interaction, thereby creating a classroom effect. CALL includes both drill type learning and virtual learning.

## SOFTWARE AND CD-ROMS

CALL can be done by installing software that are built to give students regular drills or practices in all the skills of the language. They are also provided in the form of CD-ROMs, which when played by a computer provides a format which would instruct the learner as to what to do next. In this type of learning the computer remains to be the instructor and the teacher is just a facilitator. The language enhancement software or the CD-ROMs are built in a format which would at first instruct the learner about what he is to learn and would then move on to give time to practice a few exercises followed by a short testing. These language enhancing software and CD-ROMs help the learners to know and develop all four skills of the language in separate, as there are practices and testing made available for each skill. This type of learning or enhancing the language is followed in many educational institutions in their language labs. The students are given separate computers, headsets and a microphone which makes it easier for them to listen individually, play back sounds or sentences that were not clear to them and even record their voices for the speaking skill practices. The computers in the language lab are connected in the form of "peer-to-peer networking" (Lever-Duffy and McDonald, 377). In this, the facilitator will be able to monitor the activities of the



students from a single computer and also makes it easy for the teacher to share files at a stretch.

### **INTERNET**

The emergence of internet or widely known as the World Wide Web and its applications was of a greater significance to the learners and teachers of English as it contributed a lot of benefits to the learners. The internet led to the evolution of e-learning. E-learning includes learning made possible through any electronic device or product of technology. E-learning can be of linear or collaborative type of learning.

Linear learning includes learning of language done through internet where the computer becomes the instructor and remains to be the one that feeds the learner with input, evaluates the learner with some tests and gives feedback based on the score of the learner in that particular level. The computer feeds in information based on what skill the learner chooses. This form of online learning of the language has a major benefit of allowing the student to know his/her standard of a particular skill in the language. Knowing the lack of language skill in the specific area will help the individual to work further in developing that skill.

Collaborative learning includes the method of learning done through online where the learner learns by interacting with the teacher through webcams. It is more like learning in a virtual classroom where the teacher discusses with the learner on what content or syllabus is to be dealt. This style of interactive online learning enables the learners to fix suitable times with their online teacher and makes them feel the environment of learning in a classroom but in a stress free environment. CALL also comprises of the process of learning made through social networking sites, podcasts, videos and e-books which are sources that help to download, view or share materials among the learners and make comparable learning. Learners can also use computers to know their level of proficiency in English by taking online tests which also in a way to analyse and learn.

### **MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING**

MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) or Mobile learning (m-learning) is a recent source

that is preferred and considered to be a success for learning language. It "refers to the use of mobile and handheld information technology devices in teaching and learning." (Djoudi, 353) The rise in number of persons owning smart phones and its extensive use has made people to widely accept MALL. Language learning through mobile phones can be done through the huge list of mobile applications available. The mobile applications can be downloaded and used according to one's own need in learning the language. Teaching and practicing of all four skills are available in one application and there are applications for each skill in separate too. These applications can be downloaded and used at anytime and at any place where the learner wishes to use them. MALL also includes learning done through chat groups, bluetooth and etc. where just like social networking sites files, videos, short activities, and daily vocabulary can be shared among groups. A teacher can also make his role significant in MALL by creating a group for his class of students and make them all participate by giving them interesting tasks in the social group. Making them listen to audio clips, making them share their record and send in few lines regarding a topic, making them read short passages and making them write sentences or paragraphs and develop them into a story and many such activities will help the students to enhance his language learning skills in an enjoyable and subtle way.

### **ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES**

21st century is an age where technology has become a part and parcel of everyone's life. It is this need and importance for technology among the learners that has made them look out for new ways to learn and teach language with it. CALL and MALL have gained significance among the learners of English because of the ample materials available at one's hand at all times and for giving the learner the right to choose and learn according to his requirements. The use of technology to learn a language comes with a lot of benefits but it equally poses a lot of challenges to both the ESL teachers and learners.

CALL and MALL are much suitable for the people of this century who are in search for devices to do desired actions but that which would help them



save time and energy. With almost every individual owning a computer, laptop or a smart phone that are easily portable also gives them the advantage of having internet packages, thereby providing them the advantage of learning a language at just a click. Learning language through technology makes learning easier and fun-filled which in a way will motivate the learner. "Multimedia technology, with the help of audio, visual and animation effects, motivates the students to learn English quickly and effectively." (Pun, 3) Technology makes the process of learning a language learner-centered, where the learner can learn at his own pace and work on the individual's need of skills.

The major challenge of using CALL in institutions or the learners using MALL is that of using less quality language software or downloading applications that are less in standard. Low speed in internet connectivity may also at times pose to be a threat to the learners. And above all for years, students have learnt subject matters only under the guidance and instructions of a teacher and for them to learn using technology on their own might be of a great challenge, where they might at times tend to deviate from their learning process. Hence it has now become a time where "learners need training to effectively use smart phones as learning tools." (Lindsey, 91)

## CONCLUSION

Learning language is hugely possible through technology and would be of a greater aid to an ESL learner of this century. Learning that is done through computers and mobile phones have organized formats that would help a learner to develop skills like vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar which further leads to the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Technology indeed has provided a platform to enhance one's knowledge of language and the rapid change in technology innovations has obviously had an impact on the learners. This could be seen in the change of learning practice from CALL to MALL. And teachers on the other hand have moved from the position of being an instructor to being a facilitator with the method of teaching and learning process being carried out by technology devices which in turn has

helped to establish the learner's autonomy. In whole, technology and its innovative devices has contributed a lot for the learners of ESL.

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