

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Yu Zhao¹, María Cruz Sánchez Gómez², & Ana María Pinto Llorente²

¹Doctoral School of Training in the knowledge society, University of Salamanca (Spain)

²Faculty of Education, University of Salamanca (Spain)

Abstract

With the developing of information age, there is a tendency for many countries around the world to improve the quality of language education with the help of technological tools. This study tries to investigate the influence of virtual learning platform for university students in their English learning as second language. The quantity research was carried out and the participants were 144 second-year English major students coming from the Faculty of Foreign Languages in Gansu Agricultural University in China. By evaluating the data collected by the questionnaire, the results are as following: (1) It demonstrated the students' perception about using technological tools in studying English; (2) It verified the improvement for students' English competence with technological tools, especially in speaking and listening; (3) There were evidences that the communication between students and teachers had also been promoted; (4) The autonomous learning was formed when it came to acquire a higher level of English.

Keywords: *Technological tools; second language acquisition; English learning; autonomous learning.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the developing of technology has led to the constant scientific advances, and brought an advance of materials in a fast and varied way (Álvarez, Campo et al., 2009). From certain perspectives, technological tool is a reconstruction of traditional media to respond to the digital revolution. Technological tools are not only used in the most relevant computational advances, but have also led to some modifications and changes in the interactive processes that are carried out in the network. Therefore, there is no doubt that information and knowledge technologies (ICTs) have entered the educational field, in such a way and to such a point, that such confluence converts these ICTs into technologies for learning and collaborative knowledge (TAC) (García, 2010).

As these technological tools are developed, countries around the world are increasingly closer in their political relationship and economic and cultural development (Shi, 2015), and this new structure of the whole world implies that the relations are established by means of language. Hence, it is needed for citizens of different countries to improve their competence in one or more foreign languages. Today, there are more and more people learning foreign languages in China, due to the current need to make connection with the whole world. At the same time, how to improve the quality of second language teaching is highly necessary.

Pinto-Llorente, Sánchez-Gómez, & García-Peñalvo (2017) mention that the purpose of teaching English as a second language (L2) is to provide students with the necessary skills to carry out adequate communication. Therefore, second language teaching is an area based on the development of different communication strategies, skills and competences in which technological tools can play a fundamental role (Vega, 2016). The technological tool will be a key element that helps the development of different activities that favor the desired result and the improvement of the teaching-learning process of a second language. The use of technological tools is increasingly used by the demand of the global environment at the same time. One of the main reasons why I chose this topic is because of the tendency that everyone studies a second language and the need to improve the quality of education in our current society.

In this work, we will observe and analyze the benefits or disadvantages of the application of technological tools in the process of didactic activities. Meanwhile, the relationship between the use of different technological tools (mobile devices, virtual platform) and the improvement of foreign language learning is also investigated.

2. Context

The students in this study were English learners in Foreign Languages Department of Gansu Agricultural University in China who enrolled in the subject of English as a foreign language. They were separated in three groups (Group A, Group B and Group C) with a number of students between 43 and 52, and their teachers were specialized in teaching English as a foreign language. During the experiment, each of the classrooms was equipped with a video projector, an electronic projection screen and a fixed acrylic blackboard, and all of the participants were allowed to use the virtual platform. The study lasted approximately three months.

A platform called "Moso Teach" was used in the experiment. It is an interactive tool with the support of the Internet, and IPTV technology is also included for users to communicate and evaluate each other. Every participant is able to transmit information through the forum in the platform. This can be used on mobile phones and at the same time teachers can control it on their computer or use it in the classroom with a projector. Teachers can carry out educational activities on this platform, and watch students' performance. It also has the support of a large number of tools (new media) to be used in the design of activities during the teaching-learning process of English as L2.

3. Objectives

The objectives of this study were to analyze the influence of technological tools (mobile devices, platform) for learning a foreign language, specifically English. There were four research questions in the study: (1) Do The students know the importance of using the technological tools in studying English? (2) Whether technological tools can improve the students' English or not? (3) Could the communication between teacher and students in the new teaching environment be more active? and (4) Do technological tools help students develop autonomous learning?

4. Method

An anonymous questionnaire (English version) was posted in the virtual platform to investigate students' perception about using technological tools in English learning ($\alpha=0.885$).

The questionnaire was divided into three parts: Personal information, the use of new medias technology and the study about English learning. There were various dimensions in the questionnaire. Students were asked about their personal information and English learning experience, their perception of digital competence, frequency about using the platform, the expectations that students had about learning English and their opinion about the effectiveness of the activities carried out through tools to see the influence on their competence of English, especially oral expression and listening comprehension. They were asked if the interaction between teachers and students had been improved with this platform. It also included questions to evaluate if the technological tools help them build autonomous learning. Students valued the platform when a temporary study ends.

This questionnaire was formed by Likert-type scales, it also included open, closed questions and with the prescriptions "yes" or "no" depends on their real situation.

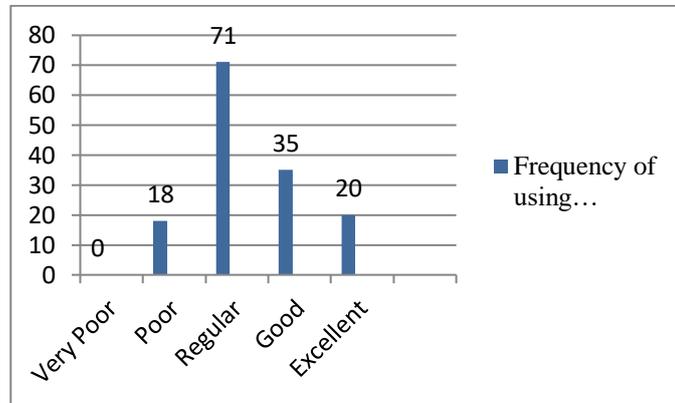
5. Results

According to the data provided by the participants, among 144 students who completed the questionnaire, 98 of them were females, taking up 68%, and 46 males, which occupy 32%. As for the length of English learning, 52% of the participants indicated that they have learned English for 5 to 10 years, while 48% indicated that they have learned English longer, for 10 to 13 years. The fact showed that each participant has mastered English at certain level.

We asked participants if they considered the technological tools that used in this study contributed or helped them to improve oral expression and oral comprehension. According to the results obtained, 35.4% of them confirmed that these technological tools had helped them a lot to improve their oral expression and 38.9%, regular, because they were able to use the mobile phone and Internet to get various materials meanwhile teachers would ask them to do oral practice that every student could evaluate and communicate through the virtual platform. According to the average calculation, it showed that the average score of these questions surpassed 3. With respect to the data obtained in the listening comprehension, more than 50% of the students, specifically 52.8%, considered that this contribution was good. We also emphasized in the obtained results and in regard to the improvement of the pronunciation that the students considered that it had helped him between regular, 31.9%, and quite, 40.3%, which indicated that

technological tools had a good impact on improving oral comprehension, and there was a 36.9% of participants who believed that these technological tools had an excellent function (Average= 3.19). With these data, we can see the positive influence exerted by the technological tools on oral expression, oral comprehension and pronunciation. We noted that most students have improved their oral English.

Figure 1. Frequency of using technological tools.



Regarding the variable that was referred to the frequency of using technological tools mentioned, we highlighted that the vast majority of students used it on a regular basis (Figure 1). On the other hand, based on the data collected, most students considered that the use of technological tools in learning a second language was quite effective, which the average score was 3.19.

Table 1. Result of the questionnaire: The interaction between participants.

	Average	Very Poor	Poor	Regular	Good	Excellent
The interaction between teachers and students	3.29	0	0	12.5	45.8	41.7
Communication On-line	3.17	0	0	12.5	58.3	29.2

The results (Table 1) also showed that 41.7% of those students thought that after using these tools, they communicated more with their teachers (Average=3.29) , When asked about the communication on-line, the average score is 3.17 and more than a half of them thought their role in English learning had changed because of the platform, everyone could express their opinion instead of receiving feedback from only one person.

We evaluated the tools that they used to see if they can establish an autonomous learning throughout their English learning. 51.4% of them believed that technological tools had helped them to improve autonomous learning (Average=3.11) and 35.4% developed a collaborative learning in significant measure, encouraged them to study in a group and carry out a continuous study (Average=3.52). About the study environment offered by the technological tools in learning English, 41.7% thought it was open and natural. With the forum, students learned in groups, did exercise in a critical way and thought creatively.

6. Conclusions

The study was aimed at identifying students ‘perception and experience in using technological tools in learning English. The results showed that technological tools were effective in teaching and learning English, as well as improving oral expression and listening comprehension. Technological tools implemented interactive and collaborative resources to create the e-activities that are appropriate to improve students’ English pronunciation level and ability to perceive and produce English more accurately (Pinto-Llorente, Sánchez-Gómez, & García-Peñalvo, 2015). Communication between teachers and students had also been improved, and this type of learning helped establish an autonomous learning when it came to acquiring a higher level of English. In their comments, students emphasized that the technological

learning environment afforded the possibility to think not only as a receiver but also a giver, and that this motivated them to put more effort into the language study.

These technological tools offered a direct opportunity for students to learn a second language (Pinto-Llorente, 2012). In addition, the effective of using technological tools in the classroom for learning-teaching foreign languages depends on the ability of teachers and students to interact with technological resources.

Because of the recent international situation, we needed more people who can adapt this brand new social environment and economic market. According to Wang (2012), the development of teaching foreign languages has undergone a substantial change in recent years due to new technological tools. It has gone from a synchronic teaching that takes place in a specific place to an asynchronous multimedia teaching that develops in virtual spaces. A future trend in teaching a second language is the improvement of the processes of b-learning and the use of synchronous and asynchronous tools offered by virtual platforms.

The findings of the research brought encouraging conclusions and suggested, it is crucial to supplement language teaching with technological tools. However, a limitation of this study is that the sample was not very large (144 students) and the duration of the study was relatively short (3 months). We have not evaluated the participants' digital competence which could influence the results of this experiment. Future research should assess the advantages and disadvantages of more type of technological tools with larger populations and adapt the concept according to teachers' and students' perceptions and needs. The objective is to find the balance of instructional strategies that is specifically targeted at improving student foreign language learning ability and also maximize its positive impact in teaching process.

References

- García, G. S. (2010). Las redes sociales como entornos de aprendizaje colaborativo mediado para segundas lenguas (L2). *Edutec. Revista Electrónica de Tecnología Educativa*, (34), 149
- Pinto-Llorente, A. B., & Sánchez-Gómez, M. C., & García-Peñalvo, F. J. (2017). The Impact of Wikis and Discussion Boards on Learning English as a Second Language. A Mixed Methods Research. *Digital Education Review*, (32), 35-59.
- Pinto-Llorente, A. M. (2012). *Análisis de un modelo hipermedia modular para la enseñanza del inglés en modalidad semipresencial*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://repositorio.grial.eu/handle/giral/1189>
- Pinto-Llorente, A. M., Sánchez-Gómez, M. C., & García-Peñalvo, F. J. (2015,). Developing a VLE to enable the innovative learning of english pronunciation. In *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Technological Ecosystems for Enhancing Multiculturality* (pp. 83-89).
- Shi, J. (2015). La influencia que ejercen los nuevos en la enseñanza de la destreza oral de inglés en la universidad. *Overseas English*, (17), 36-37.
- Tomé Diez, M., & Campo Delgado, J. M., & Álvarez Álvarez, A., & Demaizière, F., & Martínez García, J. Á., & O'Down, R., ... & Vera Pérez, C. (2009). *La web 2.0 como recurso para la enseñanza del francés como lengua extranjera*. Ministerio de Educación.
- Vega Vivar, B. (2016). Uso de las tic en el aula de lenguas extranjeras en educación primaria. Retrieved October 10, 2018, from <https://repositorio.unican.es/xmlui/handle/10902/9316>
- Wang, S. R. (2012). La investigación de los nuevos medios en el enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras con el entorno virtual. *El Periódico Chino*, (11X), 176-177