Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching (TELT): Culture in the Making!

Suzana Ab. Rahim[1], Farina NozakiahTazijan[1], Rushita Ismail[1] and Emily Jothee Mathai[1]

[1]Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Corresponding author's email: suzana.arahim {at} ppinang.uitm.edu.my

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ABSTRACT--- *The diffusion of technologies in language teaching and learning is undeniably inevitable with the rapid technology succumbing both the language educators and learners. Educators have to bow in to these changes and take up the enthusiasm of being a "technophile, much to the likings of the language learners of this digital age. With the advent of Web 2.0, podcasts,vodcasts , virtual learning environment and many more, these pedagogical tools are perceived as technology-enablers in enhancing the process of language teaching and learning. This paper attempts to gage the interest or trends of the English as Second Language (ESL) learners in defining their preferences of the technology-enablers in the process of language learning especially outside the formal classrooms. As such, a survey was carried out on a group of engineering students to gage their preferences and tendencies towards enhancing and propagating technology- enabled language learning and teaching tools in and beyond the language classes.*

Keywords--- TELT, ESL learners, language learning and teaching.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Much has been highlighted about the significant contribution of a technology-enabled language learning environment which requires both the educators and the learners to keep up with the progress and changes in the traditional classroom setting. No longer are the mundane four walls and talk and chalk confining the language learning, the educators have taken up the roles of "technophiles" in advocating the more proactive approach of providing the learners with a blended-learning environment. Although this is relatively new in the language classes in UiTM, many of the educators have actually subscribed to the ideals of this mode of learning due to its indispensable outcomes. The oversize classes and limited opportunities for the learners to put into practice the language they are trying to acquire has triggered the concern amongs the educators and as such, the provision of real world contexts via technology-enabled language learning tools will be able to enhance their language interest and in time to come, their language prowess.

This study describes learners' perceptions with regards to the use of various multimedia technologies in their language learning process. It explores their views regarding the integration of Internet tools in the learning of English language classrooms and beyond them. This study also looks at the gap between their ideals and the reality of having to shift to a technologically-enabled language learning process apart from indicating the preferences of the learners in embracing technology in such a process. It also hopes to probe into their lacks of interest in certain mode of technology and thus help the teachers in designing or uptaking/ adopting better learning tools for them.

2. OBJECTIVE

This paper aims to gage the interest or trends of the English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in defining their preferences of the technology-enablers in the process of language learning especially outside the formal classrooms.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1 Language Learning and Teaching on the Internet
In today's higher education, language learning does not have to be confined to the four walls of a classroom as technological advancements have made it possible for learning to take place in the virtual world. The teaching and learning of English language has been proven more effective via the use of multi-media, internet, intranet and weblogs and many others. More importantly, is the use of web portal as a means of propagating knowledge isnd enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Lightbown and Spana (1999) as cited in Nadzrah (2009), are of the view that low proficiency students have always found learning English language to be of a challenging task due to the inhibitions they face in a less interesting and interactive learning environment. Hence, it is pertinent that certain measures have to be

taken in order to motivate the students to actively participate in a learning environment that will boost their interest in pursuing the language.

The potential of ICT and new media and its impact on language learning is nothing new. This is especially true whereby the role it plays in enhancing language learning process is evident towards the learners. The new term coined to represent the upcoming and trendier teaching and learning mode is blended learning. Blended learning as defined by McSporran and King (2002) consists of various delivery methods tailoring the needs of a wide range of audience in multi-subjects. Be it of electronic options comprising e-learning classes, learning management systems and the many online tools to the traditional mode of the face-to-face method propagating autonomous learning. The integration of these delivery methods are believed to benefit language learners in particular as motivation and the diverse needs of ESL learners do contribute a significant role in their achievement of mastering the language. Thus, it is pertinent and imperative that their preferences and trends in the ICT and new media be gaged in order for the educators to cater to their needs as ESL language learners.

Meanwhile, Ismail et al. (2010) highlight the benefits of an e-learning portal to adult learners in University Sains Malaysia whereby it is found that a majority of the users agreed that they have gained a lot from the use of the portal. If such advantages have been reported for distance learners where face-to-face interaction is minimal, there could be more benefits in store for UiTM learners who not only are involved in active classroom participation but also outside classroom environment.

Table 1 Technologies available

Learning/content management systems (LMSs/CMSs) include Blackboard, Drupal, Joomla, Moodle and Sakai. Moodle, in particular, is a very popular free LMS adapted to online courses at many universities and schools.
Communication tools include Gmail, Skype, TokBox, Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger, Jabberwacky, Verbot, MyBB, phpBB, Tangler and Voxopop. A good example of the communication tools is Skype, which is widely used for voice chatting and video conferencing.
Live and virtual worlds are used for delivering live meetings and virtual word communities. Elluminate, Livestream, OpenSimulator, ActiveWorlds, Second Life, Ustream, Wimba Classroom and WiZiQ belong to this category.
Social networking and bookmarking sites encompass Delicious, Diigo, Elgg, Facebook, Grouply, MySpace, Ning, SocialGo, LinkedIn, Twitter, Lang-8 and Livemocha.
Blogs and wikis, including Blogger, Edmodo, Edublogs, LiveJournal, WordPress.com, PBWorks, Wikispaces and Penzu, are collaboratively used in many language classes.
Presentation tools such as 280 Slides, Animoto, Empresser, Prezi, SlideRocket and Zoho Show offer innovative ways of presenting language-related materials.
Resource sharing tools are one of the most valuable tools on the Web. They encompass Google Docs, TitanPad, Zoho Writer, Box.net, Dropbox, VoiceThread, Xtranormal, Flickr, Picasa, MyPodcast, PodOmatic, Glogster, Screenr, Slideshare, PhotoPeach, Dipity, OurStory, Jing, SchoolTube, TeacherTube, VideoPress, Vimeo, WatchKnow and YouTube.
Website creation sites such as Google Sites, Jimdo, KompoZer, Mahara, Movable Type, SnapPages, Weebly, Webnode, Webs and Wix provide teachers and students with simple and easy ways to create their own Websites.
Web exercise creation tools such as ContentGenerator, SMILE, ESL Video, JClic, Hot Potatoes, Quia, Lingt and Listen and Write enable teachers to create language exercises themselves.
Web search engines designed to search for information on the Web include Ask.com, Bing, Google and Yahoo! Search.
Dictionaries and concordancers are language reference tools, which include Dictionary.com, Merriam-Webster Online, YourDictionary.com, Compleat Lexical Tutor, Forvo, Howjsay, Visuwords, OneLook Dictionary Search and VLC Web Concordancer.
Utilities that can be useful for language learning activities include CalculateMe, CalendarFly, Doodle, ClustrMaps, Currency Converter, Dvolver Moviemaker, Google Earth, Lesson Writer, Storybird, Cacoo, Mindmeister, Mindomo, Remember the milk, SurveyMonkey, Voki, Time and Date, TinyURL.com, W3C Link Checker, Wallwisher, Wayback Machine and Wordle.

3.2 Types of Online tools

The trends in language learning are changing rapidly with the advancement of technologies. Generally,the online tools are divided into twelve categories as Figure 1. (Son, 2011). The Online Tools (OTLT) are categorised in learning/content management systems; Live and virtual worlds ; Blogs and wikis; Resource sharing, Web exercise creation ; Dictionaries and concordancesCommunication;Social networking and book marking; Presentation;Website creation ;Web search engines and utiles.
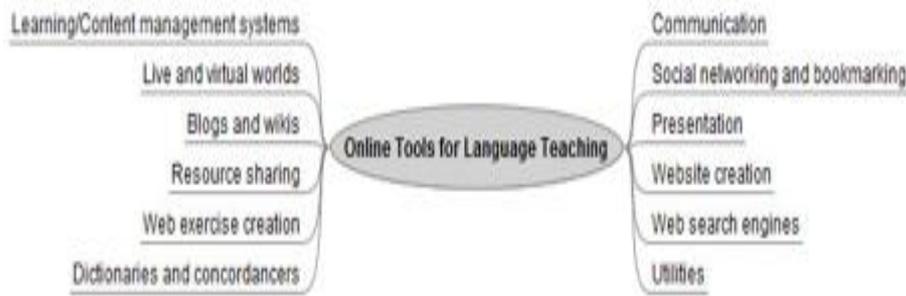

Figure 1 Categories of Online Tools For Language Teaching

As the demand towards technologies is increasing, many students opt for this way to acquire their learning. This is mainly due to the reasons of availability of input or sources which are vast and easily accessible for learners to acquire language compared to the traditional classroom teaching. By having these choices, it allows the technology enabled learning and teaching tools to become a popular choice for learners. Learners are easily attracted to technology tools of learning as they find it easy to access the sources, interesting and interactive materials available. Some of the technologies mentioned are as indicated in the respective table.

However, due to the rapid development and vast changes in technology, these are some of the popular tools listed by directory of online tools.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Participants

This study examined 90 second and third semester diploma students who are taking up Intermediate English and English for Academic Purposes courses in UiTM Penang. These students are pursuing Civil and Mechanical Engineering and have to take up six hours of English Language classes per week.

4.2 Data collection

This study adopted a quantitative analysis whereby the respondents are given time to answer the questionnaire survey distributed via an online survey. The questionnaire was administered to elicit relevant information relating to respondents' perceptions of and their preferences towards the use of ICT and Multimedia in language learning. The questionnaire was adopted from the survey conducted on a "Study On The Impact Of Information And Communications Technology (ICT) And New Media On Language Learning" (2009).

4.3 Instruments

The first part of the survey dealt with some background information of the respondents and their usage of technologies in their everyday life. Section B meanwhile highlighted the respondents' views on using technologies in relation to language learning.

5. RESULTS

Table 2 Using technologies for language learning

Answer Choices	Responses
non-existent	0% 0
an occasional addition	20% 15
a regular component	36% 27
the main medium	54.67% 41
I don't know / not relevant to me	2.67% 2
Total Respondents: 75	

In attempting to see the link between the significant of technologies for language learning, it is found that the use of computers and technologies has been the main medium according to almost 55% respondents whose experience of learning a language in a course or any other systematic way. Meanwhile another 36% agree that the technologies has been a regular component, suggesting that they are not strangers to technologies where language learning is concerned.

Table 3 Technologies and applications that helped improve the language skills

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Average Rating
Tv	14.86% 11	45.95% 34	31.08% 23	8.11% 6	74	2.32
Computer	21.62% 16	39.19% 29	31.08% 23	8.11% 6	74	2.26
Voice over the internet	16.67% 11	37.88% 25	40.91% 27	4.55% 3	66	2.33
Films on DVD (with subtitles or not)	17.14% 12	40% 28	37.14% 26	5.71% 4	70	2.31

Amongst the many technologies and application that would have helped them improve their language skills (at school, work,home or even in their leisure time) the respondents opted for computer,voice on the Internet, as well as films on dvd to have had some impact on them. This is the least expected since there are various applications namely blogs,vlogs, podcasts, mediaboards and social networking sites which are available to enhance their language skills. We have decided to look at these four variables that show a score of the lowest avarage rating among other variables. The reason for this is because the option scales of answers range from 1- strongly agree to 4-strongly disagree. Since the average rating for these four were found to be the lowest amongst other variables, a chi-square test has also been run bearing a result that all these four variables are of significant values of 0.00. In other words,there is a significant difference in students' response towards the selected ICT/Technologies variables that helped improve their language skills.

Table 4 Preference of usage in studying a language

	No	Yes, only if free to use	Yes, even if charged	Total	Average Rating
Online learning environments	**6.85%** 5	**86.30%** 63	**6.85%** 5	73	2.00
Face-to-face learning environments	**6.76%** 5	**64.86%** 48	**28.38%** 21	74	2.22
Blended learning environments (a mixture of face-to-face and online)	**4.11%** 3	**83.56%** 61	**12.33%** 9	73	2.08
Environments intending to help you explore new learning opportunities	**2.70%** 2	**83.78%** 62	**13.51%** 10	74	2.11

The majority of respondents also revealed that they would prefer to learn or take up a language in online learning environments more, followed by a close 83.5% in blended learning environment (a mixture of face to face and online). Nonetheless this mode of learning preference has to come free for them to have opted for such a stand.

Table 5 Perception on technologies to be of assistance :

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Average Rating
...to speak a language better	**23.94%** 17	**67.61%** 48	**7.04%** 5	**1.41%** 1	71	1.86
...to understand others better when they speak	**26.39%** 19	**65.28%** 47	**6.94%** 5	**1.39%** 1	72	1.83
...with reading in a language	**23.61%** 17	**72.22%** 52	**2.78%** 2	**1.39%** 1	72	1.82
...with writing in a language	**15.28%** 11	**76.39%** 55	**6.94%** 5	**1.39%** 1	72	1.94
...to become more confident in using the language	**18.31%** 13	**71.83%** 51	**8.45%** 6	**1.41%** 1	71	1.93

Based on the respondents' perception or belief, this survey question aims at gaging their perceived needs whereby technologies could help them in the following variables-
While almost 96% strongly agree and agree that technologies could help them with reading in a language, another 91.5% stated their belief that technologies could help them with writing in a language. Some 90% also responded that technologies would enable them to speak a language better with the presence of technologies.

Table 6 Perception in relation to technologies and language learning

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Average Rating
I am sceptical about the use of technologies for language learning	**16.67%** 12	**62.50%** 45	**16.67%** 12	**4.17%** 3	72	2.08
I would pay an additional cost to use technologies in language learning	**9.72%** 7	**55.56%** 40	**27.78%** 20	**6.94%** 5	72	2.32
People learn languages differently when they use technologies	**13.89%** 10	**72.22%** 52	**12.50%** 9	**1.39%** 1	72	2.01
A language learner is more autonomous and flexible when using technologies	**13.89%** 10	**65.28%** 47	**18.06%** 13	**2.78%** 2	72	2.10
Language learning is more collaborative when using technologies	**13.89%** 10	**65.28%** 47	**19.44%** 14	**1.39%** 1	72	2.08
Technologies give learners access to more authentic (real-life) language use	**13.89%** 10	**70.83%** 51	**13.89%** 10	**1.39%** 1	72	2.03
Using technologies can motivate me more to learn a language	**11.27%** 8	**76.06%** 54	**11.27%** 8	**1.41%** 1	71	2.03
Using technologies to learn a language can help me improve in my studies and/or my work	**12.50%** 9	**75%** 54	**11.11%** 8	**1.39%** 1	72	2.01
Using technologies to learn a language can help me integrate better in the world in which I live	**13.89%** 10	**70.83%** 51	**13.89%** 10	**1.39%** 1	72	2.03
Technologies in language learning will increase in the future	**19.44%** 14	**66.67%** 48	**12.50%** 9	**1.39%** 1	72	1.96

At 86%, the respondents feel that people learn languages differently when they use technologies. In addition to this, is nearly 88% who responded that using technologies to learn a language can help them improve in their studies and work. Of significance is the perception that technologies can make learning more accessible and less threatening to them. This is recorded by almost 85% of the respondents who believe so. Technologies in language learning will increase in the future as noted by another 86% respondents indicating a possibility for them to willingly embrace technologies in the near future.

6. CONCLUSION

It is imperative that these students' perceptions towards the trend and preferences of technologies enabled learning and teaching tools be noted since they are indicative of tools that will boost their interest in taking up language learning a step further. Educators should progress along this suggested line since the technologies would positively contribute to a better language learning environment, relevant to the volatile changes taking place in classrooms. More importantly, due to the rampant wave of the internet, the technologies enabled learning and teaching tools are continuously changing.

Many other tools that are not mentioned in this research are significant to TELT as well. It is difficult to select the right tools for specific purposes. It is the choice of the learners and teachers to choose which tool could better assist their learning and teaching. The TELT tools should then become a culture in accordance to the changes of technologies as to reflect the continuous changes of learning beyond classroom teaching. It is therefore important for language practitioners to be selective when choosing online tools to be used in classroom teaching as every TELT has a different purpose and different needs. The ESL students now have a variety of list to choose in order to assist their language teaching. However, there are not many TELT tools designed for the Malaysian context. Most TELT tools are targeted for the native speakers and this somehow will lead to confusion among ESL or Malaysian learners as proper guidance are needed in order to maintain the Standard of Malaysian English. As TELT offers an interactive platform, learning outside classroom will be more interesting and definitely a hype way of learning and teaching in language classrooms. Language practitioners are spoilt for choices of TELT tools to choose thus creating a new diversion language learning from the traditional language teaching and learning.

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