

## 5ED-O06: How Are We Doing in EFL Online Classes?

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### Abstract

Recently, traditional classroom teaching and learning has been forcibly altered to online setting for several reasons. An important one is due to fast growing of technology which fully supports the idea that learning doesn't necessarily have to happen only in the classroom but anywhere in the world. Another principally important reason is the coronavirus epidemic that has compulsorily pushed online learning to be clearly more evident. The objective of this study is, therefore, aimed to scrutinize studies regarding the role of digital technology in language learning and teaching. Since the start of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in in 1960s and '70s, it has been clearly indicated that the use of technology has a major impact on EFL students' learning as well as the teachers' teaching. The advent of digital media has dramatically transformed traditional face-to-face language learning to online learning. Therefore, it would be rationale to study the influence on how technology such as CALL, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and robot-assisted language learning (RALL) has been applied. It is, therefore, very interesting to see the real pictures of what are actually happening in the digital-age EFL classes in terms of teachers' teaching, learners' learning, and EFL content management. The possibility to use technology, suggestions, and opinions on the future of using technology in language education is also discussed.

**Key Words:** EFL, ELT, technology, computer-assisted language learning, mobile-assisted language learning

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### Introduction

The teaching of English (ELT) has changed dramatically over the past decade. In Asia especially, English is taught as a foreign language rather than a second language. Greater values of the English language with an emphasis on student-centered classrooms have increased the importance of English through learning the language in both formal and informal contexts. This shows that ELT will continue to grow consistently (Doman, 2015).

In 21st century, teaching and learning has basically changed enormously regardless of the field of study. The transformation has altered the traditional classroom into learning in which the learner does not have to be in a class where the education is organized. Students are no longer required to attend the class where the teacher conducts teaching in the front as long as they have the tools or equipment suitable for their distance learning. Thus learning can take place in any corner of the world.

To understand how learners learn English as a foreign or second language, this article has been aimed to communicate the phenomena that occur in those language classes where. Its specific objectives are to explore the advantage, disadvantage of distance or online English language learning in general to reflect what is happening in the English language classroom. This means that the old way of learning seems about to end being caused dramatic changes in technology, society, economy and modern life style. To really understand the situation, relevant articles mirroring teaching conditions, problems, difficulties, and benefits of online teaching have been scrutinized to obtain better clarity of the circumstances.

### Technology Used in Language Learning Classes

Professor David Wiley, an instructor working at Instructional Psychology and Technology at Brigham Young University, has described six significant changes that affect our everyday lives through the growth of technology, especially Internet technology (Wiley 2006). He suggests we are moving from:

1. Analog to digital. Information, media, interactions, and experiences are increasingly completed online.
2. Tethered to mobile. People can use wireless networks, laptops, smartphones, and tablets to access the digital world anywhere, anytime.
3. Isolated to connected. On the Web, people can connect to others around the world.
4. Generic to personal. People can choose their own experiences, and can have those delivered to their personal devices.
5. Consuming to creating. The changes from analog to digital and tethered to mobile are reflected in increasing access to connected technology, and signal the others in this list.
6. Closed to open. People of the Web are gradually open about who they are and what they do. People can find and develop connections and communities through sharing on the Web.

Through the use of technology in the past decade, language teaching and learning has also swiftly changed resulted from the changing technology. We have applied technology in teaching through numerous forms under and different names, which sometimes can get confusing. In terms of the extent to which the amount of technology is being used, there are also differences according to the availability of the technological facility in each educational organization. Therefore, it is relatively interesting to really understand that what is really happening in the language classroom nowadays.

To obtain the clearer viewpoints, the researchers have applied relevant information from various academic sources with reference to teaching and learning of English as a foreign or a second language. In order to be up-to-date with current events, most articles selected for this investigation have been limited go back less than ten years in order to frame up the modernity and the current technology of the English language teaching and learning. Moreover, this documentary research study has been set to possibly develop hypotheses for future studies that can yield more accurate and useful findings. In ensuring the quality of the work accuracy and comply with the standards of documentary research, four key areas of documentary research are closely followed in matters related to document validity, reliability, representation and meaning of the document (Scott, 2006).

To state the importance of technology in education, it is undeniable that teaching and learning in any field currently relies on different forms of technological assistance. In terms of language learning according to Gradol (2000), "Technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education, work and culture. The use of English language has increased rapidly after 1960. At present, the role and status of English is that it is the language of social context, political, sociocultural, business, education, industries, media, library, communication across borders, and key subject in curriculum and language of imparting education".

The above comments are in accordance with an overview of research and issues on technology in EFL teaching and learning in Thailand having been proposed by Deerajviset (2014). The article broadly covers EFL research on the use of technology in EFL in Thailand. The reviewed studies reveal the use of technology on EFL skills including listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and other integration. The study has uncovered clear evidence that the use of technology has a positive effect on language learning. However, to take advantage of technology in terms of technology efficiency in language learning, it is imperative that teachers guide the students how to implement technology in their language learning. This is truly commanding to the EFL study success.

Campbell (2015) revealed the research results of ICT blended instruction as opposed to a traditional Face-to-Face of a Thai classroom. Her findings show a significant, positive difference in student's English learning achievement when compared with the English learning achievement of students participating in a traditional class. Moreover, the research has identified a significant, positive difference in students' attitude after learning English through ICT blended instruction.

Another study that has confirmed the positive results of technology use in ELT is examined by Mofareh (2019). He projects that since the application of modern technology represents a major breakthrough in the contemporary English language, it has been seen as the most sought-after teaching program for teachers. Technology fosters positive student participation with teachers and stimulates learning. As a result, most English language teachers today adopt a range of technology to help design the language learning activity to facilitate the best teaching and learning method. Also, today's research addresses the elements of technology used in the teaching and learning of English through innovative curriculum in scientific and technical developments.

### ELT Technologies

Hubbard (2021) generously offers a number of different names provided by several groups of practitioners who have attempted to promote their own views and philosophies. He adds that the following list below is representative but not exhaustive.

- CALL - Computer-assisted language learning, sometimes expanded as computer-aided language learning
- CELL - Computer-enhanced language learning: suggests the computer's role is to make learning better
- TELL - Technology-enhanced language learning: this accommodates more than just computers, often bringing in video and seeing the computer as just one part of a larger system. It is increasingly popular as a generic term: for instance, while TESOL has a CALL Interest Section, California TESOL has a TELL Interest Group.
- TALL - Technology-assisted language learning: variant of CALL and TELL
- CALI - Computer-assisted language instruction: with "instruction" in it, it's more teaching oriented
- CBLT - Computer-based language training: views elements of language learning as "training" and tends to use an approach with definable, measurable objectives
- IT and ICT - Information Technology/Information and Communication Technologies are common acronyms outside of language teaching, particularly in Europe; sometimes this is presented as IT or ICT for LT (Language Teaching)
- NBLT - Network-Based Language Teaching: focuses on computers linked in networks, both locally and through the Internet, especially for computer-mediated communication
- DLL - Digital Language Learning: a relatively new term encompassing computers and other digital devices
- MALL - Mobile Assisted Language Learning: learning with mobile devices like smartphones and tablets (sometimes also used for Multimedia Assisted language Learning)

- Technology-mediated language learning - Usually presented without an acronym, this is probably the most generic and descriptive modern term, but it doesn't have a memorable acronym

Back in the early days of using technology, ELT relies on a method known as computer assisted language learning (CALL), which focuses on teaching communicative language. Kern Warschauer (2000) divides the history of CALL into three phases: 1) structural (1970s to 1980s), where exercises are developed for use with mainframe computers to allow learners to in-depth grammar practice, 2) communicative (1980s to 1990s), where personal computers were used for communication accuracy and fluency practice, and 3) integrative (21st century), when multimedia and Internet have been used to enable learners to learn real language for accuracy, fluency and agency.

According to abundant reviews regarding CALL, its benefits are well aware including providing individual student attention, promoting meaningful and realistic interaction while using the language, helping learners see their own progress, dividing content into more meaningful ways, and drawing students' participation effectively etc. However, there are some drawbacks for a widely appreciate approach like CALL. The disadvantages have been referred through the unavailability of CALL tools, expensive cost, unskilled instructors, the unbalanced between classroom lessons and CALL lessons, or the isolation of the student while learning. These drawbacks have literally decreased the popularity of CALL and there surely are more approaches to come (Ozturk, 2013).

An example of CALL in Thailand was accomplished by Attapol (2012). His findings suggest that this method of teaching should be an add-on program not a master program, in which teachers need to examine whether the technology suitable for the instructor as well as learner. It can be summarized that CALL is less popular than it should due to several reasons like the learner's inadequate knowledge and expertise on CALL programs, the limitations of the computer facility, as well as the cost of CALL installation.

Ideally, language learning should be consistently supported by the institution in order to able to meet the learner needs such as using suitable software programs or relevant facilities. In addition to that, there should be ongoing technology training for learners and instructors to help solve language learning problem problems in the right way. Although CALL was actively introduced and has been applied since its prosperous beginning, a blend of newer technologies has also been appeared in various forms of computer technology that comes such as , whether it smart whiteboard, mobile phones, electronic dictionaries, various mobile devices or even robots. It is, however, important to promote a successful language learning experience through technology (Wang & Winstead, 2016).

At present, the interest in using mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) is on the rise for both teachers and learners. More specifically, more teachers are also learning how to take advantage of mobile technology and able to design learning activities to better suit the learners. Hashim and others (2017) propose that mobile technology is dramatically transforming and enhancing the teaching and learning of English. MALL is seen as a subject that is likely to be researched as it is able to shape more

personal learning and teaching. With its portability, the mobile device is believed to bring new and improved ways to help people learn while traveling and can also help increase the efficiency of their English language learning.

An example of applying MALL to investigate the effect of language learning skills is accomplished by Chanprasert and Han (2013). The researchers reveal the study results of on language skills including vocabulary practice, grammar practice, listening practice, pronunciation practice, and reading practice. They project that, through MALL, the students can learn vocabulary more frequently. MALL is found to be more effective than learning vocabulary from paper materials. In terms of grammar practice, the mobile application allows students to complete assignments inside and outside of the classroom at their convenience. Moreover, MALL offers audio-visual media as a podcast for listening skill, which has been developed from videotapes, CDs, DVDs to digital media providing easy and convenient access on the website to download. For pronunciation expertise, mobile technologies such as iPad can also increase the student's chances of learning a language outside of the class for its facilitating application features including an HD video camera and FaceTime useful for teachers and learners as well as other helpful MALL applications and systems to boost reading skills.

It can be a great challenge to apply the MALL theoretical framework to practicality in the classroom. This gives students a new and challenging experience. The fundamental reason to support its application is that this type of learning provides an opportunity for students to practice language skills using technology that can be taken anywhere.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, this research study suggests us that current ELT is more technologically oriented. Technology has been playing important roles in all kinds of walks since the introduction of the smartphone in 2007. This growth will have been projected to around 1.48 billion units by 2023 (S. O'Dea, Oct 26, 2020 <https://www.statista.com/>). In educational contexts, mobile phones make theoretical student-centered learning possible by allowing students to customize, transfer, and access information to strengthen their skills and knowledge to achieve their educational goals (Sharples et al., 2007). This research study suggests us that bringing technology into ELT contexts should help students become more personally confident to learn more effectively. However, the teacher needs to take on new roles such as facilitation and guiding because without the teacher careful direction, learning can be susceptible since there has been a variety of content sources and formats that the learner is not capable to differentiate the precision and appropriateness of the learning material in accordance to the standards of language usage. Again, it is the teacher's duty to scrutinize, recommend, and assign appropriate and useful materials. This may be a quite a problem for some teachers who have not yet adapted to the teaching technology (Blyth, 2018; Godwin-Jones, 2016). There are many more challenges including the

institutional policy, limited infrastructure, budget constraints, unaffordability for the student to have mobile ownership, and hardware constraints (Burston, 2014; Chwo et al., 2016).

In exploiting technology, it is necessary that the language teacher know how to apply suitable kinds of technology to match with the language content, skill, teaching activity, and the language learner. The teacher should know how to design language learning activities using technology as part of the job. They should seriously encourage learners to use technology in their language development by suggesting appropriate applications along with assigning appropriate language tasks. The educational organization should also play the most important part in promoting the use of language teaching technology in particular by recruiting experts to advise teachers to enhance their technology skills for the effective use of the aforementioned technologies.

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