

Innovations in ELT: A Study on the Use of Modern Technologies to Teach English to Technical Students

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Abstract

Today, technology is very important for teaching English, especially to technical students who need to keep up with new information quickly. The old way of teaching, like just writing on the board and lecturing, is not enough anymore to help students develop language skills such as phonology (pronunciation), syntax (sentence structure), and semantics (meaning). New tools like communication labs, video conferencing, and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) programs make it easier and more engaging to practice the four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Videos, podcasts, and online materials provide authentic language input, helping students improve their pragmatic competence (ability to use language in context). Students can also use video libraries, satellite programs, blogs, mobile messaging, and internet resources to learn at their own pace and review lessons repeatedly, which supports vocabulary acquisition and fluency development. Devices like Quick Link Pen and Quicktionary assist learners in expanding their lexicon (vocabulary) quickly. Programs like Study Skills Success offer structured exercises and track learners' progress, encouraging autonomous learning. Web 2.0 tools enable students to create and share multimedia content, which promotes communicative competence and interaction. These technologies transform learners from passive receivers to active language users, improving pronunciation, intonation, and overall communicative effectiveness. By combining these modern tools with traditional teaching methods, educators create dynamic classrooms that motivate students and make language learning enjoyable. Ultimately, integrating technology helps students develop essential linguistic and communicative skills needed for academic and professional success in today's globalized world.

Keywords: Technology-enhanced language learning, Communicative competence, Autonomous learning, Computer-assisted language learning (CALL), Vocabulary acquisition

Introduction

The 21st century is changing very quickly, especially because of new technology. These changes are also affecting how we teach and learn English. In the past, classrooms mainly used books and blackboards. But now, teachers use many new tools like computers, videos, podcasts, and even live online classes. These tools make learning English more fun and interesting. They also help students practice all parts of the language—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—in better ways. Thanks to the internet, students can connect with people who speak English all over the world and use real-life materials to learn from. This makes learning more useful and realistic. Using these new technologies helps students learn English more easily and prepares them for the modern world, where knowing English is very important for school, work, and talking to others around the world. So, teachers and students need to use these tools to make learning English better and get ready for the future.

The Digital Transformation of English Language Learning

In today's world, information is growing quickly. Experts say that the amount of knowledge we have is doubling or even tripling in a very short time. Because of this, students need to constantly learn new things to keep up. This is especially true for students in technical or professional fields, where English is often used in higher education, research, and the workplace. If students don't learn how to use English well—especially through modern tools—they may find it hard to compete in the job market. That's why using technology in English language teaching isn't just a good idea anymore; it's necessary. English is not just a subject in school anymore. It's a global language used in business, science, technology, and communication. To learn it well, students need more than grammar rules and vocabulary lists. They need opportunities to listen, speak, read, and write in real-world situations. This is where technology becomes very useful. Technology can provide students with access to real English conversations, reading materials, and writing platforms.

It allows them to learn at their own pace and in ways that suit their learning styles. Language experts like Maggie Sokolik have noted that machines and computers are no longer used just for drills or simple exercises. Now, they help learners connect with people around the world and use English for real communication. The internet gives students access to a huge amount of reading material in English, covering almost any topic they can think of. It also gives them the chance to talk with others in forums, chatrooms, or video calls. This helps them learn how English is really used and makes learning more enjoyable. In this new environment, media acts like a bridge between the teacher and the student. It helps deliver lessons in ways that are more engaging and easier to understand. Media can be anything from videos and audio clips to online articles and digital textbooks. When we combine media with technology, learning becomes even more powerful.

What Is Technology in Education?

Technology, simply put, means using tools and systems to solve problems or do tasks more easily. In education, it means using these tools to help teach and learn better. Whether it's called "construction technology" or "medical technology," the idea is the same: technology helps people work smarter. In language learning, technology helps students practice English in modern, exciting ways. It helps teachers create better lessons and reach all kinds of learners—from beginners to advanced students, and from visual learners to those who learn better by listening or doing.

Modern Tools for English Language Teaching

There are many different tools that English teachers can use today. These include:

- Communication labs, where students can practice listening and speaking using headsets and computers.
- Video conferencing tools, like Zoom or Google Meet, that allow students to talk to native speakers or attend live lessons from anywhere in the world.
- Video libraries, full of English lessons, documentaries, and educational videos that students can watch at their own pace.
- CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) programs, which offer interactive lessons, quizzes, and games.
- TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning) methods that mix traditional teaching with digital tools like animations, videos, and online exercises.
- Podcasting, where students listen to real English speakers discussing topics like science, culture, or everyday life.
- Quick Link Pens and Quicktionaries, which help students translate words quickly and hear their correct pronunciation.
- Educational satellite programs, where students can watch lessons broadcast from major educational centres.
- Blogging, where students write their own posts in English and read others' work, helping improve writing skills and creativity.

The Evolution and Impact of Technology in English Language Learning

The use of technology in language learning isn't new. It actually started back in the 1960s and 70s. At first, teachers used simple tape recorders to play audio lessons for students. These later evolved into language laboratories where students could record and listen to their own speech. Over time, technology kept improving. Every new tool or platform added more ways to support English learning. Today, with the internet, smartphones, and AI tools, teachers have more resources than ever before. Traditional teaching methods—like "chalk and talk," where the teacher writes on the board and lectures—are still useful in some cases. But they can feel outdated and boring to students who are used to digital devices in their daily lives. When teachers add technology to their lessons, the classroom becomes more active, lively, and engaging. Students are more likely to pay attention and enjoy the learning process. This makes a big difference. When students feel comfortable and interested, they learn better. Modern technologies help students relax and connect with the subject instead of feeling stressed or bored. This is why we need to bring technology into English classrooms—not to replace teachers, but to help them teach more effectively. As education expert Indumathi explains, today's classrooms are full of students from different cultures, languages, and learning abilities. No single teaching method works for everyone. But modern tools make it easier for teachers to meet the needs of all students. New teaching methods that use technology allow students to learn English in different ways—some by listening, some by reading, some through group activities. This variety helps keep learners motivated and excited about learning. One important point is that language is best learned through imitation. Just like children learn their first language by hearing their parents speak, students learning English benefit from hearing it spoken often. The more they listen to English, the more they start to understand and speak it. Technology makes this possible by providing many chances to hear real English—through songs, videos, podcasts, and online conversations. The internet has made a huge difference in English learning. It gives students easy access to high-quality resources. They can watch English movies, listen to interviews, read news articles, or join English learning communities online. This helps them build their language skills in real-world contexts. Also, research shows that people tend to forget new information within a few days if they don't review or use it. This means that regular practice is important for language learning. Technology helps students practice often, in different ways, and from anywhere. This improves memory and helps them use what they learn more confidently.

How to Use These Technologies in English Language Learning

Modern technologies can be powerful tools in helping students improve their English language skills—especially the essential skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW). Below is a detailed guide on how each of these technologies can be used effectively in the classroom or for self-study.

Video Tapes

Using scenes from popular English films is an engaging way to teach students. Start by showing a short clip without subtitles so students can focus on listening and identifying words, tones, and accents. After this, show the same clip again, but this time with subtitles. This helps students connect the spoken words to their written form and improves both listening and reading skills. Watching and repeating scenes helps students absorb pronunciation and usage patterns naturally. Students often feel encouraged to rewatch these clips at home, which strengthens language retention through repetition.

Communication Labs

Communication labs use specialized language-learning software to help students develop their LSRW skills. These labs include tools for:

- Listening to conversations or passages
- Speaking into microphones and getting feedback
- Reading digital texts
- Writing responses and essays

The labs often use headphones and interactive modules, which reduce distractions and allow students to practice repeatedly. Since these labs are self-paced, students can learn at their own speed, making the experience less stressful and more engaging.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing tools like Zoom or Skype allow students to attend live lectures, often from expert speakers or professors in different parts of the world. This real-time interaction lets students:

- Listen to high-quality, real-world English
- Ask questions and get immediate answers
- Participate in global discussions

This method exposes learners to different accents, dialects, and cultural expressions, which helps build confidence and communication skills.

Video Libraries

Video libraries store recorded classroom sessions or expert lectures. These recordings are especially useful for:

- Students who missed a class
- Those who want to revise a lesson
- Learners who prefer to study during their own time
- Students can watch, pause, and replay these videos whenever needed, helping them review difficult topics at their own pace.

Blogging

Blogging allows both teachers and students to share written content online. Teachers can post:

- Assignments
- Study materials
- Articles or grammar tips

Students can respond by writing comments, posting questions, or even publishing their own content. This not only improves writing skills but also encourages creative thinking and peer interaction. It's a great way for students to practice English in a more informal and digital format.

Mobile Messaging for Vocabulary

Students can use their mobile phones to receive daily vocabulary updates. Some educational websites offer SMS or app-based services that deliver one new English word each day along with its meaning, usage, and pronunciation. This daily exposure to new words builds vocabulary gradually and consistently.

CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning)

CALL refers to using computer software and applications to assist in learning a second language. Through interactive exercises, games, quizzes, and feedback tools, CALL:

- Makes learning engaging and dynamic
- Shifts the student's role from passive to active learner
- Provides immediate corrections and suggestions

Teachers can design lessons that allow students to explore language concepts hands-on using educational software.

TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning)

TELL takes CALL one step further by integrating hardware (like tablets or iPads), software, and the Internet into language education. TELL enables students to:

- Use online dictionaries and grammar checkers

- Watch English-language videos and documentaries
- Participate in language exchange platforms
- Read online news or blogs

This full tech-based approach gives learners constant access to rich, real-life English material.

Educational Satellites

Colleges can set up satellite-based classrooms where educational content is broadcast from institutions like UGC, Anna University, or international sources. Students can:

- Watch expert lectures in real time
- Record sessions for later review
- Access high-quality educational programming

These satellite sessions help bring world-class education to students in even remote areas.

Internet-Based Learning

- The internet is one of the most widely used tools for learning English today. Teachers can guide students to:
- Access grammar websites
- Use online dictionaries
- Watch English YouTube tutorials
- Join interactive forums or quizzes

The ability to instantly search for information helps students find materials that match their skill level and interest. It also allows them to do grammar practice, essay writing, or even take part in speaking exercises with online communities.

The Web and Online Exercises

Many websites offer free grammar and vocabulary exercises. For example:

- www.smic.be provides over 100 grammar and vocabulary tasks
- www.eslgo.com lets students work with ESL teachers interactively

In addition to exercises, many sites have:

- Discussion forums
- Course management systems
- Language exchange platforms

These digital resources support independent learning and provide students with constant access to English practice tools.

Podcasting

Podcasting involves creating and sharing audio content online. Teachers can record lessons or explanations, and students can listen to them on their smartphones or computers. Podcasts help in:

- Replacing or supplementing classroom lectures
- Allowing absent students to catch up
- Offering flexible, on-the-go learning

According to Vijayalakshmi, podcasting transforms entertainment tools like iPods into learning tools, preserving the student-teacher connection even outside class.

Quick Link Pen

The Quick Link Pen is a handheld device that lets students scan printed text and store it digitally. It:

- Translates scanned words or sentences
- Saves the data to a computer
- Accesses built-in dictionaries for instant meaning

This device is helpful for learning vocabulary and reading comprehension on the go.

Quicktionary

The Quicktionary is a digital pen with a small screen that displays the scanned word's meaning and translation instantly. It supports pronunciation and comprehension by:

- Displaying word meanings immediately
- Offering translations
- Helping learners see mouth and tongue movement via supporting software
- Programs like Enounce and Sound-Editor let learners slow down speech or view sound waves, making pronunciation clearer and more accurate.

By using these technologies wisely, teachers can create interactive, engaging English lessons that cater to all types of learners. Students, in turn, can practice consistently, explore the language creatively, and gain the confidence needed to use English in the real world.

Using Digital Tools to Improve Speaking Skills

When we design learning activities for students, it's important to remember that they live in a digital world. Today's technology offers many creative tools that help students build strong speaking and communication skills.

Web 2.0 tools—like video makers, podcast apps, digital posters, and cartoon creators—let students create and share their work online. These tools encourage students to speak, present, and communicate more confidently.

To become good communicators, students need to:

- Use digital tools and platforms to learn and share ideas with others.
- Share information clearly and quickly through the right digital platforms.
- Express their thoughts in ways that make sense to different people, using different kinds of media (like text, audio, video, etc.).

Good communication is important in every job and workplace. So, as teachers, it's our job to help students practice and build these key 21st-century skills.

Study Skills Success (SSS)

Study Skills Success is a learning software that helps students improve in areas such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and using visual information. It has several helpful features:

- Progress Tracker: Lets students check how much of the course they've finished and how they're doing.
- Scratch Pad: A space where students can type notes or text during practice. They can also print these notes if needed.
- Print Option: Allows students to print any page or part of the content they are working on.
- Voice Recording: Students can record themselves speaking and listen back to improve their pronunciation and fluency.
- Web Link: Gives direct access to the Study Skills Success website for more learning materials.

Conclusion

Modern digital tools don't replace traditional classroom teaching—they make it better. They help students learn English in more fun, interesting, and flexible ways. Tools like podcasts, video calls, language labs, and blogs give students new ways to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These tools also let students learn at their own pace, get quick feedback, and use different learning styles. With the right mix of teacher support and technology, students can become more active in their learning and improve both their language and tech skills. Using modern technology in English teaching is important today because it helps students get ready for school, work, and real-life communication.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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