

## Appraisal of Modern Internet Facilities in Teaching English as a Second Language

**Aisha Abdullahi Ibrahim**

*Department of Curriculum Studies  
and Educational Technology,  
Faculty of Education and Extension  
Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo  
University, Sokoto*

**Article DOI:**

10.48028/iiprds/esjprcd.v11.i1.01

**Keywords:**

Technology, Internet,  
Language-Skills,  
Learning, Assessment

### Abstract

This paper examined the modern internet facilities used in the teaching and learning of English as a Second language (L2). Technology had brought several modern inventions and innovations that gradually found their ways in peoples' lives. In education, where the English language is taught and learnt as an L2, modern technology through internet facilities had certainly changed the way in which the language is taught and learnt. This paper analyzed the relevance of these facilities that English as an L2 teacher utilizes in their instructions. It pointed out some internet facilities and services like digital reader, 3D printer, Gamification, Cloud technology and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each in the teaching and learning of English as an L2. This is followed by critique of each. The paper argued that modern internet facilities and services have a great impact in the teaching and learning of English as an L2 but should be applied with cautions otherwise, it takes the position of teacher in the teaching and learning process.

*Corresponding Author:*

Aisha Abdullahi Ibrahim

### **Background to the Study**

Modern technology involves hardware, software, and the internet. These ushered fundamental structural changes for significant improvement in the teaching and learning. These technological gadgets and services gradually found their ways in English as Second Language (L2) classrooms. The digital learning tools like computers, projectors, and handheld devices such as smart phones, IPAD redefined the course offerings, experiences, and the serve as learning materials. They offer support for English language teaching and learning 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. It builds English language students 21<sup>st</sup> century skills where problem solving, critical thinking, team work, and good communication skills are required. It also increases students' engagement with learning activities, motivates and accelerates students learning through jolly gamification. These gadgets and the services they offer are also powerful in transforming new trends of blended teaching and learning, distant, and open learning. Their services give room to connect teachers to their students and to professionals, subject content, resources, and systems to improve L2 instructional delivery and allow students to learn autonomously. They provide online learning opportunities and the use of open educational resources available in the internet to increase exchange of ideas, materials, and communication thereby accelerating the rate of students' interaction, encounter with different instructors, reducing costs associated with the purchase of the instructional materials or program delivery, and better utilizing teacher time (United States Education, 2021). With these services, the paper strongly believed that modern internet facilities and services had potentials of impacting the teaching and learning of English as an L2.

### **Educational Technology**

Educational technology is derived from concepts- education and technology. Education on one hand is the process of imparting individual some disposition to transform one to be a functional member of his society. Technology, on the other hand, entails the practical application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes. Educational technology, therefore, have different conceptual interpretations. Heimlich, Michael, James, and Sharon in NTI (2016) stated that the effort to conceive educational technology started with what the discipline is not. For instance, educational technology is the use audiovisual media in education, the use hardware and software in education, or the use teaching machine. These conceptions do not necessarily imply what educational technology is all about.

Literally, specialist conceived educational technology as the application of technological facilities and all forms of methods and strategies in the teaching and learning process. Edtech (2013) described the term as a wide array of teaching-and-learning-related software and hardware that is increasingly being used in teaching and learning classrooms. These kinds of software, hardware, and connectivity usually helps in concretizing the lesson, augmenting media in the classroom, and attending to individual differences thereby making students active in the learning process. Through educational technology, teachers can create digital worksheet, interactive classroom, and interactive textbooks, gamify lessons, take attendance, assign homework, present quizzes and evaluate students' performance. The teachers can get real time results related to the teaching material, teaching style, and teaching format.

Education technology can also be conceived as the application of a body of technological knowledge in solving educational problems (NTI, 2016). This conception entails the utilization of the radio, video, filmstrip, computer, models and improvised materials in order to solve educational problems. With modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Internet enabled devices are the commonest technological tools used in exchanging information. The modern Internet devices such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets gradually complement whiteboard, textbooks, chalk, Pen and Paper Test (PPT). This is by providing room with Digital Worksheet, Online Classroom, e-book, and Computer Based Test (CBT) among others. The ultimate goal of these services is to provide an enabling and conducive learning environment.

### **Internet Facilities in Teaching and Learning English as L2**

Internet facilities have absolutely revolutionized the entire teaching and learning of English as a Second Language. In the olden days, the teachers were the sole interpreters of knowledge and the textbooks were the sole resource. Internet facilities with their connectivity have impacted students' roles and opened up new avenues in which the language teacher functions. This involves management of students and English language teaching and learning resources. For instance, the English language teacher can use internet facilities in two perspectives: facility in education and facility for education.

Internet, as a facility in education, opens up room to the English language teacher to choose from the wide ranges of audio, visual, audiovisual, broadcast, and projected media to teach different language skills to different levels of English language learners. This makes lesson preparation, presentation, or management of students' language learning differences and styles easier. Internet facilities for education deal with the proper application psycholinguistics theories and principles as well as philosophical underpinnings in the teaching and learning of English as L2. The connection is that psycholinguists provide principles in which these students learn. Technological tools such as Programmed Instruction, Modular Interactional Package, and Immediate Knowledge Result (IKR) depended on the psychological understanding of how individual processed information and learn. Philosophically, the internet facilities were provided with basis on moving from concrete to abstract, child-centered learning, using bold letters and colors for identification etc.

The above factors showed that English language teaching and learning in modern days cannot be divorced from the application of internet facilities. Hence, learning every language skills can be augmented by the modern media as Parankimalil (2015) identified the roles of technology in teaching and learning process below:

- I. It provides a scientific basis for English as L2 learning theories and practices. This equips teachers with skills in transforming a passive classroom into an active and interactive one. The multimedia gadgets accompanied by charts and models, smart classrooms, and e-learning rooms, has potentials of drastically motivating and increasing the attention level of the students (Parankimalil, 2015).

- ii. It has modernized teaching-learning environment. The English language learners are exposed to authentic use of language through professionally designed programs on multimedia to conform to individuals learning differences.
- iii. It complements the English language teachers' instructional presentation through structured lessons for remedial, enrichment, or drills and practices. The English language students can be trained for self and individualized instruction, so that teachers are relieved of the burden of routine repetition for exercise and revision purposes (Parankimalil, 2015).
- iv. The systematized organization of content and instructional materials enabled English language teachers to present a well-integrated and structured language skills and components thereby saving time for other creative work and classroom management quality.
- v. It contributes towards the professional growth of teachers in meeting the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Parankimalil (2015) stated that it equips teachers with scientific methods for solving English language learning problems. This adds to the competence of the English language teacher and inculcates a scientific outlook of the teaching methodologies.
- vi. It made English language teaching and learning effective and process-oriented. The modern media such as Television, radio, V.C.R, computers, LCD projectors, etc., had enriched and facilitated the effective transmission of knowledge (Parankimalil, 2015).
- vii. It introduced different modalities where instruction can be face-to-face, blended, or distant.
- viii. It provides effective and immediate feedback on English language evaluation. This is through artificial intelligence where computer application like Mark Up can be used to mark students' essays.
- ix. It gives rooms for out-of-school practice for students to utilize related learning experience from educational programs on TV, radio, and the other media.
- x. It opens up new fields of English language research on materials development, application in the language classroom, the examination process, evaluation, and classroom management.
- xi. It provides wide range of practices and strategies that help teachers teach according to the demand of the English language skills or components' requirement.
- xii. It provides a scientific foundation for the English language learning theories and intelligence.

### **Innovative Internet Facilities in English as L2 Teaching and Learning**

There are several examples of innovative facilities that are gradually making their ways into the English as an L2 classroom. The paper synthesized some of these facilities from various blogs and discussed them. For examples, Griffin (2021), Fulton (2019), Maloney (2019), and Asian Times (2020) gave fascinating accounts of these facilities in different subjects.

### **Digital Readers and Tablets**

These are innovative facilities that work online or offline. They are applied in English language classrooms to complement or replace the bulkier hard-copy text materials. These facilities

contained soft copy of the text that are accessible from a portable tablet. Tablets are internet enabled devices designed for research on the internet and useful tool for the classroom reading, writing, speaking, listening, and playing educational games. Students can search for topics without having to leave their desks. E-books can equally be downloaded and saved for present and future use thereby making students autonomous acquirers. In addition, Bryne (2020) stated that the possession of speakers by tablets make it serve as tool for practice on listening to audio books or text-to-speech e-books. Using apps such as Tune-in Radio, students can listen to music, radio documentaries, and podcasts from all over the world thereby training the students become effective listeners.

Digital Readers and Tablets can be used in teaching the four language skills. For example, a tablet accompanied by loud speakers allows for training in English language listening skills. A teacher can choose a story, speech, poem, audio program and ask learners to listen to. Questions follow to ascertain understanding and discussion with whole classroom. This can be done to make students buttress their points based on idea portrayed by the author. Reading can also be taught through the use of digital readers and tablets. Here, learners are asked to read some portion of a story, speech, poem, etc., and attempt questions to test understanding.

#### **The Strength of Digital Readers and Tablets in Teaching and Learning**

1. Portability: the portability of Digital Reader and Tablets jettison the need of carrying around a heavy backpack.
2. Centralizing materials: composition of media display centralized the accessibility of using the gadgets for listening activities, reading, speaking and writing on the same tool.
3. Update: the flexibility of the gadgets to update information reduced the cost of purchasing new contents, books, or reading materials. It is also easy to access and purchased when need. The delivery is immediate.
4. Flexibility: the different Apps installed or ready to be installed can meet the English language needs of individual learning differences and provide more personalized learning opportunities.

#### **Weaknesses of Digital Readers and Tablets in Teaching and Learning**

- i. Cost of Purchase and maintenance: every students need to be provided with a tablet. There is cost of purchasing tablets to every student. There can be instances of lost, damage, or stolen assets in the classrooms.
- ii. Limit Handwriting: it restricts students to engage in handwriting as almost all the writing is done electronically.

#### **Critique of Using Digital Readers and Tablets in the Teaching and Learning of English**

- i. Hand-writing, which connects the minds of learners and the words they write, has been disengaged since learners write electronically.
- ii. Despite the fact that digital readers and tablets reduce the cost of purchasing books, learners' access to literature written when there were no internet services or other forms of writing in which the authors had no access to the internet has been denied.

- iii. Communication does not only entail sound production; gestures, and the environment, it also contributes to the understanding of the intended meanings. These two factors (gesture and environment) can hardly be accessible by using digital readers and tablets.

### **3D printing**

This is an innovative technology that impresses the world in creating anything from car parts to artificial organs (Fulton, 2020). It is applied in the English language classroom to create hands-on models that students can examine, analyze, study, and interact. For example, students can read passages on the geography of an area by studying an illustrated 3D map. 3D is used in teaching speaking where learners can be asked to discuss in groups what they observed from the illustration, and writing where learners write down their observations, descriptions, or commentaries based on the illustrations.

### **The Strength of 3D in Teaching and Learning**

- i. 3D printing accommodates both visual and kinesthetic English language learners.
- ii. It engages the students and increases their curiosity.
- iii. It saves teachers time on creating their own models.
- iv. It is useful in simulation of places, exposition, description, etc. creating room for English language students on procedure and vocabulary learning.

### **Weaknesses of Using 3D in Teaching and Learning**

- i. There is cost of purchasing and maintenance.
- ii. The interactivity is limited to the teacher.
- iii. Poor management would lead students to create unwanted illustrations.

### **Critique of Using 3D Printing in Teaching and Learning of English**

- i. A language cannot be detached from the culture and the environs of the native speakers of that language. Merely studying the geography of the target language area using a 3D map would not be enough when compared to learners that have direct access or contact with the place.
- ii. 3D is a kind of simulation that enables learners to have access to substitute real objects, places, authentic situation, real environment, etc. at their disposal for learning purposes. Learning outcomes will never be the same with learners that have direct access to those materials.

### **Virtual Reality (VR)**

This is a facility that augments reality. One of the primary uses of this technology in the classroom is taking students on virtual field trips to places that are otherwise inaccessible (Fulton, 2020). For example, a student could take a virtual field trip to Deep Blue Sea while sitting on the desk. Virtual reality is useful in teaching speaking (when learners are asked to explain or describe what they see during the trip), writing (when learners are asked to write reports on their experience during the trip), etc.

### **The Strength of Virtual Reality in Teaching and Learning**

- i. It engages students on real-life experiences that would otherwise be impossible, harmful, or inaccessible.
- ii. It appeals to visual senses of the students. It concretizes abstract objects to students instead of merely reading about them.

### **Virtual Reality's Shortcomings in Teaching and Learning**

- i. It lacks spatial cognizance in the real world. The students could engage into something in the real world while immersed in the virtual one.
- ii. Motion sickness can develop in some students due to their eyes sensing movement while their bodies do not.

### **Critique of Using Virtual Reality in the Teaching and Learning of English**

Places covered by cameras usually come with colors and a lot of edits that beautify the portraits and motion they cover. The understanding of the places or portraits of the places can be altered in the minds of the learners such that the interpretation or understanding can be perceived differently.

### **Gamification**

This is a process of using computers games in English language classrooms. Students learn better when they experience funs in learning (Maloney, 2019). The uses of electronic games in the classroom create students fun in form of play motivating them to learn the content and concepts at hand. This is a type of game-based or play-based learning. Maloney (2019) stated that this can be achieved by employing well-designed digital and non-digital games to arouse learners' language practice, critical-thinking, and problem-solving abilities. It also increases students' engagement and participation in the lesson. Digital games can be excellent sources for authentic texts in the classroom (Maloney, 2019).

### **The Strength of Gamification in Teaching and Learning**

- i. It engages students in English language activities and practices.
- ii. It motivates students in practicing the language skills.
- iii. It provides immediate feedback on the language component or skills evaluated.

### **Shortcomings of Gamification in Teaching and Learning**

- i. Useful games for English language teaching are selective and therefore, not every game can be used in teaching.
- ii. It takes time to learn how to effectively use games for teaching or learning.

### **Critique of Using Gamification in Teaching and Learning English**

Using games in teaching and learning creates fun and is highly recommended because learners love what they learn easily. But when the minds of the learners, particularly the young ones, are not set on having fun while learning, they may hardly concentrate in the class.

## **Cloud Technology**

This is innovation that hosts applications and services on the internet instead of on a user's computer (Fulton, 2019). It possesses memory that store, share, and be accessed on any device that is connected to the internet. It is used to store, share, and be used to access stored digital textbooks, lesson plans, videos, and assignments. It also gives students room for synchronous and asynchronous chats records with the instructors and other classmates. It provides "flipped classrooms," in which students can watch a lecture before class and spend the class time engaged in discussion, group work, and analytical activities (Fulton, 2019).

### **The Strength of Cloud Technology in Teaching and Learning**

- i. It gives opportunity for storing information thereby reducing chances of homework getting lost between school and home.
- ii. It simplifies the burden of students carrying heavy textbooks.
- iii. It enables easy access of information from any device connected to the internet.
- iv. It provides easy access for sharing of information and chat options.

### **Shortcomings of Cloud Technology in English as L2 Teaching and Learning**

- i. Inadequate accessibility of the internet in some schools.
- ii. Security: some network gurus can hack the accounts.

### **Critique of Using Cloud Technology in Teaching and Learning English as an L2**

- i. Information stored on the cloud can be hacked. The safety of information stored can always be compromised.
- ii. If the internet service is bad, access to the stored information can be denied, and as such, a planned class cannot hold as planned.

## **Artificial intelligence (AI)**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is software that provides means for automating grading, feedback, and providing personalized learning opportunities (Asian Times, 2020). It is used in the teaching and learning of English as an L2 by providing Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) services, checking and automatic correcting students' mistakes in writing, as well as automatic evaluation, grading, and printing feedback thereby simplifying teaching and learning process. AI in education has been defined by Rabah (2020) as the application of software systems for teaching and learning of English as an L2 in order to develop the processes of organizing and selecting content scientifically. It diversifies learning according to the learners' individual differences and employs teaching strategies and evaluation methods for individualization, self-study, and simulating them through smart and expert systems. AI applications such as simulation and communication programs are like real-life situations for conversation and communication. They introduce practical training in language skills, and educational games based on language. Lehlou and Brigui (2021) stated that communication tools based on AI help design situations for practicing the accurate pronunciation of letters and words through sound drills and visual media. Such tools provide exercises for describing and interpreting images and everyday situations, for listening, and for practicing guided pronunciation. They also allow learners to practice language skills and provide feedback for guidance (Lehlou and



Brigui, 2021). Some programs have language drills that give training in communication through the use of language skills to guarantee that learners reach proficiency levels.

### **The Strength of Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Learning**

- i. It saves teacher time of grading and giving feedback.
- ii. It provides greater insights into a student's learning patterns.

### **Flaws of Artificial Technology in Teaching and Learning**

- i. Teachers can learn a lot about a student's learning patterns by doing the grading themselves.
- ii. Teachers give personalized feedback rather than machine generated.

### **Critique of Using Artificial Technology in Teaching and Learning English as an L2**

Everything in this medium is artificial. Learners are deprived access to reality thereby making them unsocial in situations where they have to mingle with others.

### **Mobile Technology**

Mobile phones are traditionally used to make calls. Some schools regard them as distractors to English language learning and ban it to schools. Rather than banning cell phones and other mobile devices from use during class, some schools are incorporating this technology into the learning process through educational applications. The application can be in the following:

**a. Use of Short Text Messaging (SMS):** Short text messages are called SMS for short. It is a modern technological innovation applies in teaching and learning different components of English as an L2. For instance, students' vocabulary retention can be increased by using short message service (SMS). The text messages containing targeted vocabularies can be sent to students at spaced intervals. The teacher can also text the words covered in class to encourage students to review them outside the school hours. By sending the words multiple times, the teacher increases the chances of students remembering of the forgotten words.

**b. Use free programs to make flashcards for mobile phones:** If teacher does not want to create teacher's own vocabulary lists, there are several companies that produce flash card software that runs on mobile phones. For example, the websites such as 'www.flashmybrain.com' provides avenue for creating flashcards for use in English language classroom with some token payments on setting up an account.

**c. Use Text Messaging Feature for Circular Writing:** this is mobile phone feature that helps many students who do not like writing to write. The feature associates writing some fun. Regular use of mobile phones especially with textual communication makes students engage in writing. The number of text messages, status updates on social networking sites, and instant messages (IMs) sent by the average young learner is staggering (doubleclickatme.com, 2017). This is a clear indication that student writing is a challenging but this technology encourages short stories, messaging, and discourse competence in English. This introduces students to writing essays under coherence and cohesive ties. One activity is circular writing, where

students create a story together by contributing one text message at a time (doubleclickatme.com, 2017). This is done by engaging each student to write a sentence or two and then sends to the next student, who adds another message, and so on until the story is complete. The teacher copy and record the story as it emerges.

**d. Using the mobile phone to keep a Blog:** at an advanced stage, the mobile phone is used in writing and keeping of a blog. Students use the text messaging and camera features to add messages and post pictures to their personal blogs (doubleclickatme.com, 2017). This is a great step on inscription about personal experiences, places visited, and people met. These are important step in gathering materials for essay writing. Teachers can read these blogs and provide feedback, request more information, or ask students to comment on each other's work (doubleclickatme.com, 2017).

**e. Use the mobile phone for social Networking:** Social Network Sites (SNS) like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsUp, and MySpace among others are sites for sharing information electronically. A group of "friends" can meet, post messages, share pictures, videos and audio, and generally interact online. Most of the interaction takes place in writing. A language teacher can encourage students to use English language instead of the native languages in their writing. The teachers actively use such sites to keep in touch with students or to organize English language practices, quizzes, or activities online.

#### **The Strength of Mobile Technology in Teaching and Learning**

- i. It provides wide variety of applications that engage in students in the learning process.
- ii. The applications provide the opportunities for individualized and autonomous.

#### **Shortcomings of Mobile Technology in Teaching and Learning**

- i. Availability: it is not every student that possesses a mobile device and not every parent is comfortable with their child having one.
- ii. School-parent cooperation: To really utilize this technology, schools have to make sure that every parent is onboard and that every student has access to some sort of mobile device (Patrikakou, 2016).

#### **Critique of Using Mobile Technology in the Teaching and Learning of English**

- i. Controlling learners on strict use of mobile technology for learning can be a very difficult. Learners can have access to platforms that can have negative implications for their moral wellbeing.
- ii. Hand-writing, which usually connects the mind and the words, has been substituted by electronic writing.
- iii. Mistakes made during handwriting are usually corrected by the teachers. This enables the teachers to know the strengths and weaknesses of their learners. Learners equally know their mistakes and take corrections. These developments have been compromised since electronic writing usually highlights mistakes at the cause of typing.

## Conclusion

Teaching English as a second language requires training and practicing elements of language and vocabulary to develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also includes how to use language to produce texts, and how to use it to understand reading passages. Since the opportunity to practice these skills in real life situations are often not available, students' chances of mastering these skills are diminished. Therefore, it is necessary to switch from traditional strategies to communicative ones, and rely on digital tools to face difficulties in teaching/learning English.

## References

- Asian Times (2020). *Innovation at your doorstep: India's most innovative schools*, Retrieved from <http://asian-times.com/innovation-at-your-doorstep-indians-most-innovative-school>
- Bryne, W. (2020). *15 ways to use a tablets in the classroom*, Retrieved from <http://sclln.blogspot.com/search/label/elearning>
- DoubleClick@me (2017). *Useful resources for EFL teachers and learners*, Retrieved from <http://doubleclickatme.blogspot.com/>
- Dumanda, C. (2013). *What is educational technology?* Retrieved from <http://www.sovignvalley.com/how-can-you-use-technology-to-motivate-your-students/>
- Fulton, J. (2019). *7 examples of innovative educational technology*, Retrieved from <http://www.classcraft.com/blog/examples-of-educational-technology/>
- Honeylin, D. (2013). *What is educational technology?* Retrieved from <http://edutechnology.blogspot.com/2013/10/rubrics.htm>
- Lehlou, F. & Brigui, H. (2021). *Artificial intelligence in teaching and learning languages*, DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.35349.04323
- Maloney, S. (2019). *Gamification in English language teaching: More than child's play*, Retrieved from: <http://hongkongtesol.com/blog/2019/07/gamification-english-language-teaching-more-child-play>
- NTI (2016). *General education courses: Introduction to educational technology*, Lagos: National Teachers Institutes.
- Parakimalil, J. (2015). *Roles of educational technology in the teaching and learning process*, Retrieved from: <http://johnparankimalil.wordpress.com/2015/01/21/role-of-educational-technology-in-the-teaching-learning-process/>

Rabah, A. T. (2020). Using artificial intelligence for developing English Language teaching/learning: An analytical study from University students' perspective, *International Journal of English Linguistics* 10(6), retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n6p40>

United State Education (2021). *7 examples of innovative educational technology*, Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/oii-news/use-technology-teaching-and-learning/>