

Digital Media: An Effective English Language Learning Tool

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Abstract

This research article aims to explore how digital media can be used as a language learning tool effectively in the English language classroom. We are living in a modern world where the advancement of technology is replacing conventional classrooms. It is a known fact that for the past couple of years the use of digital media is increasing widely and rapidly. Most students, teachers and common people use a choice of digital tools for various purposes. Digital media provides to access useful information and connects with learning groups and other educational systems which makes the overall learning process more interesting and engaging. It even enhances tremendously the overall teaching and learning process. Through digital media, it is easier and expedient to share and receive information, communicate and stay connected to improve the teaching and learning process. At last, digital media assists teachers and learners of the English language to find solutions to the problems and improve their language skills.

Keywords: *Digital Media, Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, Utter*

Introduction:

A language is a medium of communication or channel through which we share our ideas, feelings and emotions. The word language has been derived from the Latin word

“*Lingua*” which implies “*Tongue*”. Let us look at some dictionary definitions of language given below:

- Collins co-build, English language dictionary defines language as “*it is a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or religion for talking or writing*”.
- Oxford Advanced Learner’s dictionary defines ‘*language means a system of sounds, words, patterns etc used by humans to communicate thoughts and feelings.*

English as Lingua Franca:

English has become a link language as it is used in almost all the spheres of life like life sciences, business, sports, etc. It has been used widely as a medium of instruction from schooling to higher education. Therefore, learning good English is very essential to survive and get a perfect placement in this modern and competitive world and it has to learn with utmost care and concentration. To learn better English one should become a master of all four language skills. They are listed and discussed below:

Listening: The renowned educationalist, applied linguist and teacher, Jeremy Harmer(2015) says, ‘*what we say or write is heavily influenced by what we hear and see*’. It is a known fact that second language learners and first-generation students face difficulty because of its segmental, supra-segmental features and grammar so they believe learning listening skill is not so easy. If they habituate speaking in English, watch selected and good English videos and listen to the native video content in English it would become easy for them to get acquainted with segmental and suprasegmental features. As we often say, if we want to become better communicators in English first we must be good listeners.

Speaking: Speaking is another important language skill that will help the learners of language to communicate well, to express ideas, emotions, thoughts and feelings in day-to-day conversations.

Reading: Reading is also a part of learning skills. Through this skill, learners can improve grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation. It has two types, one is intensive reading which we do for the sake of academic purpose and another is extensive reading we do for the sake of pleasure, entertainment and gaining knowledge.

Writing: Writing is a systematic process. Learners can present their ideas in a precise manner through writing. But writing is a skill which has to be developed by themselves.

Digital Media:

Digital media helps language learners to stay connected with the world and updated about their fields. It includes various electronic devices like *mobile phones, computers, and tablets* through which people can share ideas with others in an organized way. It also plays an important role in learning and teaching the English language as it provides several opportunities for language learners to improve their language skills. Through online and social media like *Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube*, learners can improve their English effectively.

Definitions of Social Media:

Social media platforms help us to get connect with people and update ourselves. Cambridge Advanced Learner's dictionary defines '*social media as a form that allows people to communicate and share information using the internet*'. Merriam Webster Dictionary (2019) describes '*forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and others*'. According to Wikipedia, '*social media is a primarily internet-based tool for sharing and discussing information among human beings*'. Let us now discuss one by one how these social media platforms help language learners to improve and learn the English language.

Facebook:

This is one of the world's most popular and useful social networking sites. Through *Facebook*, language learners who are keen on improving their language skills can connect with friends, family members, colleagues etc. It can also use to improve the English language by changing language settings on Facebook from local language to English because it will give novel experience to language learners. This app further helps to connect with native speakers and allows us to improve pronunciation and spoken language. Learners should habituate to chatting or speaking in English so that they can improve or get benefited from the language. The Facebook English language learning groups also help language learners and give importance to beginners to improve their English. The beauty of this application is that it is user-friendly, helps to learn the language at our own pace and can be installed both on mobile and laptop/desktop.

Whatsapp:

Whatsapp is another useful and important mobile application used by all most everyone in the present generation. With this application, we can connect with known people to practice and learn the English language at our own pace. This application also helps us to communicate and connect with people not only within India but across the world to learn the English language. This application is useful to chat with people in English and learn proper spelling, vocabulary and grammar. It even has both smart features like video calling and a voice message facility, hence we can learn and practice listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. Individual chats also play a vital role to develop language skills.

Language learners have to create a group on this application with the known people who are experts in the language and can start chatting with them in English and correct mistakes and exchange language learning tips and techniques. We can also improve our language skills through knowledge sharing and communicating with people who are good at

English and understand features of pronunciation and fluency easily by observing their non-verbal communication.

Twitter:

Through *Twitter*, learners improve their English if they are using Twitter set their account language from their native language to English and follow English-speaking users on it. Further, one can express, read about hobbies and share hobbies, events, and funny moments which happen in day-to-day life in the English language. Your followers who are good at English and follow Twitter events can give suggestions to improve their language skills. Users of this application can follow news on Twitter about what is happening around the world. They can further follow news on the Twitter trends page with new stories and comments to improve the language.

Instagram:

Instagram is a useful mobile application through which we can learn the language without any difficulty. ESL learners can find insta learning pages if they follow them regularly. Followers will have access to an end number of language videos and also learners can communicate with people in the English language.

Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary:

To learn pronunciation clearly and fluently users can use this software. Users can also install this app on *smartphones* and laptops/desktops. You can learn two different pronunciations with this software. One is British English pronunciation (U.K) and American English pronunciation (U.S). Learners can learn sounds with phonetic transcription and practice learning exercises to improve their fluency in the language.

Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary:

This application includes words, meanings, definitions, synonyms, and words search. We can learn the English language at our own pace. This app is freely downloadable from the

play store. This mobile application can be used to improve the pronunciation skills of both British and American accents. It is useful to learn grammar, meanings and sentence structure. Further, this app is one of the famous English dictionaries and can be used effectively to learn and improve English language skills.

Oxford English Grammar and English Listening:

It can be downloaded on mobile free of cost if language learners have mobile data. By using this mobile application, learners can learn English grammar, and improve language skills by listening to various lessons. This application will help language learners to improve and learn the language with more confidence.

Fluent U:

It is one of the best and unique apps for learning and improving English. It has real-world videos, news etc. this app will give a wonderful and realistic experience in learning the English language. Further, it also has additional features to improve language skills.

Learn English daily:

This is one of the simple and finest apps to learn English easily. With this app, you can listen and speak. It contains many words, phrases, and sentences to improve your fluency. Lastly, this application helps us to improve our pronunciation.

Hello, talk:

This app helps to connect with native speakers to improve language skills. It has interesting and additional features as we can chat, and send them an audio message so it develops our language fluency.

Utter:

The utter mobile application will help us to learn many courses. It is user-friendly and can be installed on all smartphones. To begin with, one should hit on the course on which you would like to work on. In this app, we can even ask questions and take suggestions from the

experts. We can also practice learning with utter chat experts and improve your fluency in the language. So, through all these social websites and apps people can learn the English language easily and fluently.

Digital Media Merits:

- Language learners can improve their language skills if they can sign in to educational websites and social networking sites and practice them thoroughly.
- And they can join an end number of groups and they can communicate with the people in the English language.
- They can ask questions, tips, and techniques, to develop their language fluency.
- By using digital media, second language learners can practise their learning skills and speaking skills with the English masters.

Digital Media Limitations:

- Learners get addicted very quickly to digital media and waste so much time spending hours together.
- The excess usage of digital media can also lead to a negative impact on an individual's health and become lazy further it leads to increased eyesight.
- Our personal information from our social networking sites can be hacked by known or unknown people. Therefore users are advised to keep their personal information and accounts safe to avoid such hacking incidents.

Conclusion:

To conclude, digital media plays an important role in learning and teaching English language skills. Through digital media and its tools, learners can improve grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, phrases etc. Digital media is very much helpful to first-generation students, who are scared and not able to interact and involve in classroom discussions.

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