

THE IMPROVEMENT OF LANGUAGE SKILLS (SPEAKING, LISTENING, READING, AND WRITING) FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNERS

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Annotation: *This article analyzes the relevance of language skills - reading, writing, speaking and listening - which are important in learning foreign languages. Also, recommendations are given if they can be used in effective teaching and learning.*

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In the context of the current technology era, the many industries that require aid with foreign languages, such as engineering, health, and education, are modernizing and improvising thanks to the benefits of the international language known as English. It is inconceivable that any certain type of technology is shunned in language classes. In fact, computers and other modern information technologies—like speech synthesis, video, and telecommunications—are playing bigger and bigger roles in language arts and English courses. Information technology is becoming ubiquitous and diverse, starting to resemble all of the traditional subjects, approaches, and educational objectives. Therefore, a wide range of potential roles for the technology must be taken into account in study on its application in schools. Technology has been utilized to both support and improve language acquisition in recent years. To improve the language learning process, teachers can modify homework assignments and classroom activities and differentiate instruction with the use of certain technological instruments. The efficacy of any technical instrument depends on the knowledge and experience of the certified language teacher who oversees and guides the language-learning environment, even though technology can play a significant role in supporting and boosting language learning.

Although technology has become embedded in our everyday life, researchers and practitioners constantly strive to find ways of incorporating technology in education, with language learning being one of those fields. Learners may have access to technology in language learning settings in two distinct ways: learning from and learning with technology (Reeves, 1998, p. 1). While the former implies a relative passivity from the learner, the latter infers an active participation (Hill, Wiley, Miller Nelson, & Han, 2004). More specifically, a learning from technology approach generally considers computers as tutors, and takes various forms to deliver the instructional material to the learner, such as computer-assisted instruction (Ring Staff & Kelley, 2002). On the other hand, learners, in a learning with technology method, are “no longer solely taking the information, but are also contributing to the knowledge base” (Hill et al., 2004, p. 443). Computers connected to the Internet are,

therefore, regarded as tools or “resource to help learners develop higher order thinking, creativity, research skills, and so on”, thus promoting social interaction and learning.

Learning independently is a stir word that is often used in connection with computer technologies applied to the area of foreign language instruction. Specially, English language instructions. English language is generally taught and assessed in terms of the ‘four skills’: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading are known as ‘receptive’ skills while speaking and writing are known as ‘productive’ skills. All language learners will need to develop their skills in each of these areas, and your language classes should incorporate activities related to all these skills with the help of technological methods. Below are some practical steps you can take to develop these skills outside the classroom – remember you will also want to think about your current language level and priorities for learning in each area.

Listening to and reading content in the language you are learning is a great way to develop your vocabulary and comprehension. It is important to make your listening and reading active rather than passively absorbing the content. Try to choose listening or reading material that interests you and will hold your attention. Whenever possible, listen to recorded content (on a CD or DVD) or through a streaming internet service that you can pause and rewind. This will allow you to listen multiple times, or go back to sections you did not understand. For improving, your listening and reading skills you can make use of some equipments and materials, such as: CD-players, video recorders, lyrics of some music and many useful programs.

The improvement of your speaking skills will involve acquisition of fluency in spoken interactions with others as well as continuous practice of your pronunciation. Use your new language skills as often as you can speak to people – other students from your language class, native speakers you might meet around town, or language partners in online exchanges through the internet. To practice pronunciation try reading aloud or repeating after a recorded text, trying to reproduce the pronunciation and intonation of the original.

Writing in another language can seem a daunting task, but is a critical skill, especially if you plan to use it in the workplace. As in your first language, your writing will be improved by becoming a critical reader - try to think actively about how texts are structured and what kinds of phrases or vocabulary are used for different purposes (e.g. introducing a topic, describing, comparing and contrasting, writing conclusions). Finally, try to get constructive feedback from others (your teacher, fellow students, and native speakers) on how you can improve. In addition, you will be able to know other’s opinions by writing in some web sites and messengers. (Beeman, W. O. (1988). *Intermedia: A case study of innovation in higher education*, 27-45 pages)

Technology can be used to change writing instruction in a variety of ways. Computers can aid at places where teacher time and attention are insufficient.

One thing that springs to my mind is that more effective and functional education of writing skills could be conducted through the assistance of modern technological advancement. Ideals of writing across the curriculum may become more feasible with the support of computers. The establishment of student-writers’ community is possible

achievement that goes in the light of useful utilization and application of computer network systems. Real audiences and meaningful goals can stimulate the development of competency in written communication as well as enhance motivation.

Nevertheless, research to support the numerous claims being made is lacking, and computers' potential benefit is still far from being fully realized. A lot of the applications discussed here call for reevaluating curricula, educational activities, and the responsibilities of teachers and students. Furthermore, a lot of the computer-based activity models and programs available today are cumbersome to use or challenging to incorporate into other learning activities. Expenses remain exorbitant, particularly when considering that they represent a small percentage of the limited resources allocated to educational materials. The best computing resources are too frequently distributed unfairly. In spite of these issues, computer-based instruction in English language arts is really expanding and is expected to play a bigger role in education going forward.

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