



A Role of an INTERNET as Web Tool for Second Language Learning

DEVILABEN HIRABHAI ROHIT

Assistant Professor,

H. M. Patel Institute of English Training & Research

Vallabh Vidhyanagar (Sardar Patel University)

Gujarat (India)

Abstract:

This paper argues that the role of an internet for second language learning. It will argue about the role of internet as a tool in assisted English Language Class. It will throw light on the web tools through which teacher can teach easily teach second language.

Key Words: *Blog, Chat Room, Discussion Board, E-journal, Email, E-Learning, Internet [multimedia], Moo, New Group*

1. Introduction

This is the Era of Technology. One must use Internet for language teaching and learning. As language educators, one should not ignore the educational applications of the latest technology. The language experts have explored the potentials of the available sources and exploited them to the maximum to upgrade the instructional strategies to enhance teaching and learning. Undoubtedly, this target has been achieved through Internet web tools and its manifold usage. These Multimedia components are effective in terms of helping the students to elicit explain and communicate information because they can break down complex concepts into simple, meaningful display. Finally this module has created a great impact among the learners and it facilitates them to overcome their language deficiencies and thereby make, a number language learning methods have been adopted from the immemorial. The Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Situational Language Teaching Method, Communicative Language Teaching Method are a few of them introduced by the language experts. These methods were introduced at regular intervals according to the standard of the learners, and status, where native, alien, or as first or second language. Gradually, the emergence of new media facilitates various web tools which add new dimensions to English. The necessity of new methods and techniques was felt. Hence, the conventional patterns are gradually being replaced by updated materials, modern curricula and with ever changing syllabi according to the systematic growth of the knowledge. As each improvement in technology became available instructors, who saw themselves as hip cool andhi-tech quickly incorporated the new tools, correctly perceiving that sick multimedia presentations have a certain amount of entertainment value for students, several dozen studies indicate that multimedia can improve learning and retention of material presenting during a class session or individual study period as compared to traditional lectures study materials that do not use multimedia. Internet can be defined as the collection of computer networks. When you are on the INTERNET you are part of a community of millions who use computers to communicate with one another and to share ideas and information. It delivered combination elements text, sound, graphics, pictures, photographs,

animation and moving video. Language learning is concerned with the development of communication skills and has traditionally and creatively exploited all these communication elements. Each element has its own particular advantage in conveying particular kinds of messages and evoking particular kinds of learner responses. Essentially, however, the ability of the single source, the computer, to combine, link and orchestra all these communication elements of multimedia would be most probably greater than the

sum of its individual parts. Through internet web tools we can get instant response from the learners. Moo, Chat rooms, discussion Board, New Group, E-Journal, E-Learning, Blog etc are such useful tools through which we can teach second language and easily get responses from the students. Even Moo provides such a facility that if students have any problem while learning they can indicate raise hand option which shows green light and teacher can show students mistake through red light. The technological advances, which are so closely related to channels of communication and to language, can be valuably incorporated in the gamut of language learning tools.

By using various web tools we can teach language. The application of multimedia attempts to combine the state of the art pedagogy with state of the art technology. The major motivation for the development of multimedia teaching is The Major Motivational potential it offers for the bandwidth for information transfer. This can be made possible using variety of communication channels-textual, tonic, graphics and tactile and so on. In the latest education scenario, computer and its application have emerging as the trend setter largely for the benefit it provides in any field. The advent of the high powered multimedia kept the learner close to authentic situations where learning simultaneously involved listening, seeing, reflecting, doing and participating. Multimedia additionally provides further and more powerful dimensions to communication when the control and manipulation of this meaningful information is passed into the hands of the learners. The ability to interact with these communication elements via interactive multimedia tools which allows language learners to explore, discover, ponder, search, question-answer, and receive feedback. Owing to the rapid development of industry and technology, an increasing need has been felt for improving the communication skills at all levels of administration. However, the available teaching and training materials are not adequate to meet the demand of the industry. Hence, it has become necessity to identify more methods to suit the present trend undoubtedly, multimedia is capable of bringing authentic, like, real world impressions before the learners to give the maximum insight or experience in the subject or field in which a learner is interested.

2. Multimedia: A Flexible Learning Source

All language learners are different in terms of their requirements, enthusiasm, strength and weakness, motivation, style etc. The ability of the multimedia to be used as flexible self study resource may be useful in accommodating these learner differences. Learners can focus on the area they are interested or weak and can learn at their own pace. They can take as much time as they like, they can repeat the same module number of times they prefer. Overall, the learner and researcher can use variety of media on offer that they prefer to learn from the media. The web tools based language learning need interest connection, resources. Hence, the responsibility for any learning decision during the use of multimedia is passed over to the learner. The only can decide how to study, when to study, how to relate with the other subjects and process. Therefore, any successful language learner is the responsible for his or her own learning. Multimedia with its wealth of in built materials and feedback makes the learning autonomous. In multimedia important role since it determines the instructional objectives. The level and quality of content and the ability of technology efficiently impart the ideas to help the teacher regard, as a user of technology as a tool of instruction, it becomes important for the teacher to analyze the different features of the technology that we use to teach the students. The multimedia lab has some features that cannot complete by ant other method. First, the function of video on demand students can choose an English teaching web tool for example chat line students can chat within their group students send message and feedback is give by teacher. The most benefit of it is students can get instant message. Students writing skill easily improve through chat line. In one sense, students easily get attention towards study. Second, the function of multimedia lab is multiple. It offers teachers more powerful teaching tools with the aid of modern technology. High motivation to study English ids observed by using multimedia which gives variety of forms of teaching from listening to audio records and watching video, up to works with web tools and dialogue chat online. As it is known, all these kinds of activities are sources of entertainments of students during leisure time. The process of teaching English becomes interesting, easy and thus, productive. The development of language skills and media skills is carried out only in the university at the classes of English, but also in the daily life students.

4. Web Tools

4.1 Chat line [Chat Rooms]

A chat room is places on the internet where people with similar interest can meet communicate together by typing messages on their computer. Using chat room can be an exciting and relatively easy way to extend the walls of your class room. Students can directly communicate with the people. You might not otherwise be in touch with teacher's communication, leaders, and experts. It is synchronous communication. Students can use chat rooms to elaborate collaborate projects interaction peers, experts. In a controlled chat room desired guest would be allowed to chat, it is private chat room.

4.2 MOO

A MOO is a text-based virtual world, which means that as a user moves around, he/she will see written descriptions of places in the MOO, including descriptions of rooms, furniture, open spaces, and exits into other places. There are many resources for language learning on the Internet. However, synchronous communication in a MOO or chat room offers opportunities for interaction. This interaction, even though it is written and not face-to-face, can be more authentic than the type of face-to-face interaction that many language learners where English is a foreign language have access to. Davies, Shield, and Weininger (1998, pp. 17-18) asserted that

There is a real possibility to interact "naturally" with native speakers—computer-mediated communication is real, despite the virtual interlocutors whereas the target language interaction in the classroom is quite often unreal, despite the real interlocutors. Perhaps most importantly, though, is that the target language switches focus within any MOOing activity: language is no longer a goal but an instrument to Pursue other (real) goals; integrating into the MOO's Community is socializing in the target language, one of the highest ranking activities in foreign language learning.

Weininger, Shield, and Davies (1998: 90) agreed, saying ...very basic textbook activities, such as talking about the weather or introducing one self, become authentic by virtue of the fact that learners constantly meet new participants, perhaps based on the other side of the globe, whereas the same, classroom-based exchange could never be authentic. In other words, MOO users have easy access to authentic communication partners and actually want to know the answer to a simple question rather than asking it as a formulaic classroom activity...

As Michael Guest pointed out in an interview with Elin Melchior (Melchior 1997, p. 14), although MOOs involve reading and writing, their structure is like conversation, and they have the advantage for students that because they are not face-to-face conversation, and though the conversations take place in real time, there is not as much time pressure or stress as with face-to-face conversations.

Chat can be used either among students in the same class or between students in the class (either as individuals or in pairs or groups) and outsiders from other parts of the world. Freiermuth (1998: 85) argues that it is better to have students chat with other students in the same class for a number of reasons, including that native speakers become disinterested in chatting with non-native speakers of low proficiency, that the language used may be too difficult, that there is not topic, and that the non-native speakers may be confronted with harsh language, insults, etc. However, using chat rooms, MOOs or other sites that are specifically intended for non-native speakers seems to solve some of these problems. Native speakers who come to such sites are interested in chatting with non-native speakers, and they are likely to be patient with their difficulties in expressing themselves in the target language. In addition, the teacher may give the students certain tasks to fulfill during their time chatting, for example, certain information to ask for.

4.3 E-mail

With the fast development of computer and digital information technology (including multi-media technology, internet technology, mobile telecommunication technology and wireless network technology), computer and internet are combined more and more with language teaching, on the basis of which e-learning environment has been constructed. Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) has been widely used in many developed countries. However, computer and internet don't play important role in the scope of language teaching in China. For instance, as one of the most widely used and the most

convenient means of communication, e-mail is seldom used in the college English teaching and learning. Instead, it is simply used as a communication tool by the teachers and students in China. But in some western countries, together with other internet tools, e-mail began to be widely used in many fields like mathematics, scientific research. It's estimated that there are more than 1 billion e-mail users all over the world (Mark W. 1995:5). So how to make good use of e-mail in college English teaching has become one of the heated topics.

4.4 The feasibility of application of e-mail to the college English teaching

The striking characteristics of e-mail make it possible to be applied to the college English teaching. E-mail can send large amount of information easily and conveniently. E-mail is a very powerful information tool that is simple to use and easy to understand. It's hard to imagine any other form of computer-based communication that can be so intimate and yet so wide reaching --- so focused and so expansive (Ken W. White & Jason D. Baker 2004: 44). The present college English teaching puts much emphasis on listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. Therefore, the teachers need to provide the students with various learning materials and get the feedback from students in time, which results in the exchange of a large amount of information between teachers and students. But it is very difficult to realize this exchange in the traditional English teaching classroom. With the help of e-mail, however, this can be realized easily. A single optical fiber with a diameter of less than half a millimeter can transfer all the information contained in the 29 volumes of Encyclopedia Britannica in one second. So teachers and students can exchange information easily with the help of e-mail. E-mail can provide a real and natural environment for the students to study English. The best way to study English well is to use it. One fact we have to admit is that there is no authentic language environment for the Chinese students to practice and use English, which results in the divorce between study and application which is bitterly criticized by many experts and scholars. But the Chinese students can effectively improve their English levels by communicating with people whose mother tongue is English through e-mail. This e-communication can enable Chinese students to learn some authentic English expressions which cannot be found in the textbooks and to become more confident as well.

E-mail can improve students' ability of Independent Learning. In traditional English teaching classroom it's impossible for the teachers to answer all the questions from students, and when the class is over the synchronous communication between teachers and students is over too. Most students don't want to ask the teacher questions face to face for the sake of shyness, which prevents them from improving their English. But e-mail can realize the asynchronous computer-

mediated communication between teachers and students. Many students who might hesitate to ask questions in person are much more forthright via e-mail (Mark W. 2000: 32). They can communicate with their teachers, classmates and even teachers and students from other universities without fearing of shyness via e-mail. This is virtually one of the positive ways of independent learning. E-mail is very helpful for the teachers to improve their own learning. English teachers can share teaching experience, ideas, methodology, materials by communicating with English teachers from other universities both at home and abroad via e-mail to break the limits and to improve their English.

5. The application of e-mail to the college English teaching

The application of e-mail to the college English teaching can be realized through the following ways:- teacher interaction, teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction.

5.1 Teacher-teacher (t-t) interaction

"You cannot make bricks without straw." If an English teacher wants to improve his teaching skills, he has to acquire more knowledge and better his teaching approaches. But the individual and closed study prevents the teachers from making quite great progress. Therefore, more exchanges of information among teachers are called for. In fact, the exchanges of teaching experience and learning among teachers are limited to one or several universities in a certain area and teachers can only improve their teaching, academic and reach levels by depending on the few academic journals and magazines, which greatly restricted the development of the teachers themselves as well as the field of English teaching. Fortunately, this situation has been changed due to the rapid development of internet in the way that the worldwide

teaching and scientific research resources can be shared by all. College English teachers can exchange ideas on English teaching with language experts and academic forums; the opportunity to contact colleagues and share practice; and the ability to forge links that benefit the (Ictadvice 2003). We can find some e-mails which can make us reach to some academic journals and experts, for instance, *celea@fltrp.com* (for Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press), *bwyys@bfsu.edu.cn* (for Foreign Language Teaching and Research), *elt@fltrp.com* (for Teaching English in China), and so on and so forth. Apart from this, English teachers can discuss English teaching with their counterparts from other countries and regions all over the world through e-mail discussion lists. Some famous are TESL-L Discussion List (Teachers of English as Second Language Discussion List, the website is <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l/>). TESL-L was founded in May, 1991, with the goal of providing educators with a fast, convenient, and topical electronic discussion forum that focuses on issues related to TESL/TEFL. It maintains cordial relationships with all professional organizations in the field of English language education, including TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language). The registered user can put forward any questions about English teaching and discuss the questions with over ten thousand English teachers around the world. By September 15, 2006, it has 32,293 members in 172 countries.

The worldwide English teachers can take part in the activities on this discussion list this will stimulate the academic exchanges among the English teachers all over the world and in turn improve the English. Besides, the teachers from the same university or department can communicate more frequently with each other about teaching experience and strengthen cooperation in teaching and scientific research so that they can play more important role as a teaching team.

5.2 Teacher-student interaction

As more and more high school students are now admitted to universities, English is often taught in a classroom jammed with about over 100 students. In Shandong Institute of Business and Technology (SDIBT), for example, there were 158 students in my class 2 years ago. Now the situation is better, but there are still 81 students in my class. Class participation is an awkward and terrifying experience for most students. Frustration is universal and perpetual over the limited opportunity for participating. Many questions about English learning from students can not be solved in time during the regular classroom teaching. Teachers and students seldom have face-to-face communication after class due to the lack of proper time, the lack of confidence in English study or mere shyness (Mark W. 1995:33). This insufficiency of communication has a negative influence on the college English teaching and learning and ruins the enthusiasm of both the teachers and the students to teach and study English. In such a case, the employment of e-mail might be good solution to this problem. It is just like a bridge between teachers and students for their all-round communication both in and after class. To some extent, this communication bridges the gap between the teachers and the students and makes it more like "communication between colleagues" (Donald, E.H., Michelle, G. & Simone 2000:10). The ways to realize teacher-student interaction via e-mail are as follows:

5.3 Problem solving and question answering

Just like what we have discussed above, many questions from students cannot be solved by teachers in time during the regular class time, but this can be easily done via e-mail after class. A teacher in New York University conducted a study on the informal working time via e-mail and the result showed that his students not only asked him more often but also became opener and better at communication (Mark W. 1995:33). Many students always hesitate to ask questions when face to face with teachers, but they became bold and frank to ask without any worry via e-mail (Mark W. 2000:32). I ever conducted an experiment in the class which I taught in 2003. There are 81 students all together in the class. In the first semester, I told my students to ask me directly in or after class if they had any questions about English study, but the result was quite disappointing. Only very few students came to me to consult immediately when class was over. What surprised most was that nobody came to me to consult after class in spite of the fact that they did have a lot of questions. So at the very beginning of the second semester, I made some changes by telling them my e-mail address. I told them they could send their questions to me via e-mail and I would answer every e-mail.

5.4 Language abilities developing

E-mail is quite useful to develop the abilities of listening, reading, and writing. The experiment I made in my class showed the effects of e-mail in developing these abilities.

In order to give a full play to e-mail in developing the language abilities, I applied for a special e-mail t-communication@163.com firstly, and made it public to all my students, telling them the code to log on. This e-mail address became a bridge between the students and I. I tried to train and develop my students' abilities of listening, reading and writing.

5.5 Developing listening ability

When it comes to listening, e-mail shows its advantages: convenient, swift and voluminous. I made some mp3 or wma. (Because these 2 can be played by mp3 or mp4 player) audio listening materials by myself with the help of computer technology or searched them on the internet. Then I classified them into Band A and Band B according to their difficulty and uploaded them into the net disk in the public e-mail box. The students could choose to listen to Band A or Band B according to their own English level. They could download these audio listening materials to their mp3 or mp4 players for free listening or listen online. Whatever method they choose, they have to understand the materials before a set deadline. When the deadline came, I checked how much they understood. It turned out that the students' listening ability was improved greatly. Compared with the traditional way to improve listening with tape-recorder and magnetic tape, the biggest advantage is that the listening materials can be renewed very quickly so that students can listen more, and they can choose the right listening materials which suit their English level.

5.6 Developing reading ability

E-mail can play an even more important role in developing reading ability. In traditional English teaching, it's impossible for the teachers to hand out as many reading materials as possible to the students because of large number of students and the lack of fund, which limits the improvement of the students' reading ability. E-mail is definitely a good answer to this problem. I collected some reading materials on the internet which includes some from Band 4 and Band 6 (this can be done very easily on the internet) and some passages from China Daily, 21st Century and some other English websites. Then I edited and designed these materials by adding and deleting something and designing some questions. After that, I uploaded them to the public mailbox. The students were requested to send the answers to me via e-mail for my check within a fixed period. The students can get access to several hundred pages of reading materials at one time very easily. The extensive reading can definitely be very helpful for the students to improve their reading ability.

5.7 Developing writing ability

E-mail has shown its great usefulness in improving students' writing ability. Many experts and scholars both from home and abroad ever wrote essays, dwelling on this point in great details, for example, Janice Cook (1996) from Honolulu Kapiolani Community College, University of Hawaii, Ellen Pratt (1996) from University of Puerto Rico and Nancy Sullivan (1996) from Texas A&M University, Hartman (1991), Mabrito(1991,1992), Kern.R. G.(1993), Palmquist M. (1991). The results of their experiments and research all showed that the use of e-mail in English writing could definitely enhance students' writing ability. Pratt & Sullivan (1996) conducted a research at University of Puerto Rico which lasted one semester, aiming at studying the effects of writing with the help of computer. They compared students in two English-as-a-Second-Language writing environments: a networked computer-assisted classroom and a traditional oral classroom. Results indicated that while the writing environment has no effect on attitudes toward writing with computers or writing apprehension, writing quality improves in the computer-assisted classroom and that discourse patterns in the two environments are different. "Students become more confident in writing", "every word they put down is not for the purpose of being corrected by their teacher, but rather for the purpose of sharing ideas with their classmates"(Mark W. 1995: 40).

I did similar experiment in the class I taught in 2004. In the last semester, I asked my students to hand in their English composition via e-mail instead of the traditional exercise book. I made it clear that they should draft and edit their composition with Office Word processing tool. The result was that the quality of the composition handed in via e-mail was greatly improved. The spelling and grammatical mistakes which used to be common decreased to a very low level because the Office Word processing tool has the

function of marking the spelling and grammatical mistakes automatically, so the students could find their mistakes and corrected them in time. The mistakes are usually so impressive that students will not make the same mistakes in the future. The high quality compositions also reduce teachers' heavy burden to a great extent. The application of e-mail to the writing liberates both the teachers and the students from the old traditional method, which makes the study a process full of findings, thoughts, explorations, creations and excitement. There are two more benefits to collect the compositions via e-mail and public e-mailbox. One is that since all the students' compositions are stored in the same mailbox, anyone can log onto the mailbox to do peer-reading. It's usually difficult for us to notice the errors we make in our own composition, but it's an easy thing to find the mistake in other's compositions. By doing peer-reading, the students can raise their mistake-free awareness. They can make their compositions free from some easy mistakes. The other benefit is that teachers can establish their own corpus which is composed of the compositions, which can provide materials for scientific research. For example, there were 158 students in the class I taught in grade 2004. Every student was asked to hand in 1 composition every week during a 16-week semester. The total number of the composition in the whole semester should be 2528. Yes, some students didn't hand in compositions, so the virtual number was about 2000. I keep doing so, it is no longer a dream to have one's own corpus. Apart from what we discussed above, more benefits can be seen in this writing method. For instance, the students are on equality with each other. "For those who are not confident and shy, they needn't to bother other students. They can write at their own speed."(Kroonenberg 1994/1995). Kern, R. G. (1995a) and Mark W. (1996) think all students can "speak", giving shy students a greater chance to participate. Mark W. (1999) also think students can notice, refer to, save, and reuse input, which allows them to assimilate vocabulary, collocations and grammar. They have more control over the planning time for their output, which allows them to reach for more complex terms.

5.8 Student-student (s-s) interaction

According to my observation and inquiry, the college students make very few communications concerning English study both in class and after class. In their opinion, this is mainly due to the lack of a platform for communication. The lack of the fixed classroom and their shyness prevent them from further communication. Study after class and the main reasons are the lack of fixed communicative media and shyness. However, e-mail can provide the students with a stable and convenient medium for them to communicate. They can communicate with each other about English study through e-mail, which broadens the English study from classroom to everywhere. What's important is that students enhance their friendship by doing so. Janda designed a series of activities on the basis of e-mail, encouraging the cooperative communication and writing among students. In these activities students were required to do group-work, introducing to each other, discussing movies and literary works and preparing oral presentations, and so on and so forth (Janda 1995). Manteghi designed chain stories (with one student writing after the other). The teacher starts the story with one student continuing and e-mailing to another student until every student writes a part of the story (Manteghi 1995). Student-student interaction through e-mail can enlarge the content of teaching effectively, but some points should be paid much attention to:

- (1). Remember that careful planning in advance is quite necessary for activities through e-mail. Don't take it for granted that students can make good use of it independently.
- (2). Teachers should act as an active guide but not a controller. In the background of web based teaching, it's the teachers' purpose to let the students learn how to control their study so that they can master the skills for independent learning (Lai, K. W. 2001:43)
- (3). Think of it carefully how to integrate the e-mail-based activities after class with the regular classroom study effectively. Kern assumes that electronic discussion can be an excellent preparation for an oral discussion on the same activity (Kern, R.G. 1995b).
- (4). In the activities through e-mail, teachers should not correct the mistakes made by the students directly. Instead, they should let students know the correct way to express by setting examples. (Kelm 1995)

5.9 Blog

An Internet-based weblog, also known as a blog, is essentially a homepage managed by a writer. McIntosh (2005) expands this definition in the following way:

Historically, a weblog, or ‘blog’ for short, is recognised by its regularly updated, time and date stamped posts, running down the computer screen in chronologically reverse order (i.e. the most recent post comes first). Crucially, there is an ‘Add Comment’ feature so that readers of posts can leave their opinions, questions or thoughts. Finally, there is a writing style element: blogs are written by one individual who gives his or her thoughts in a generally relaxed, ‘spoken’ style (p. 2). According to Williams & Jacobs (2004), “...’Blogs’ have evolved along similar lines to other forms of human communication in that they are a product of convenience rather than design” (p. 232). Lamshed, Berry, & Armstrong (2002) connect blogging with journal writing, stating that “like a journal, a blog can be a continually updated resource that grows over time with the accumulation of writing and other content. This archived information is accessed using a simple calendar that highlights the dates on which entries were made” (p. 9). These and various other researchers (Hiler, 2003; Thorne & Payne, 2005) have also recognized blogging as “a set of... phenomena” that has, since its inception as a manner of producing anything from online diaries to academic and reflective journals, emerged to have the capacity to “engage people in collaborative activity, knowledge sharing, reflection and debate” (Williams & Jacobs, 2004, p. 232). Related to the availability of computers and Internet connections was the fact that blogs are easy to create and maintain. There are a number of servers, blogger.com being one example, which offer free, simple to set-up, and convenient to use blogs (Kukana, 2005; Ray, 2005). Some of these are designed specifically for educational purposes, which generally means that there is no advertising. The blogger can quickly set up his/her own blog on one of these free web spaces, upload pictures, music and even video (from his/her own files or another web source) and then upload personal writing (known as a blog “post”) and receive commentary from readers regarding each post that has been made. With a blog set up and a list of classmates’ blog addresses, the student blogger can post his/her own writing from any internet-connected computer and also access, read and comment on any classmate’s post. Such activities can be done at a student’s leisure, in a campus computer lab, a classroom, a dormitory room or an apartment, providing the maximum “versatility” and a broad “scope for interactivity” (Williams & Jacobs, 2004, p. 234-235). Finally, for our curricular purposes, which were focused mainly on having students become engaged in the writing process within a broader, student centered writing community, blogging stood out—in contrast to email, *MySpace* and *Face book* messaging and online chat activities—as the CALL activity having the greatest pedagogical potential. Hall & Beggs (1998) contend that the main objective of teaching is to facilitate students becoming “legitimate producers of language within social groups both inside and outside the classroom” (p. 37). We recognized that in blogging, students do exactly that as they create written posts in the target language that are shared and can be commented upon with regard to various aspects, whether content, organization and/or usage, by classmates, the teacher and anyone else with the blog address.

In this way, blogging would seem to satisfy Chapelle’s first and third principles for “language learning potential” and “meaning focus” (Chapelle, 2002, pp. 499-500). At the same time, blogging can be implemented in relation to other activities, ensuring integration of skills as well as fulfilment of Chapelle’s second and fourth principles, those of “learner fit” and “authenticity” (p. 500). For example, within the composition courses of two of the writers of this paper, students were assigned to watch English-language films, some of which were for specific language learning purposes and others that had an additional thematic connection with course content. Students then would be asked to write film reviews that were to be posted on their blogs. In the next stage, classmates would leave feedback on those blog posts in the form of questions asked, observations made, and at times, ideas challenged. In this way, student participants, both the initial blog poster and each commentator, interacted via meaningful blog exchanges. As the discussion above demonstrates, a variety of features made blogging appear to be a good pedagogical “fit” for our program and for the students in our courses. Through systematic implementation and careful observation, we wanted to determine the degree to which this was the case.

6. The key elements of blogging

As mentioned earlier, the cycle of blogging activities that was implemented included students setting up blogs, collaborating with blogging buddies (some within an appointed group of classmates called “blogging groups,” but others not), making blog posts, then reading classmates’ post and commenting. The ease with which a student or any other blogger can set up a blog has been discussed in the section above. This section addresses blog posts, peer reviews and peer comments on blogs posts, blogging

groups, and the blogging buddy method. It also includes a summary of the common aspects of blogging that were covered in our various sources.

6.1 Blog posts

At one time a recurring criticism of the use of blogs in education was that blogging students only write “trivia” (Downs, 2004). A major tenet of this paper is that, with well-structured activities and requirements directed by a classroom teacher, blogging activities and the associated technology provide the ideal forum not just for informal writing but also writing for academic purposes. While the *Blogs in English language teaching and learning* 7 writers of this paper had various ways of implementing blogs and giving blogging assignments within their university-level language classes, the course syllabi were similar in several important ways. First, the semester-length courses were arranged into content modules ranging from two to four weeks, during which time students were given blog post assignments that were fully integrated with other course activities. Before writing anything, students would read thematically related material, perhaps watch a popular or documentary video with content of a similar thematic focus, and discuss the content in class. Students would then use the content materials as a basis for doing narrowly focused paper-based writing tasks, such as question development and answers, idea outlines, and paraphrasing and summarizing exercises. Finally, each student would make a blog post in short essay form in response to a teacher-generated question or assigned task. Such assignments would usually be formulated so as to generate a clear student opinion (albeit one that required some recitation, analysis and/or synthesis of the thematic content). On occasion, the weekly or bi-weekly assigned blog task was more open-ended, with students generating their own topics related to the material, and then responding to those on their blog. The blog post was pitched to students in this way as providing them with an opportunity to express their opinion on some particular, often controversial aspect of the content. As Nardi et al. (2004) note, “Many bloggers emphasized they blogged to comment on topics they found pertinent and important. A blog, said one, can be ‘a point of view, not just chatter’ ” (p. 44). On a cognitive development level, each blog assignment stood—along with paper-based essays—at the top of the schematic scaffold as a culmination of prior work.

6.2 Peer reviews

The teacher has been the traditional source of power in the second language classroom, particularly for the writing classroom. A student’s paper is often corrected, commented on, and graded only by the teacher. Peer review activities diffuse some of that power, giving students a sense of responsibility and accomplishment both as readers and writers. Cho, Christian, & Charney (2006) note that, “Peer feedback appears to bring about a higher perception of meaning-change revision while most teacher influenced revisions happen at the surface level” (p. 270). Yang, Badger, & Yu (2006) found similarly that while peer feedback, as a supplement to teacher input, may have less influence on improved student writing, it seems to both impact development of writing skills and to increase learner autonomy.

6.3 Peer comments on blog posts

Blogging most significantly augments traditional paper-based activities when it provides students with the opportunity to participate in a meaningful, largely autonomous forum where they can exchange ideas, while practicing previously learned skills and developing new ones. For this reason, a strong follow-up activity to having students post writing on their blogs is to have their classmates read those posts and respond with comments, whether informal feedback or assessments based on pre-determined criteria. In addition to posting a writing assignment on his/her blog, each student is required to read and respond to a set number of classmates’ posts. As this peer commentator reads those posts and responds with his/her own viewpoints, sometimes in accordance with a classmate, and sometimes not, a number of written dialogues are initiated. This step underlies the notion of the blogging activity as student-centered process, one in which “active learning, student engagement, and student responsibility” are central (Darabi, 2006, p. 53). Ideally, each student writer would also return to his/her own post of any particular writing assignment, review the commentary left by classmates and then, if so motivated, leave them a response. A member of one blogging group notes that “a kind of reciprocity (was) expected because I read others’ blogs, so I have to make my contribution” (Nardi et al. 2004, p. 45). In this way, the blog realizes the vision to “provide a forum that reaches beyond the scope of a university subject and which augments the knowledge creation occurring throughout a student’s enrolment in a higher education program” (p. 11).

6.4 Blogging groups

Teachers with experience having students create blogs and make posts often state that it is difficult to insure that members of a class regularly and universally receive comments on their posts. From our experience it seems that if students are not provided enough guidance, they will gravitate and respond to the posts made by their friends. Under these conditions, in a class of 16, a popular student might receive comments from more than half of his/her classmates, while a quieter student close to none. In answer to that challenge and in lieu of having to assign certain students to respond to others' posts, a teacher can create "blogging groups" within the class. A blogging group might consist of any number of students, but since the purpose is to narrow the field of potential peer respondents/commentators to a specific manageable group, it is best limited to no more than six members. When blogging groups were utilized in our courses, they were created in groups of four to eight classmates, and members of each group were required to first respond to the posts of *at least* half of the members of the blogging group before responding to the posts of other classmates. This procedure creates a realistic chance for each blogging group member to receive multiple comments per post, while it also eliminates the common occurrence of student writers only reading and responding to posts by friends. Creating blogging groups is the equivalent of classroom management, only in this case, student interactions in Blogs in English language teaching and learning cyberspace are manipulated for greater inclusivity. In addition to working with the posts of their blogging group members, students would also do other activities as a group, such as peer reviewing various homework exercises or carrying out content discussions. In this way, they could further cultivate a sense of meaningful social continuity with their group members. Perhaps because of the fact that blogs are a relatively recent educational activity (Thorne & Payne, 2005), the literature does not seem to contain references to "blogging groups" as used herein, as subgroups of learners determined by the teacher who have a special responsibility to read and comment on the blogs of three or four classmates. While some might argue that the assigning of blogging groups compromises the autonomy of student bloggers, the benefits of full participation proved worthwhile in our context.

6.5 The blogging buddy method

Student writers developing skills in a non-native language need to be encouraged to write in that language as often as possible. Writing assignments for such developing writers tend to fall into one of two types: guided, teacher directed, and accuracy-based work, such as structured paragraphs, strip stories, summaries, multi-draft essays and the like, or self-directed, fluency-based tasks, such as those often found in free writing and journals. Fluency writing is generally assigned as paper-based free writing or as journal-cantered tasks. In those cases, the teacher generally does not have the time to comment extensively on every student's paper. In addition, writing for an audience of one person (the teacher) may cause students to feel unmotivated over time. The challenge to teachers who utilize blogs for instructional purposes, especially when they are creating assignments aimed at providing students with opportunities similar to fluency writing tasks, is how to increase production without compromising quality. Felix has observed that, "Blogging opens up the possibility of regular peer assessment and breaks down the barriers of the four-walled classroom, helping achieve the aims of the 3rd millennial classroom: collaboration, inclusiveness, flexibility and bringing more relevance to learners" (cited in McIntosh, p. 6). One way to address the issue of blog writing quality is with the blogging buddy system. The term "blogging buddy" refers to a student writer's editing partner, the person who checks and comments on his/her blog post before it is posted. The blogging buddy is the initial peer reviewer, the first or final-draft reader, the one who acts as both the writer's good conscience (useful for motivational purposes) and as his/her proof reader (in that way, also a surrogate teacher). Regarding the blogging buddy's role, there is no limit on how much or how little editing input or other commentary he/she provides for his/her partner (although this dictum can be adjusted according to class circumstances) as long as there is a concerted effort at review and response. In this way, the blogging buddy system is simple: It requires each student to present a piece of writing to his/her blogging buddy before it is posted.

6.5 Bulletin board

If you've ever been guilty of ignoring a clearly out-of-date bulletin board or of putting up "anything" that will do, maybe it's time to give your bulletin boards a second look. Experts tell Education World that classroom boards can be more than just "wallflowers" -- they can be tools for teaching too! Included: Tips from experts to help you get more out of your wall décor!

"Too often bulletin boards are just thought of as *decoration*, when they really should emphasize the learning that is taking place in the classroom," author/educator Michael Gravois told Education World. "Those two qualities do not have to be mutually exclusive; a bulletin board can be both educational and decorative."

6.6 The best board

The three types of bulletin boards Gravois discusses are teacher-made (sometimes pre-fabricated), student-made, and those that combine teacher and student work. When creating boards, he prefers to set up the bulletin boards and then let students take over. He often develops for students a hands-on manipulative, or "response vehicle," which becomes a part of the bulletin board. Gravois keeps three bulletin-board principles in mind. Bulletin boards, he says, should:

- be interactive and make the classroom "come alive" with the curriculum material being studied.
- give students a sense of ownership of the classroom by surrounding them with examples of their work.
- be mostly created by students.

"One of my favourite boards was created when I taught second grade," recalled Gravois. "We were studying the ocean. We read books, watched videos, wrote stories, and more. Each child researched two different sea creatures and made them out of construction paper, paper plates, streamers, and other art materials." Gravois placed a long strip of white bulletin board paper on the floor and assigned two-foot sections to his students. "They worked with the students on each side of them to 'match up' the ocean floor, and colour the floor, rocks, and water," he explained. "They then taped or glued their creatures into the scene. Next to each creature, the students taped an index card that detailed some facts about their animal. We hung the student-created mural on one of the classroom walls." Similar murals also were made for the topics of the rainforest and the planets, with students designing aliens, spaceships, and comets! To Gravois, the "key" to making bulletin boards meaningful and manageable is using them as learning tools, not just in content, but in their creation as well. "If the bulletin board becomes part of the learning, it saves the teacher from having to create it, it ties into the learning, and it gives the students ownership of their space," he said. "Plus, once a teacher does this for several years, he or she will develop a file of ideas that can be used in future years, making the job even easier. A teacher shouldn't feel as though he or she needs to reinvent the wheel every year. If an idea works, reuse it!"

7. Inspiration and Amusement

Having interactive boards lets the media specialists and students use library materials to create questions and quizzes and develop entertaining ideas that will hopefully attract more patrons to the library media center," reported Judy Serritella, an experienced elementary and high school media specialist who is coordinator of library media services for the Georgia Department of Education in Atlanta, Georgia. Serritella created the Web site Bulletin Board Ideas for High School Media Specialists to share some of her board ideas with other media specialists and published it in book form as *Look Again! Appealing Bulletin Board Ideas for Secondary Students* (Linworth, 2002). Some of her interactive bulletin board ideas include:

- "And That's Final." A library media specialist chooses books from the collection and writes down the final sentence in each book. Two lists are created. One list has the titles of the books and the other has the final sentences. Students and teachers attempt to match the books with their final sentences.
- "Herstory." This interactive board celebrates Women's History Month. Questions are created about women's roles in literature, science, politics, theatre, and other fields. Students find the answers by using the library media center's resources.
- "Twenty Questions." Black History Month is the focus of this board. Questions are posed that deal with important African American people, literature, and facts. Prizes may be given to students who answer the most questions correctly.

"Library media specialists are always looking for ways to encourage reading and to promote the library media center," Serritella explained. "Clever and creative bulletin boards can help students gain understanding and find inspiration and even amusement."

8. Meeting a Challenge

Barbara Colvin was so taken with the great bulletin board ideas she found on the Internet, that she created an online index called Classroom Displays and Bulletin Boards. Later, she added some of her own boards, boards from other teachers in her school, and e-mail submissions, complete with photos. "Students love to be challenged," says Colvin, a seventh- and eighth-grade English teacher at University Christian School in Jacksonville, Florida. "When you put something on your bulletin boards that presents a challenge to students, they get interested in meeting that challenge."

One board Colvin has used many times has students "draw pictures" of adverbs. She posts the pictures and refers to them during adverb lessons. The student-created visuals are especially simple and effective. On another board, a snowman is surrounded by snowflakes that have appropriate verbs written on them -- melt, freeze, slip, drip, and so on. Students write about the scene and use those descriptive verbs.

"I think teachers can make their classrooms so much more inviting if they have eye-catching bulletin boards," Colvin stated. "This year, a seventh grade boy told me, 'Mrs. Colvin, your classroom is so colorful and exciting. Too many classrooms are just dull because they don't have anything on the walls and the teacher never does anything to the bulletin board.' That made me realize how much students do pay attention to your bulletin boards. You can make your classroom attractive with a little creative thought."

9. More than meets the eye

"An excellent bulletin board is one that makes students think," observes Kimberly Steele, an eighth-grade English and reading teacher. "That can be as simple as a thought of the day or as complex as an interactive lesson in bulletin board form." Steele creates bulletin boards that her students at Abe Hubert Middle School in Garden City, Kansas, can use as references during class or on tests -- a strong incentive for students to pay attention to what is on the bulletin board!

"One of my favourite bulletin boards is one I made in the form of a graphic organizer, particularly a mind map or web," she told Education World. "I used the mind map to illustrate the different types of text structures students' encounter while reading." Another favourite is a word wall Steele created this year. The school recently adopted a list of universal vocabulary terms classes are to focus on during the year. Steele has several students whose first language is Spanish, so she created a word wall of the words in English and added the Spanish versions in another colour. The Spanish-speaking students appreciate the words in their native language and they help Steele pronounce them correctly in Spanish; the other students are encountering a new language too. "Most important is to relate the bulletin board to information your students actually need to know, rather than something that looks cute," advises Steele. "Don't be afraid to experiment with different ideas. There are many ways to make a bulletin board unique and creative. I am not artistic, so I try to find unique things such as movie tickets or post cards to make my bulletin boards stand out."

10. Bulletin board strike a chord

For five years, Tracy King has provided Bulletin Boards for the Music Classroom, an outlet for music teachers to share their creative ideas. A music educator and technology teacher/coordinator for the Richwoods School District in Richwoods, Missouri, King uses bulletin boards as instructional tools in many ways. For example, she uses them to

- **introduce concepts.** "My favourite board for this is The Elements of Music are Not Puzzling," said King. "This board shows visually how all the elements of music are connected." The board presents the elements of music as words in a crossword puzzle with their definitions as clues.
- **provide a place for daily review of concepts.** An example from King's classroom is Go Wild With These Rhythms. She printed the names of various animals with rhythms that matched the number of syllables in their names. (For example, "alligator" was "ta ta ta ta" or four quarter notes.) Once this board was in place, she used it with many of her classes to read rhythms, to create rhythm songs, and to find rhythms that matched their names.
- **Provide information about seasonal topics or events that classes might not be studying.** To coordinate with her eighth graders' study of the Civil War, King designed a board entitled Music of

the Civil War that included quotes about the music of the war, lyrics to some of the more popular songs of the day, and titles of other songs. King also uses boards to reinforce her students' role in the school community. "I love bulletin boards that brag on student achievement," she explained. "I like to highlight performance groups like band or choir and classes that are working on special projects like compositions or recorders." A recent board commended King's choir students for their performance at a mall. "Even the simplest idea can be turned into a board that teaches or a board that brags on your wonderful students," she said. "Don't be afraid to use on your bulletin boards such non-traditional items as cereal boxes, gloves, empty video boxes, CDs, fabric, wallpaper and so on. And, most importantly, share!"

11. E-journal

E-journal is an electronic version of a journal that is found and read on the web. An electronic version of a printed journal is provided and made easily accessible than the printed copy. Electronic journal or e-journal are the same as any journal that you photocopy at the library but they are made available from a vendor through your web browser. From almost any location that you have an internet connection Hyperlinks allows further improvements in e-journals. Apart from links between the text and references or foot notes, hyper linking enables links to other documents for example other articles or reports links can also be provided to high quality images to video or audio clips, or computerized molecular models. E-journal encourage more journal changes in scholarly communication and lead to more speedy publication come of the directories of e-journals are

www.e-journals.org/

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>

For example:

Site Name: TESL (Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language)-EJ: The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language **URL:** <http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/> **Description:** TESL-EJ is an online journal that publishes four issues a year. The focus of this journal is on teaching English as a second or foreign language. TESL-EJ was started by a group of scholars who saw a need for a free electronic journal on teaching ESL and EFL. Every article in TESL-EJ is reviewed by at least two knowledgeable scholars, meaning TESL-EJ is a completely peer-reviewed. **Uses for Teachers and Students:**

- Find out about new and exciting practices in teaching English to English Language Learners Best new practices in teaching ELLs
- New ways to use materials to teach ELLs

Usefulness: This website is a great resource for an teacher who is teaching ELLs or any classroom teacher for that matter. This journal offers a free place to find new and exciting ideas to add to your teaching tool box. I found how to use Flickr with students in the volume 11 number 2 issue. There are many more articles like this. **Quality:** The articles in this journal are of high quality. The website is easy to navigate.

12. Discussion board

Discussion boards, or threaded discussions, are one of the most commonly used tools in online teaching. Discussion forums provide the ability for asynchronous discussion to occur over a period of time. The ability to learn asynchronously is one of the primary benefits of online learning. Students are able to reflect upon their ideas before sharing them with the class, leading to more reflective responses and in-depth learning. This guide has been designed to provide some practical suggestions to assist you in making the most of this versatile tool. A number of topics have been addressed, including: facilitation tips, content area suggestions, time management strategies and much more.

12.1 Benefits of Using Online Discussion Boards

Builds class community by promoting discussion on course topics Allows time for in-depth reflection- students have more time to reflect, research & compose their thoughts before participating in the discussion Facilitates learning by allowing students to view & to respond to the work of others

- **Develops thinking & writing skills**
Allows guest experts to participate in the course by posting information & responding to questions Discussion Board activities can serve a variety of purposes and can be used to meet a wide range of instructional objectives.

- **Instructional Discussion Boards** should be used to meet specific course objectives and should be aligned with course content. Well-designed discussion board activities can be used to encourage the following:
- **Demonstration of Knowledge of Key Concepts -**
Using the discussion board to discuss key concepts allows students to learn from one another and share ideas. When students submit an assignment directly to a teacher, this sharing of ideas is lost.
- **Community Building** - One of the primary reasons for using discussion boards is to build a community of learners. This tool allows students to become part of a vibrant learning community, rather than an just an independent learner completing & submitting assignments with no real peer interaction.
- **Reflection** - Reflective activities require students to share a synthesis of the learning experience, or to describe how a situation or experience has personal value to them. These kinds of activities should allow for honest and open responses.
- **Consensus Building** - Consensus building activities require students to work together to create a product or to come to an agreement on some topic.
- **Critical Thinking** - through the use of higher order questioning techniques and activities, the discussion board can be used to encourage critical thinking skills.
- **Student Leadership:** the effective use of discussion forums can encourage student leadership by giving them a voice in the classroom. Students can be given the opportunity to Icebreakers are a good example of **Social Discussion Boards**. They provide students with an opportunity to get to know one another and to interact in an Informal way. They should be fun and non-threatening and require participants to find something in common with others in the group.
- **Personal Introductions** - ask each student to introduce themselves on the discussion board at the beginning of the term. Respond to each student & encourage the class to respond to one another's introductions.
- **Portrait** - students create a portrait of themselves in any medium, digitize the portrait and share it on the discussion board.
- **Interviews** - have pairs of students interview each other on a given topic and post the interview results in the discussion board.

13. Conclusion

For the English language teacher, there is a great urgency to look beyond traditional forms of print media in order to consider how we prepare students for careers that require active participation in the new illiteracies of digital age. Indeed, the concept of literacy has reinvented itself although traditionally defined as the ability to read and write, an understanding of what it means to be literate needs to be extended and expanded. In a traditional classroom. The teacher speaks and uses a black board to express oneself. The landscape of a modern classroom is a Smart Classroom, which would have video and data projectors sound system, video conferencing facilities, wi-fi connectivity, television, DVD players, video document, and cameras etc. The competence and skill in creating an ambiance for smart learning is one of the essential attributions of a teacher at any level of the educational system. To borrow the words of William Wordsworth "The World Is Too Much With Us". The educators should put their hands up and take the initiative to improve the effectiveness of teaching/learning by reinventing and redesigning the above discussed new literacy to suit the Indian learner. In my view many language teachers feel hesitated to use multimedia, because they lack of skill in using computers. But the truth is that the acquisition of computer literacy skills comes as a result of sustained personal effort within a supportive social and professional context. My appeal to language teachers is to get ourselves involved in this process as creators, enablers, facilitators, and reviewers. This paper is only attempt to throw light on the use of web tools, can language teaching and learning easily. It will also improve your language. This is the best way, it makes teacher's work easy, interesting and reflective.

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25. www.learnthenet.com/english/html/09netiq.html
26. <http://www.netlingo.com>
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