

Using Email in Second Language Learning and Teaching

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the impact of using email as one of the most important application in the second language learning. In this study the researcher discussed the benefits of using email in learning the second language according to some previous studies which were done in the same field. She found that the email can improve the students' language and enhance their learning in two different aspects : inside and outside the class room especially in the writing skills. Also she mentioned to the positive and the negative effects of using email for second language's learners . So, the teachers can take the benefits of using this application in their teaching and the researchers also can follow the recommendation which the author listed at the end. Finally, I hope this study makes changes in the students' motivations for enhancing their learning of second language.

Keywords: Email, communication, pedagogical benefit, motivation.

Introduction:

The fast spread of using technology in many fields of our life makes it necessary to take benefits of many computer applications to enhance second language learning. How can we use technology to improve skills in the second language is a question that leads the pedagogues to search about some applications to use them inside and outside the classroom to enhance learning and teaching the second language. One of the most popular applications which people use more in their life is the email. This application has been known as the mother of all internet applications (Warschoner, Shetzer, and Meloni 2000 p3). In this essay, I will try to focus on the importance of using email in learning and teaching English as a second language. I will depend on some findings in this article" using email in foreign language teaching: Rationale and Suggestions.

Purpose of the study:

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of using email to help the students to learn any second language . It also tries to focus on describing the role of email in second language learning. It intends to encourage the students to enjoy their learning through communicate with the native speakers and learn from them. According to this study email can help the teachers also to communicate with their students outside the classroom.

Research questions:

This study aims to encourage the students and the teachers to use email as a tool to teach and learn the second language, so it finds about the answers of the following questions:

- To what extent can Email help the students to improve their second language and how?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using email for the second language learner?

Significance of the study:

Learning and teaching any second language are challenge process. However, the spread of using technology in all fields makes it necessary to find the applications which can help the students and the teachers to ease their learning or teaching of the second language . This study will discuss the importance of using email ,as tool, to develop the SL leaning and teaching. The teachers can take benefits of using this application to motivate their students and increase their attention by using many techniques in teaching them. This study will be important also for the learners who search about a suitable way to increase their understanding of the second language which they hope to learn especially in the writing skills.

Theoretical framework:

As this study examines the importance of one of the most important application of CALL, it will be descriptive and exploratory as well as evaluative. Regarding the descriptive part, this study illustrates how SL learners can engage in using email during their learning and how the teacher should be aware of the appropriate way of using email with his/her students. On the other hand, the evaluative part of this study depends on the idea of which will be better for the learners and the teachers on using email and on which skill will have more effects.

Literature review:

Communication between learners and teachers through the computer is done in two ways; first, synchronously CMC which has a real world communication which brings the learners together or with the teachers online at the same time. The second type is asynchronously CMC. In this kind, the participants are not online at the same time.

According to Kupetian (2001, p. 1), the asynchronous form of CMC is magnifying the power and immediacy of the written word and as such represents authentic communication with a delay which allows students time to compose a message. So, we can consider email as an example of this kind .

Through communication via email, the learners can feel more comfortable than face to face communication. Hellebrandt claimed that asynchronous discussion via email can enhance communicative language skills, which could result in the fruitful exchange of idea

Findings:

Goneski, Meli, and Brant have written there article to show the impact of using e-mail on learning and teaching English language through examination and using it in the classroom. They discussed different benefits of interaction through the e-mail inside and outside the classroom. The first one is the pedagogical benefit. In this section, they state that email will save the class time by doing some activities which provide the learners with more information they may not be able to cover during the class time. The second one is that e-mail can help the learner in the real world communication. The way of communication here is not face to face, but it is a written way which helps the learners very much. In this regard, the writers offered four advantages. These advantages are; expanding topics beyond the classroom, promoting student-centered language learning, encouraging the equal opportunity perception and connecting the speakers quickly and cheaply.

After that, the writers provide some suggestions for some activities which can be used in learning a foreign language through email. First of all, it could facilitate interaction with others in the target language through a writing medium. This will be a very helpful step to start face-to-face discussion in the classroom. Second, the teacher may use e-mail as pre-class, past class or supplementary activities. Each kind of activities helps the learners to use the language outside the classroom. Thirdly, using the e-mail among classes can focus on writing and reading and joint production. Fourth, linking students to other native speakers can help develop their language from different sources .

Discussion:

The interaction through e-mail has a different way. It may be one on one interaction. This type may be done between the learner and three different people; the teacher, a fellow language learner, and a native speaker of the target language. Each one of those three people has a different advantage. The writers finally discussed some information about structured and non-structured exchange through doing some examination between speakers of two different languages. Finally, email can produce more valuable inputs for the learners which the class time does not give them.

Like any other application, the email must have positive and negative effects. As for positive effects, it will reduce the students' anxiety of communication. It is an important tool to improve students' writing skills. The teacher can give his/her feedback to the students through email. Some studies were done to examine the advantages and disadvantages of giving feedback through this application. The results showed that the

interaction through email was more attractive. The students gave their comments to each other and learned from mistakes. One of the most important advantages of using email is to bring native speakers and SL learners together. This will give them more chance to know about their problems from students of their ages. Moreover, communication through email allows students more freedom of expression (Beavois, 1994). According to Kroonenberg (1995), an additional benefit of the online discussion is that students who were usually timid about participation in class became more active participants. One more advantage of using email is to meet people outside the class at any time and from any place. Through email, we can do a lot of activities which help improve skills of the second language. These activities may be done among individuals or groups .

However, email, like any other application, must have some negative effects. Kaplan (2001) has stated one idea which may threaten the success of email in the FL classroom which is the peers' nonresponse. Another problem may appear; that is if the learners of the same target language interact via email, they may make mistakes without correction. They may have spelling, grammar or writing mistakes. Also, one more important problem which faces the learners via email is that the native speakers may not be interested in learning the learners' language and culture.

Email is one of the most important tools which help in learning a second language. Through this application, the learner can receive a lot of information which helps them to learn a new thing. For example, they may receive the strategies of any skill and start using them. They may have some videos which help them to enhance other skills like listening. However, this application can be used as a tutor. When the learners receive feedback or comments on their work, they will know about their mistakes and become able to correct them.

By focusing on linguistic functions of email in SAL, we can find that its main function is a written communication. As we know, this application is asynchronous. So, an addressee needs not to be present to receive a message (Laquey and Ryer, 1993). By using email as a medium of communication, we can see some linguistic functions related to the writing skills. These functions are as follows: we can use contraction, abbreviations, ellipsis, and features related to grammatical complexity. Some examples of these features are: omission of essential punctuation, and a tendency towards informal spelling and word usage in CMC. According to Murray 1990, and Uhlíová, 1999, it has clear features of oral communication. So, the creative use of capitalization, spelling, and pronunciation to convey effects of gestures and tone had led a number of researchers to comment on the prevalence of linguistic innovation on CMC like (Crystal, 2001, and Werry1996). Consequently, email can have a great linguistic function to learn a second language as well as it may have some bad writing habits like the omission of pronouns, articles, verb to be, the essential punctuation

and the use of the contraction, parenthesis, and exclamation mark. Also, the learners may repeat some letters or punctuation for emphasis .

Email, like any other application, must have software features. These features are; automatic reply to a message, auto forward, and redirection of the message. There is a facility to send copies of the message to many people. Also, we can store the addresses in our address book. The sender can receive notifications if a message cannot be delivered. Signatures can be attached. Files, graphics or sound files can be sent as attachments. In email, date and time are stamped automatically. The sender can paste information which he or she cuts or copies from another source and saves or sends it by email. These features help in learning the SL. The teacher can send the file to hundreds of students at the same time. He can make a list for his/her students to receive an email every day or every week as he /she selects .

According to Hubbard 2009, a call theory is a set of claims about the meaningful elements and processes within some domains of CALL, their interrelationships, and the impact that they have on language learning development and outcomes. So, we can infer that CALL theory is drawn from a number of sources like SLA theory, general learning theory, linguistic theories and human computer interaction theory. I have found that all CALL applications may share a similar theory. The theories which are concerned with email are motivation, reaction, reputation and correction of errors .

The using of CALL and in particular e-mail in L2 classroom has essentially increased the teacher's central role in orchestrating learning experiences (Kinzerpnd leu 1997, p. 24). We can describe this application as Kroonemberg (1995) has described it by saying it is "a very realistic form of communication". As I have mentioned above, email is very useful for SL learning and teaching. For learners, it will reduce the anxiety of using the language contrary to what they may feel in face to face communication. In other words, Shelter, 1997 described this advantage by saying " asynchronous email might be less threatening for students to use to communicate with their teachers". In fact, because email is created by word processing on computer, students are more likely to revise their work more thoroughly due to the ease of its correction (McGreat, 1988). Using the word processor for general purposes apparently facilitates detachment and therefore makes students more willing to accept criticism (McGreat, 1988). As Jung (1999) states: " E-mail based projects can be motivating and exciting to students because they interact with real people about real things in a meaningful context. When we move to examine the effectiveness of using email in enhancing SLA, we can find some studies that are done on this field and reveal that email is a very useful tool to improve writing skills. Regarding Gonzalez and Bueno and Perez's study, email improves students' attitudes towards learning and practicing the target language. It will also improve the students' ability of independent learning, so the teacher needs to use it in her teaching to help her students and make her course more attractive .

The teacher in this application's activities works as a facilitator. Thus, by using email, the teacher can save the classroom time. She/ He will be able to email all students at the same time. The advantages of e-mail use for teachers include access to professional development forums; the opportunity to contact colleagues and share best practices; and the ability to forge links that benefit the school (Ictadvice 2003). 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. The teacher can make pretest and posttest to examine the development of students' ability through email.

Using email in learning and teaching the English language is very important so, I have some suggestions to make it more valuable. The teacher needs to use this application to enhance all language skills not only written communication. She/he can do that by sending attachments and asks the students to record their responses to enhance their speaking skills. She can use this application as synchronous CMC and take benefit of connecting between SL learners and native speakers as it is difficult for most of them to face them in the real life. The teachers should act as an active guide but not a controller. In the background of web-based teaching, it is 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).

Conclusion and recommendation:

In conclusion, email is one of the most effective way of learning English as a second language. Through different studies which were done in this field, it has been found out that the teacher and the learner can improve English language learning and teaching by using email. Teachers should catch up with the advancements of technology by acquiring the modern teaching methods so that they can help the students benefit as much as possible from the use of e-mail. The learners need to enhance their skills by using such an application and communicate with native speakers outside the class topics.

Depending on the results of this study ,there are many recommendations which I can introduce for the teachers and learners and some suggestions for further study. These recommendations are:

For teachers and learners:

As we can investigate from this study that learning and teaching the second language can be affected by using email. The teachers and the learners need to follow the advancements of CALL applications to enhance learning or teaching of second language. They also need to examine the most effective way to develop the second language through technology. The teachers must be aware of the negative effects of using email in the writing skill of the second language learning and help the learners to follow the correct rule. The learners can connect with the native speakers to ensure that they will help in writing problems.

Suggestions for further study:

To focus on one skill like writing to examine the effectiveness of using email in learning or teaching that skill.

To follow the advancements of CALL applications which will help in choosing the effective and more useful application to examine their role in language teaching and learning.

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استخدام البريد الإلكتروني لتعلم وتعليم اللغة الثانية

الملخص: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة تأثير استخدام البريد الإلكتروني كأحد أهم التطبيقات في تعلم اللغة الثانية. في هذه الدراسة ناقشت الباحثة فوائد استخدام البريد الإلكتروني في تعلم اللغة الثانية وفقا لبعض الدراسات السابقة التي أجريت في نفس المجال. وجدت الباحثة أن البريد الإلكتروني يمكن أن يحسن لغة الطلاب ويعزز تعليمهم في جانبين مختلفين: داخل وخارج غرفة الصف وخصوصا في مهارة الكتابة. كما ذكرت الآثار الإيجابية والسلبية لاستخدام البريد الإلكتروني للمتعلمين للغة الثانية. لذلك يمكن للمدرسين الاستفادة من استخدام هذا التطبيق في تعليمهم ويمكن للباحثين أيضا اتباع التوصية التي أدرجتها المؤلفه في النهاية. وأخيرا، أتمنى أن تُحدث هذه الدراسة تغييرات في دافعية الطلاب لتعزيز تعلمهم للغة الثانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البريد الإلكتروني، الاتصال، الفوائد التربوية، التحفيز.