Effects of Using Technology to Engage Students in Learning English at a Secondary school

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, more and more teachers are applying technology to improve teaching quality and help students learn more actively. This study investigates the impact of technology on engaging students to learn English and explores students' attitudes towards the use of technology in the classroom. This study aims to develop useful suggestions for educators, students, and teachers in secondary schools to engage students in learning English, thereby improving the quality of education. Besides, it encourages teachers to use technology in the classroom to enhance students' interests. This study was conducted at a Secondary School in Kien Giang province, with 45 students responding to the questionnaire with items about their attitudes towards technology used in the classroom. Additionally, the involvement of 6 English teachers in interviews also helped to deepen the understanding of teachers' beliefs about using technology to attract students to learn English. The findings of the study show that technology had a significant impact on students' engagement.

Introduction

Interest is what creates self-discipline. Interest and self-discipline are two psychological factors that ensure positivity, independence, and creativity in learning. In contrast, independent and creative active learning styles influence the development of interest and self-discipline. Sharma and Ranjan (2016) stated that it is necessary to make students interested in learning so that they can learn more autonomously and effectively. It means that if students want to study well, they must love learning first. They will be willing to join learning activities in every class because interest gives rise to the aspiration that makes them study and work effectively. Therefore, the desire to understand, the positivity in cognitive activities, self-study, and self-forging skills are the factors that need to be educated for students when they learn English. Students' interest in participating in learning activities always brings success to the lesson. When students are interested in what they are learning, they pay more attention to the lessons, they process the information more efficiently, and they apply more effective learning strategies. Therefore, the teachers need to find ways to engage students in learning English at school. Engaging students

in the learning process can increase their attention and focus, motivate them to practice higher-level critical thinking skills, and promote meaningful learning experiences. Lester (2013) said that the interest in student engagement levels grows a lot because it is an acknowledged way for students to experience increased learning and improved outcomes from an educational institution.

As English teachers, a high level of student engagement should be a priority because the more students are engaged, the more they learn and the more they achieve. Saeed and Zyngier (2012) stated that students are engaged when being involved in their work. They will try their best to overcome challenges and obstacles, and of course, they will be delighted to complete their work. Using technology as media in the classroom is very helpful because it can increase the student's interest in the learning process. As we know, English is a foreign language. It is not easy for students to approach and adapt. Therefore, it requires students to have a passion, a positive motivation, and an interest in learning English. When students are engaged in the learning process, they are less likely to lose interest in what they are taught. Engaged students are more likely to excel in standardized tests and less likely to drop out.

Most students in secondary school find it rather difficult to learn English. Therefore, they don't have an interest in learning English. This affected the students' learning attitude. They learn English in class with a passive attitude and a lack of interest. Most of them do not actively participate in learning activities in English classes. Tuma (2021) said that a weakness in the teaching process is the students' passivity in lectures. This affects the quality of teaching and learning. Martin and Bolliger (2018b) believed that student engagement could increase their satisfaction, motivate students in learning, relieve the sense of isolation, and enhance the participation of students in the lessons.

There are many ways to engage students in learning English. It depends on the student's level, the teacher's method, the facilities of schools, etc., so that the teachers can apply their suitable ways. However, after applying some ways to students in my school, I realize that one of the most effective ways that can engage students in learning English is to apply technology to the lessons. Kaur and Nadarajan (2020) said that teachers could enhance students' engagement and active participation in the classrooms in an effective manner by using technological hardware and software such as computers, tablets, online teaching, and learning applications. While the traditional methods of teaching English by simply providing knowledge to students through classroom teaching activities supported by cassette players, blackboards, white chalk, etc., have become obsolete. Instead, there are many modern devices such as TVs, projectors, interactive whiteboards, etc., that we can apply in teaching English.

Nowadays, along with international economic integration and globalization trend, the improvement of English ability has always been of interest to the education sector at all levels of education. That is why nowadays, more teachers are using technology in teaching English than before to promote positivity, initiative, and creativity for students in learning English. To achieve the above goal, many English teaching methods have been improved and applied. The application of information technology in teaching is considered a very effective measure to increase interest in English lessons. Lari (2014) said that today technology plays an important

role in education. To engage students in their lessons, teachers use it in their classrooms. Being aware of the benefits of using technology in education and the importance of student engagement, the researcher planned to study the effects of using technology to engage students in learning English at secondary school.

Literature Review

This part contains the study's theoretical background and the definitions of the terms relevant to the study, including technology and student engagement. The results of several related studies are also mentioned at the end of this part.

Definitions of students' engagement

Before studying the importance of using information technology for student engagement in learning English, it is important to define what student engagement is clearly. Experts have also defined student engagement in different ways. According to Martin and Bolliger (2018a), student engagement is the psychological investment of students in an effort directed to learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote. Dixson (2015) said that the attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, and communication with others of the individual are considered engagement. Student engagement depends on the time, energy, thought, effort, and feelings that students put into their learning. Student engagement is simply the participation, interaction, and enthusiasm of students during the learning process. In addition, Nguyen (2021) defines students' engagement as an important collaboration all throughout the learning environment that ought to emphasize the relationship between understudies and instructors, classmates, institutions, instruction, syllabus, and educational programs. Therefore, it is considered the factor that leads to the success of online learning. Dixson (2015) also said that the degree to which students actively participate by thinking, talking, and interacting with other students in the course and instructors about the content of a course is generally known as student engagement. Therefore, student engagement is a major factor in keeping students connected to the course. In a word, student engagement is simply understood as the participation and cooperation of students in the lessons. This is also the factor that can lead to the success of the teaching and learning process. Therefore, encouraging students to participate in learning activities is a very necessary thing that teachers need to do in the teaching process.

Definition of technology

Ahmadi and Reza (2018) defined technology as a manner of carrying out a task, notably using technological procedures, methods, or information. It has been characterized as the practical application of knowledge, particularly in a particular area.

The use of technology in the classroom

Technology is a useful tool for students. The usage of technology by students in the learning process is very important. Teachers should demonstrate how to use technology to enhance the curriculum so that students can use it more frequently to improve their language abilities. D'Angelo (2018) said that by incorporating technology into the curriculum, instructors have a

priceless chance to improve student engagement and academic achievement. In fact, learning a new language traditionally is not as interesting as learning a language with the help of information technology. However, there are still some teachers who rarely use technology in teaching. Gömleks (2004) thought that teachers' attitudes have a great influence on the use of information technology in the classroom, and according to some researchers, some teachers do not have a positive attitude towards computers, and they are very afraid of using computers in the classroom. This will reduce the interest of the learners. To me, one of the most effective ways that can engage students in learning English is by using technology in teaching. So, what does using technology in teaching mean? It is simply understood as the use of information technology devices and software as tools to support the teaching and learning of subjects in school, making good use of the software and designing lessons such as PowerPoint, word, violet, etc. Nguyen (2022) stated that technological advancement also has a significant impact on language learning. Numerous changes have been made to the way things are done, including updating the way English is taught using information technology advancements like using computers in the classroom.

In addition, according to Madiseh, Abri, and Sobhanifar (2022), the rapid development in technology and information has inspired teachers to explore innovative technology resources and promote the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, the application of technology can create a natural language learning environment, enable students to access accurate speech of native speakers, and make the teaching process more attractive. By designing electronic lectures with beautiful, vivid images and interesting video clips, teachers can attract students' participation in learning activities. With the development of information technology, the education industry has more and more opportunities to explore the optimization of software to improve teaching efficiency.

Gashi Shatri (2020) said that by using technology in teaching, teachers could create more opportunities for students to learn and interact with one another through the exchange of ideas and experiences and joint problem-solving. Teachers would have a lot of benefits from using technology tools in teaching. According to several studies, technology tools can enhance and improve students' engagement and active participation in the classrooms in an effective manner. Many technology tools can be applied in teaching English. Tran (2021) said that outside of class, social networking sites are seen as a useful teaching resource for EFL students. Additionally, they are crucial in fostering the process of group learning. Some of the most effective tools which many English teachers have used in teaching English are PowerPoint and Kahoot. Therefore, let's discuss the effects of these tools on engaging students in learning English.

PowerPoint: There is a wide variety of teaching software developed to assist language teachers in their classrooms. One of the most effective applications that many English teachers have used is PowerPoint. PowerPoint is an effective pedagogical tool in the classroom. Today, most English teachers use PowerPoint software to prepare lectures. This means that PowerPoint is a very effective application in teaching. Inoue-Smith (2016) supposed that PowerPoint had changed how teachers engage their students and present their lectures. PowerPoint allows us to

use images, audio, and video to have a greater visual impact. These visual and audio cues may also help me be more improvisational and interactive with the students. Instead of spending a lot of time and money to prepare all the visual aids, images, flashcards, and extra boards for the lectures, teachers can use PowerPoint lectures with various activities with images, audio, videos, etc. This is not only convenient for the teachers but also exciting for the students.

Kahoot!: Kaur and Naderajan (2019) stated that Kahoot! Invented in 2013 was considered a global educational brand because it has many unique features of typical gaming and teaching models that are interactive and competitive. Kahoot! is a game-based online learning tool that helps teachers design multiple-choice questions or learning games. Icard (2014) said that game-based learning had been regarded as a best practice to engage students in reviewing class content. It creates an atmosphere where students are critically thinking and engaged is essential for student learning. Through games, learners easily absorb knowledge more actively and with more interest. Teachers can use templates available on Kahoot! Or insert images, sounds, or YouTube links into the game to increase creativity and liveliness, making monotonous lessons more attractive to students. Kahoot! The application impresses and stimulates the learning spirit of learners because it has interactions in the form of games to test lesson knowledge. In addition, this application also creates a wide interaction and a spirit of learning competition among class members. Through this application, learners can give feedback to teachers about the quality of teaching as well as make the regular and direct exchange of ideas with teachers for effective English learning. Games on Kahoot! can help teachers change the forms of learning activities. This helps students acquire new knowledge actively. Through games, students can apply their knowledge to the games' situations, helping them practice, consolidate, expand their knowledge, and especially enjoy learning.

Some other researchers mentioned the importance of technology in improving language skills, like Kasapoğlu-Akyol (2010) studied "Using educational technology tools to improve language and communication skills of ESL students". And Yunus, Nordin, Salehi, Amin Embi, and Salehi (2013) did research on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching ESL writing skills. Besides, Wyk and Louw (2008) studied the effects of technology-assisted reading to improve reading skills for young south African learners. I realized that most of these studies mainly discuss the benefits that teachers can bring to their students when they use technology in teaching English, but there are very few studies mentioning the difficulties that teachers must face when applying technology in teaching. Several teachers in my school find it difficult to use technologies in teaching because the information technology skills of some teachers are still limited, especially older ones. They are not brave enough to overcome antiquity to be passionate and creative and even avoid using information technology in teaching. That is the reason why the research about the use of technology to engage students in learning English at Nguyen Truong To secondary school was conducted to find out the effectiveness of technology in engaging students in learning English.

The aims of the study

The research is carried out to fulfill the two aims; The fundamental research explored the effects of technology tools on engaging students in learning English. And the second aim of the

research was to see what students' attitudes towards the technology used in the classroom were

Research Questions

What are the student's attitudes towards the technology used in the classroom?

Methods

This section produces an overview of the research methodology employed in the study. First, the section introduces the research questions, hypothesis, and design, followed by the description of the research instruments and participants. Finally, data collection and data analysis procedures are described in detail.

Research Setting and Participants

Research Setting

This study was conducted at Nguyen Truong To, Rach Gia city, Kien Giang Province. My school is on the outskirt of Rach Gia city, so the facilities for teaching and learning are not as spacious as the schools in the center of the city. However, being aware of the role, importance, and effectiveness of technology in teaching in general and foreign languages in particular, the school administrators have paid special attention and decided to bring technology into teaching and learning. Each classroom has been equipped with a television with a network connection at the beginning of the school year. Now, teachers in my school have more chances to use technology in teaching. As we know, English is considered a subject that requires the teachers to prepare a lot of visual aids. Therefore, with traditional methods, the teachers have to prepare a lot of teaching aids for each lesson. It is not only costly but also time-consuming. However, by using technology, the teachers can bring a lot of images, pictures, and video clips to classrooms. This both saves time and makes the lessons more interesting. The application of technology in teaching English helps teachers have more fully skilled lectures. The content of the lectures is more diverse and interesting. Moreover, it also saves time in class so that students, as well as teachers, have more time to interact and exchange.

Participants

Forty-five students consisting of 17 boys and 28 girls ranging from 13 to 15 years of age in class 9/1 of Nguyen Truong To secondary school participated in the research. Thirty-five students came from the city center. Ten came from the suburb of the city. According to the results of the previous year's statistics, this class has eight students with excellent grades, 14 students with good grades, 13 students with average grades, and 10 with bad students. I conducted a study on students' attitudes toward learning English at school and the effects of technology tools on engaging students in learning English.

Instruments

Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements and utilized the Likert scale, asking the students to choose one of the following appropriate responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Don't know (neutral), Strongly Disagree, and Disagree. And 6 English teachers were chosen to interview about their opinion.

Questionnaire

The researcher herself designs the questionnaire with 15 items ranging from "Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly agree" about participants' attitudes towards teachers' use of technology in the classroom. Firstly, the questionnaire is written in English, and then the researcher translates them into Vietnamese. This will prevent misunderstanding among the participants and help them save time in answering all the items. And the Vietnamese versions also make the participants willing to answer every item quickly and effectively. The questionnaire will be sent to the participants in printed forms. After one week, the questionnaires will be collected for analyzing the data.

Interview

Interviewing is considered the most data collection technique a qualitative researcher processes. The purpose of interviewing people is to find out what is on their minds, what they think, or how they feel about something. In this research, the interviews will be conducted with six teachers who have been observed from the sample. This research instrument aims to give insights into teachers' beliefs about using technology to engage students in learning English.

Research Design& process/ Data Collection& Analytical Methods

Research design

In this study, a mixed methods design, which includes both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, was used to investigate the effects of using technology to engage students in learning English and students' attitudes towards the use of technology in class. A mixed research method will help the researcher collect data more objectively and accurately.

Research process

The study began on the first week of the second semester and lasted for ten weeks. The questionnaire was given out to 45 students in class on 9/1 at Nguyen Truong To secondary school. They participated in responding to the items of the questionnaire in the middle of the second term of the academic year 2021-2022. Students were instructed how to give a response to each item. The questionnaire paper didn't require the student's name to encourage students to answer all questions as honestly and accurately as possible. Therefore, all their answers would be anonymous and confidential. Students took about 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Data collection & analysis

The data collection would be conducted for ten weeks. Two instruments, mainly questionnaires, and interviews were conducted respectively. The researcher used printed paper to collect the result of the questionnaires so that the data could be collected and analyzed more easily and effectively.

Findings and Discussion

In this session, the results of the research are presented. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed to measure the students' attitudes towards the use of technology in the classroom, the effects of technology tools in teaching were discussed.

Table 1. Responses to statements 1-4

As can be seen in Table 1, more than half of the participants (55,6%) strongly agreed that technology was very useful in learning English. A slightly smaller proportion also agreed (33,3%), which made the percentage of general agreement (*88.9%*). Only *11,1%* did not know, and no disagreeing responses were found. Besides, 37,8% of students strongly agree that PowePoint lectures are more interesting than traditional lectures, and 44,4 % of students agree with that idea. In comparison, only 11,1% of students disagree with the statement that PowerPoint lectures are more interesting. These findings show that most of the students in the class were interested in the PowerPoint lectures. Moreover, based on the results of statements 2 and 4 (see table 1), we could conclude that most of the students in class 9/1 agreed that students could learn English better with technology tools, and more than half of the students (77,8%) like playing games with Kahoot.

Table 2. Responses to statements 5-8

Based on the result in table 2, almost half of the participants (*44,4%) strongly agreed that* technology gave students motivation and interest, and the number of those who agreed was a little bigger (*48,9%*). The total agreement was (93,3%). No disagreeing responses were found, and only (6,7%) did not know. In addition, the results of statements 5 and 8 showed that 73% of students liked learning English through clips and YouTube. Moreover, all students were interested in the lectures with video clips, images, and games. Especially, 100% of participants strongly agreed and disagreed that technology tools used in the classroom could engage students in learning English.

Table 3. Responses to statements 9-12

No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Strongly disagree	Disagree
9	The lectures with the use of technology make students difficult to understand	0	0	0	15	30
No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Strongly disagree	Disagree
10	The lectures with the use of technology help students acquire the new knowledge more easily	10	20	5	2	8
		22,2%	44,4%	11,1	4,4%	17,9
No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Strongly disagree	Disagree
11	Technology tools used in classroom can engage students in learning English	15	30	0	0	0
		33,3%	66,7%	0%	0%	0%
No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Strongly disagree	Disagree
12	The electronic lectures are more interesting than the traditional lectures	10	35	0	0	0
		22,2%	77,8%	0%	0%	0%

The results of statement 9 in table 3 showed that no students agreed with the statement "the lectures with the use of technology make students difficult to understand," while all students agreed that technology tools in the classroom could engage students in learning English (see table – statement 11). Besides, 100% of students agreed on the idea that electronic lectures were more interesting than traditional ones.

Table 4. Responses to statements 13-15

No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Strongly disagree	Disagree
13	Lectures with the application of technology give students more chance to practice in class	15	20	2	0	8
		33,3%	44,4%	4,4%	0%	17,9%
No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Strongly disagree	Disagree
14	Students can learn new words betters through images and videos in the electronic lectures	20	25	0	0	0
		44,4%	55,6%	0%	0%	0%
No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Strongly disagree	Disagree
15	Students don't like the teacher's using technology in the classrooms	0	0	0	10	35
		0%	0%	0%	22,2%	77,8%

As shown in Table 4, (33,3%) of students strongly agreed that lectures with the application of technology gave students more chance to practice in class. A slightly more proportion also agreed (44,4%), which made the percentage of general agreement (77,7%). While only *4,4%* did not know and 17,9% disagreeing responses were found. Besides, the result of statement 13 indicated that all students (100%) students supposed that they would have more chance to practice if they studied with the application of technology. Moreover, 50/50 of students in class 9/1 agreed (including strongly agreed and agreed) that they could learn new words better through the images and videos in the electronic lectures (see statement 14). And especially all students strongly disagreed or disagreed with the idea that "students don't like the teachers using technology in the classrooms" (statement 15).

Discussion

The results of the current study revealed that using technology in teaching English is very necessary. Technology can engage students a lot in learning English. Most students are very interested in the lectures with the application of technology. The result from the interview also showed that all the teachers indicated that the use of technology in the classroom could engage students in learning English. The result showed the important role of technology on students' engagement. However, few related studies examined the effect of using technology on students' engagement. Most of the related studies revealed positive effects of technology on students' learning skills like speaking and writing, "The Impact of YouTube, Skype and WhatsApp in improving EFL Learners' Speaking Skill" by Mustafa (2018) and Yundayani, Susilawati, and Chairunnisa (2019) studied about the effect of canvas on students' writing skills. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill in the gap by investigating the effectiveness of using technology to engage students in learning English.

Through the results, in terms of students' attitudes toward the teacher's use of technology in the classroom. The research investigated if the students were interested in the lectures with the application of technology. The participants' responses in the tables indicated that students had a positive attitude towards using technology in the classroom. They liked the electronic lectures with the help of technology tools like PowerPoint, Kahoot! and YouTube. Most students thought that technology was very useful and helped them a lot in learning English. A surprising result was that all students didn't agree with the statement "students don't like the teacher's using technology in the classrooms". Besides, the finding indicated that the lectures with the use of technology make students easier to understand the lesson. In general, all the above responses showed that the use of technology in teaching could engage students in learning English.

Conclusion

Students generally have a positive attitude towards the technology used in the classroom. Most of them think that technology is very helpful in learning English. Technology tools used in the classroom not only make students more interested in the lesson but also help them learn English more effectively. The application of technology in education in general and in English teaching in specific is inevitable because of technology's great benefits to both teachers and students. Classes s with the application of technology, teachers and students must immerse themselves in

the endless experiences of the huge treasure of knowledge and the realities of social life worldwide. The realities of social life all over the world. Especially, technology can make students interested in the lessons. And when the learners are interested in learning English, they will find effective learning ways to pursue their goals. In addition, applying technology in teaching helps teachers improve their creativity and become more flexible in their teaching process. Teachers are now not only limited to the amount of existing knowledge but also learn more about other specialties such as informatics and learn advanced skills in using images and sounds in lesson design. The above results of the research prove that using technology to engage students in learning English is a necessary thing that all teachers should do in the process of teaching to give students interest in learning. From that, we can give them a positive attitude, motivation, and passion for learning English.

Acknowledgments

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Biodata

Pham Thi Chuong has been working as an English teacher at Nguyen Truong To Secondary School, Rach Gia City, Kien Giang Province for 24 years. She chose this profession for her desire and passion. She is currently studying for a master's degree at Tra Vinh University. She is very interested in doing research. Her area of research is to explore the benefits of technology in engaging students to learn English. In her opinion, the more students are engaged, the more they learn, and the more they achieve. She believes that her research efforts will greatly contribute to improving the quality of the school's education.