Pindus Journal Of Culture, Literature, and ELT
ISSN: 2792 – 1883 **Vol 2 No. 4**
https://literature.academicjournal.io

How does Using Computer Technologies Affect the Language Learning Process in ESP Classes?

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Annotation: The present article is intended to reveal the effectiveness of technology in ESP classes through the experimental study conducted at Tashkent State University of Law with 200 first-year students and ESP instructors from the foreign languages department. In the research diverse methods were employed such as qualitative, quantitative, and experimental. Regarding this, necessary investigating tools were applied which assisted in finding essential data to unveil whether technology-based lessons are more effective and facilitative than typical traditional classes.

The findings of the research article show that computer technologies can affect both positively and negatively in ESP classes depending on how they are implemented in the classroom and students' literacy level. The result of the interviews and the questionnaires with the ESP teachers and the law students at Tashkent State University of Law indicates that technology has become an inseparable part of ESP classes. However, it is evident from the research paper that technology can also become a distracter if not applied appropriately in ESP classes. The experiment of technology versus "no technology" lessons are conducted in this research paper and the results are described in the form of graphs, charts in the article.

Keywords: language learning, ESP classes, technology-based, legal English, traditional classes, computer technologies, online activities, the effect of the technology.

Introduction

Technology has been in language learning for quite a long time. The first use of technology can be seen in audio-lingual methods (ALM) in which audio recorders were used in language classrooms. Furthermore, implementing ALM in most language departments at universities led to creating language labs. However, technology is developing at an accelerating rate. Since the widespread use of audio recorders and video materials in language classrooms, wireless internet has become a normality in designing appropriate language tasks. Moreover, with the rapid advancement of technology, it is predicted that language learning will be among the first to benefit from the use of virtual reality. Nevertheless, according to Gardner (2014) when most people say technology, they usually mean the things that have "on and off" functions which he believes that these so-called technologies may not help us to do lots of things in language classrooms. What Gampbell really means is that using technology should never be a virtual variant of what we do in the physical world, on the contrary, teachers need to find or even create technologies that will transform language learning to the next level. The authors will focus on the use of technologies in language learning and teaching in ESP classes. Computers, machines have been in use in ESP classes since 1960, from CD-ROMs to Computer-assisted learning and large corpora (Elzbieta, 2015). Even though technology has been in use in language learning classes for ESP purposes, there has not been much research on the effect of using computer technologies language learning in ESP classes. Most articles in this field focus on individual applications or tools and their use in certain topics.

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 4 for the month of April-2022

For example, Asmali (2018) conducted research on the impact of the clicker platform using a smartphone application called Kahoot and found that learners who used clicker did better than those who did not use it. However, these kinds of research articles do not consider the overall impact of the usage of the technologies in language learning in ESP classes. The authors did extensive research on this topic and conducted empirical research on the effect of the technology's use in learning legal English at Tashkent State University of Law.

There are a couple of questions this article tries to answer:

Does using computer technologies affect ESP students learning the languages positively?

Does using computer technologies have any drawbacks in language learning for ESP students and teachers?

How can ESP teachers get all the benefits of the computer technologies and avoid any problems it may bring alongside them?

How should ESP students use computer technologies to learn foreign languages in a way that does not negatively affect their other classes or harm their health?

What is the future of computer technologies in language learning for ESP areas?

The current study is intended to investigate whether using technologies in ESP classes can positively affect students' performance, improve the quality of the language learning process and assist in helping students achieve their desired results ultimately.

Literature review For the last decade, technology has developed to such a great extent that it has been highly affecting productivity rates and efficiency in language learning settings. Moreover, a number of technological tools have been used in various areas of pedagogy and language teaching such as TEFL, TESL, and ESP. Teaching a foreign language to the students who specialize in the areas which are way further from linguistics is such a challenge for language educators. Not only do they have to be proficient in the language itself, but also should have sufficient knowledge in the students' major. Another one of the most significant struggles might be the fact that in most ESP classes students have difficulties in exposing themselves to the language environment. The reason for this is likely to be that ESP students do not have a language background and the subject matter they are taught does not comply with their level. As a result, they might experience alienation, disengagement, underachievement, and ultimately failure of the course (Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano & Hawkins, 2000). As Bunce, VandenPlas&Havanki (2006) note a language cannot be transmitted to a discouraged and unassertive student. Thus, taking into consideration the above mentioned hardships, if the ESP students are taught a foreign language using traditional methods and techniques, they are most likely to get demotivated, classes can become mundane, and eventually there is a high possibility of dropping out from the course. Nevertheless, this situation can be improved and negative consequences can be avoided by implementing up-to-date teaching approaches, appropriate technological instruments, and suitable materials. According to Admiraal, Huizenga, Akkerman& Dam (2011), applying technology can positively influence the students' participation and performance. What is more, it can stimulate their extrinsic motivation and raise the engagement in second language acquisition. Meanwhile, Fotaris (2016) notices that employing online games during the lessons can prolong their regular attention span and encourage them to participate more actively since games create a competitive atmosphere and provide immediate rewards which positively impact on overall performance.

As Husaj (2014) states technology changed everything in language learning: IT as a product and service is a must in language classrooms which we can not imagine our lessons without them. Youtube, video recorders, and other tools transformed our language classes and allowed language

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 4 for the month of April-2022

teachers to differentiate instructions and adapt different activities in ESP classes. Husaj believes that technology plays a crucial role in assisting foreign language teachers and facilitating language learning because of which they can get better results at schools or universities.

Umirov (2021) found in his research article that incorporating videos and audios help learners to learn much faster and have a positive washback in language learning. His research clearly shows that students generally prefer different kinds of content such as audio and videos, online language learning games rather than just a textbook.

New tools such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, and internet communications are replacing our traditional way of communication or the way we work, the lessons teachers teach (Zakhir, 2018). In his research, Zakhir found that when these technologies were used properly, technological tools encouraged the students to learn and improve their language skills. The majority of both students and teachers reacted positively toward the use of these tools in language learning in the ESP context.

Methods

The methods of this research article include a number of investigating tools such as questionnaires among the ESP teachers and the students, interviews with both the teachers and the students as well as research experiments among the two groups of students on the effectiveness of technology-based instruction.

The researchers taught two groups of students in separate classes using two completely different approaches, i.e. a traditional method without any means of technology and a contemporary method where the students were instructed utilizing a variety of technology.

The participants of the research were 20 ESP teachers from the foreign languages department at Tashkent State University of Law. The teachers at the department have 1-20 years of experience in teaching legal English. 60% of the teachers have 5 or more years of experience and 40 % of the teachers have less than 5 years of work experience in teaching legal English. Firstly, the ESP instructors were asked to do a certain questionnaire, the questions of which were mainly about the use of the technology and their experience of using computer technologies in their ESP classes. Additionally, the questionnaire also included questions of how the teachers want their classes to be technologically equipped and their views of future technologies' use in the future ESP classes. The full list of the questions is given in appendix 1.

In the following stage, the researchers involved 200 first-year law students at Tashkent State Law University. Then, the researchers also gave a similar questionnaire to the students with a slight alteration. The questions in the questionnaire were almost identical to the ones given to the teachers, but they were given so that the students could answer from students' perspectives (Appendix 2 to see the list of students' questionnaire questions).

After collecting enough data from the questionnaire both from teachers and students, the researchers conducted 2 lessons implementing two contrasting methods. The 30 participants were selected and they were divided into 2 groups. In the experiment part, the first group was taught by S.Seytniyazova in a traditional approach with minimal or no technology. The second group was led by S.Umirov, and the classes were computer-technology enriched and with minimal traditional means of tools.

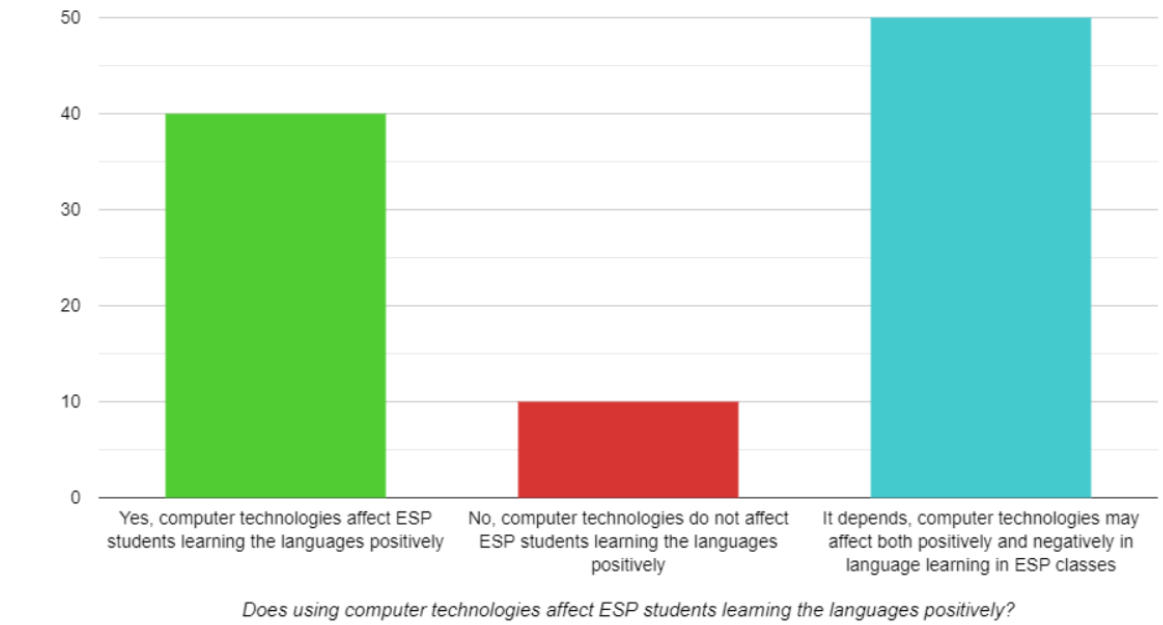
There were 15 students in each group in both researchers' classes and they taught 10 classes in sequence to check the efficiency of technologies in ESP classes. To study how technology exerted influence on their performance, the authors used the final exam results and conducted interviews

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 4 for the month of April-2022

with the students and teachers in groups so that they would find out their views on the use of technologies.

Results & Discussion

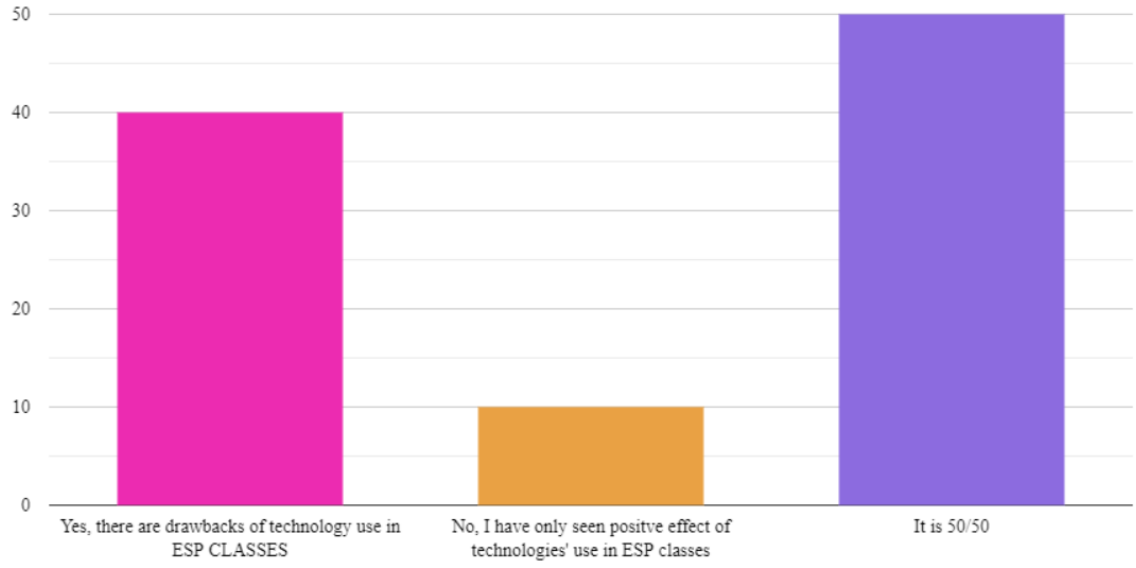
The results of the questionnaire from the teachers show that they believe that computer technologies' role is significant. However, there is no consensus of it is all positive or negative. When asked whether technologies affect only positively, 40% of them responds as "yes" it is positive, and 50% of the teachers believe that using technologies may affect both positively and negatively, 10% of them think that technologies impact negatively in the classes, respectively. (Graph 1)



(Graph 1)

Most of the ESP teachers at the department use some sort of technology in their classrooms and tend to think that technologies are an essential part of the ESP classes. However, when asked if they think the technologies have any drawbacks in language learning, half of them were not sure about it and responded as 50/50. 40% of them believe that computer technologies affect positively language learning, 10% consider technology causing some issues in the classes, respectively. (Graph 2) This contradicts the widespread assumption that technology always affects language learning.

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 4 for the month of April-2022

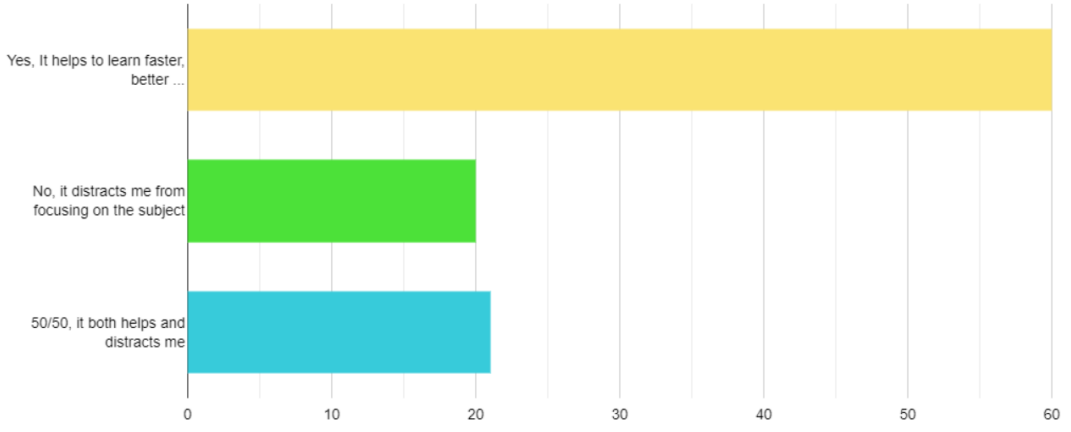


Does using computer technologies have any drawbacks in language learning

(Graph 2)

It can be concluded from the results of the questionnaire that most people agree that teaching ESP classes without computer technologies is almost impossible in the 21st century. Nevertheless, there is not a general consensus on if it only helps the learners to learn or distract as well, Some of the teachers believe that technologies are profit-driven, that's why most of the technologies do more harm than good to the students' learning experience. They feel that computer technologies should be strictly regulated in the education sphere.

Students' responses are also critical of the use of technologies in ESP classes. Most of the students (60%) consider the technologies as helpful in language learning and these tools help them to learn foreign languages better. On the contrary, 20% of the students responded as "technologies distract me", the rest (20%) of them believe that these tools can both help and distract depending on their use of them. (Graph 3)



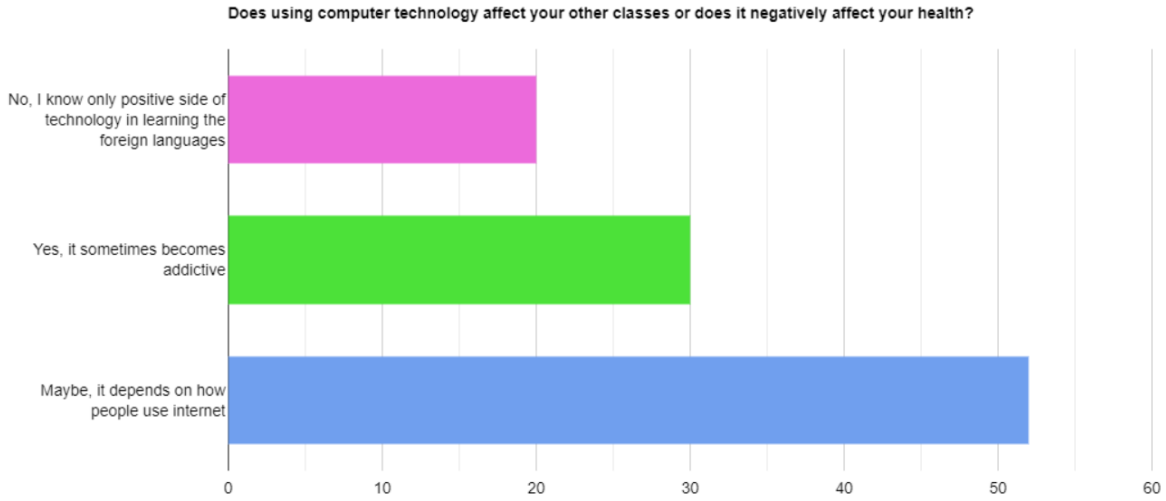
Do you think technology helps you learn a foreign language better?

(Graph 3)

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 4 for the month of April-2022

Technologies are not used in only ESP classes but also in other subjects as well. 30% of the students think that computer technologies might affect their other classes or their health negatively. As an explanation, some of them noted the eyesight issues, headaches after using technologies, and the classes in which low-technology classes become boring when ESP classes are technology-enriched, or it may simply become addictive and interfere with their everyday life. However, a large proportion of the students 50% think it depends on how the technologies are used by the students and the teachers, 20% assume technology does not have negative sides in language learning, respectively. (graph 4)

The results of the questionnaire show that technology does not only affect positively but also it can become the source of problems in language learning. Both students and teachers believe that technology will heavily influence ESP classes and there will be more and more technologies in the classrooms in the future.



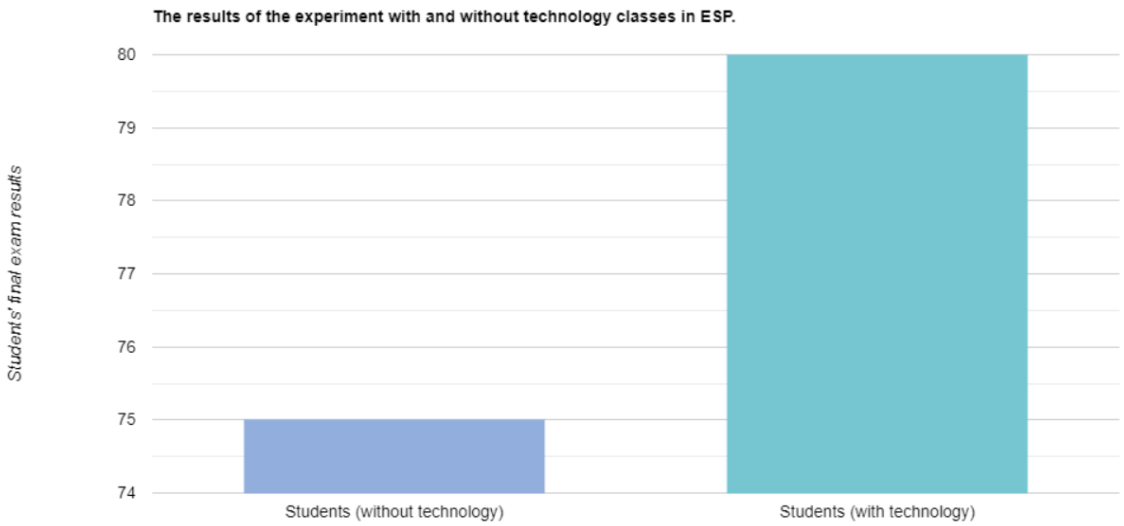
(Graph 4)

Having conducted 10 lessons and analyzed students' scores in the final summative test, it was revealed that the students who were taught using different means of technology outperformed those who learned the language in a traditional language setting. The results show that the first group was able to get a 20% higher score than the second group. In order to discuss the results and impressions from the lessons, the interviews were held both with teachers and freshmen. Consequently, during the interview, the teachers mentioned some advantages of using technology. First, they noticed that they spent less time preparing for lessons. Video, audio materials, and ready-made images made it easier to develop a well-planned lesson. Another benefit was that technological tools such as PowerPoint presentations, supplementary comprehension checking online activities (e.g. Kahoot. it, nearpod.com, quiziz.com, etc.), topic-based videos gave an opportunity to implement differentiated tasks to engage all the students. Regarding the drawbacks, the teachers found it hard to get access to the internet because of the unstable connection. Furthermore, some of the online sources require a paid subscription which can cause financial difficulties. Finally, some language rooms need to be well-equipped to enable teachers to hold a variety of activities.

In regard to students' responses to the interview questions, it was discovered that students felt less tension while playing online games related to the topic being discussed. In addition, they also noted that the technology enabled them to retain new vocabulary better since they could hear them being

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 4 for the month of April-2022

used in the context in the videos. Also, according to some students' opinions, technology helped create a friendly and engaging atmosphere and taught some team-building skills. On the other hand, some students thought that using too much technology became addictive and distracting in the way that it made them forget their ultimate purpose of studying.



(Graph 5)

Conclusion

The authors analyzed the current literature on the area and conducted questionnaires, interviews and conducted 10 classes with and without technologies with the same level of students. It can be concluded that technologies are in our classes and they will only occupy more spaces in ESP classes, however, the implementation of the computer technologies. From the results of the questionnaires and the interviews, we can see that students lack computer literacy. As a solution, the authors believe that all educational institutions need to create classes or need to include digital literacy in their syllabus.

The results of the technology and without technology classes show that students do better when computer technology is incorporated properly. However, the results may not be enough to say conclusively that technologies are everything in ESP classes. This area may require more research or researchers may replicate the research in their own institutions.

The authors can conclude from the research as Bin-Hady, Altamimi (2021) state technology is an essential tool in improving all language areas from speaking, writing, reading, listening, and grammar.

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