



Academic Essay

Theoretical Perspectives of Integrating Technology into English Language Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

Three issues of technology integration into English language teaching and learning are present: inquiries on what and how technology is used to support language learning, ignorance of theoretical foundations and technology standards as a basis to design technology-supported language tasks and instructions, and English language teachers' attitudes that put technology far ahead of language learning. In response to these issues, this theoretical-based paper aims to discuss resources where teachers can find reliable technology to support their language teaching practices. It continues to explain language learning and task engagement principles and technology standards as a basis for designing language tasks and instructions. The author supports the discussions with relevant literature and instances of some technology-supported language tasks and teaching and learning practices. The paper then proposes a professional learning community meeting where the teachers can learn collaboratively with their colleagues in a supportive learning environment on how to use various technology applications. The paper concludes that it is essential for language teachers to have a clear understanding of the language learning objectives that their students need to achieve before utilizing a range of technology tools to assist their students in reaching the learning objectives. Moreover, teachers with principled ways of using technology should perform better in supporting students' learning with technology than those who design a technology-based task and instruction mainly based on their personal (and biased) experiences on what worked well with technology. Questions for future research exploration are presented.

Keywords:

Language learning

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Language learning principles

Technology

Technology standard



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1. Introduction

The author spots three issues of technology integration into English language teaching and learning practices. First, before incorporating technology in their classrooms, English language teachers often ask what technology to use and how to use it (Hubbard & Ioannou-Georgiou, 2017). Teachers with strong technological literacy should answer these inquiries quickly, but some other teachers who lack technology skills might find the "what and how" questions challenging to solve. Second, the teachers sometimes do not employ any theoretical principles and use technology standards as guidance for designing their technological instructions and tasks. Therefore, the designs are mainly based on their personal (and biased) experiences of what worked well with technology. Also, the teachers often do not set clear learning objectives to achieve after students complete the tasks. Third, several English language teachers might often be "technocentric" (Egbert & Shahrokn, 2018, p. 11). In other words, they focus more on incorporating the most sophisticated technology and putting the technology far ahead of language learning in their classrooms. If all of these issues are not addressed seriously, English language teachers will not be able to maximize the potential of various and recent technology tools for their language teaching and learning practices and fully help their students achieve their language learning goals.

In response, this paper would like to inform pre- and in-service English language teachers, fellow educators and practitioners about [1] of potential resources to find various types of technology for supporting English language learning. The discussion in this first section should answer the “what” technology that the teachers can use for learning and teaching purposes. Second, the paper aims to explain [2] language learning and [3] task-engagement principles, as well as [4] technology standards as theoretical foundations for designing technology-supported language tasks and teaching and learning practices. Then, the paper continues to propose [5] a *teacher technology meeting* as a supportive avenue for the teachers’ professional development in education technology. The meeting should shed more light on “how” the teachers can use the technology to support their language teaching practices. The overall discussions [1-5] in this paper should interest pre- and in-service English language teachers, specifically in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts where students learn English in a formal classroom with minimal opportunities to use the language outside the class (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). The paper should also benefit fellow educators and practitioners who wish to support their language teaching instructions and students’ English language learning with the best and wisest use of technology. The author will continue to explain his positionality and method of writing this paper.

2. Author Positionality

This section describes the author’s positionality to inform readers about the background experiences that he brought to write this paper. He has worked as a lecturer and a researcher in the English Language Education Program at a private university in Central Java, Indonesia, since 2014, with a special interest in integrating technology into his teaching and learning practices. He has actively conducted workshops to share his best practices in using technology in teaching and learning language and doing research for teachers, educators, and practitioners.

3. Method to Write This Paper

In writing this theoretical-based paper (similar to Ivone & Renanya, 2019), the author did not conduct research collecting interviews, questionnaires, or class observation data from research participants. Yet, the author supports his arguments related to the purposes of the study (see points 1-5 mentioned in the previous section) with relevant literature taken mainly from books and journal articles. The discussions were also completed with website links to access various language teaching and learning resources and practical language teaching and learning activities that language teachers can do with the support of technology. The author will continue to discuss the initial condition that language teachers need to know before deciding on particular technology tools to use in their classrooms. The author will then discuss each point (see points 1-5) in light of the relevant literature. In the end, the author will conclude by stating key points learned from this paper and suggesting some questions for future research.

4. Precursors: Knowing the Language Learning Objectives to Achieve by Students

First and foremost, language teachers need to know exactly what language learning objectives to achieve for their students. Then, they can decide what technology to use and carefully consider if the technology has the potential to help students achieve their language learning goals. As Egbert and Shahrokn (2018) reminded, “the technology use should be subordinated to the learning goals. In other words, teachers should not use the computer simply for its own sake” (p. 23). After knowing their students’ learning objectives, language teachers can explore various sources to find appropriate technology, as described in the following section.

5. Various Technology for Language Teaching and Learning Purposes

In this paper, technology refers to “the use of systems that rely on computers, digital applications, and networks in all of their forms” (Healey et al., 2008, p. 3). Technology also refers to “electronic tools, software, and hardware intertwined with the Internet used for teaching and learning purposes” (Mali & Salsbury, 2021, p. 250).

5.1 Learning from Educational Technology Books

Educational technology books (e.g., Egbert & Shahrokn, 2018; Hamilton, 2018; Muhtaris & Ziemke, 2015) that have practical and readable vocabularies, list various types of technology, and provide applicable scenarios for using the technology should be helpful resources. As an example, in a chapter of their book,

Egbert and Shahrokni (2018, p. 56) tell the potential Internet resources for supporting listening and speaking practices, such as:

- English Club (see <https://www.englishclub.com/>); this site provides online resources to study English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation and enables students to chat in English with other students.
- National Public Radio (visit <http://www.npr.org/>); this news site provides downloadable audio recordings (podcasts) for listening practices.
- Rachel English (see <https://www.youtube.com/user/rachelsenglish>); this YouTube channel demonstrates how to pronounce English words and say various English language expressions (e.g., greetings and introducing someone).
- The Internet TESL Journal (see <http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Speaking/> and <http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Listening/>); these sites display various sources (links) to find speaking and listening practice materials.

Additionally, Muhtaris and Ziemke (2015) end discussions of each chapter of their book with things to try tomorrow with technology. For instance, teachers may create sessions (e.g., thirty minutes on Fridays) for their students to explore various technology tools that their teachers use in classrooms. These sessions hope to familiarize students with the technology and make them more confident in using it. Also, the sessions should provide opportunities for students to explore the potential of technology to support their learning. After the sessions, students can be invited to share ideas from their exploration with the whole class or in a small group discussion so that they can gradually “get their creative juices flowing” (Muhtaris & Ziemke, 2015, p. 40) with the technology.

As another example, Muhtaris and Ziemke (2015) also suggest a “digital conversation” (see p. 63). Teachers select an article (e.g., from *Edutopia*, <https://www.edutopia.org/>) for their students to read. Then, the teachers ask them to annotate the article, react to some ideas, and propose some reflective questions about what they have learned. Afterwards, the students share their thoughts in a virtual discussion room (e.g., using *Padlet*, <https://padlet.com/>) and respond to each other’s ideas. The teachers can also monitor and participate in the online discussion.

In a more recent year, Hamilton (2018) discussed various technology tools and ideas for using the tools for different purposes of learning. For example, for visual learning, language teachers might use online drawing websites, such as *Sketchpad* (<https://sketch.io/sketchpad/>), *Drawisland* (<https://drawisland.com/>), or *Kleki* (<https://kleki.com/>) and ask students to draw self-portraits or personal favorites and then describe their drawing into a paragraph. The teachers might also introduce their students to *Wordsift* (<https://wordsift.org/>), a website that generates word clouds from text entered into the text box available on the site.

After students had finished their essays, they pasted their texts into *Wordsift* to create word clouds. They were then challenged to be thoughtful about the colors, fonts, and shapes they chose for their clouds. For their end products, they created slides of the word clouds with explanations of their choices, followed by slides of the essays themselves. When the slideshows of all students in the class were combined, students could see how the words in their clouds reflected different themes in their essays. (Hamilton, 2018, n.p.)

5.2 Learning from Educational Technology Websites

In addition to the books, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) website can be another helpful source. There is a section on the site called *Best Digital Tools for Teaching & Learning* (visit <http://www.ala.org/aasl/awards/best>) that lists the best (winning award) and user-friendly applications for teachers. For instance, some of the best apps in the year 2019 include Nearpod (<https://nearpod.com/>), Quizlet (<https://quizlet.com/>), and Do Ink (<https://www.doink.com/>). In short, Nearpod helps teachers to create interactive lessons and meet students’ needs by including 3D objects, virtual field trips to famous tourism landmarks across the world, quizzes, or open-ended questions (for a more detailed review of this app, read (Shahrokni, 2017). Meanwhile, with Quizlet, the teachers can create digital flashcards and interactive language quizzes or games that can be shared and accessed outside classrooms. Then, Do Ink is an IOS application to create green-screen videos (for a tutorial, watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1H3h19abII>). Movie industries often use green-screen technology to make actors look like they are in a place (e.g., desert, sea, or forest) that they are not actually in. We also see

how the green screen technology is usually used on the weather forecast on TV to make the news anchors stand on the weather map.

As an alternative to the AASL's website, a blog, namely *Free Technology for Teachers* (<https://www.freetech4teachers.com/>), can be a valuable source for finding technology applications. Richard Byrne owns the blog. He is best known as a five-time winner of the Edublogs Award for the *Best Resource Sharing Blog*. Byrne writes regular blog posts on various technology applications for teaching and learning, along with (YouTube) video tutorials on how to use the apps (visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/rbyrnetech>). Other YouTube channels owned by Indonesian lecturers that provide tutorials on various technology tools for language teaching and learning purposes are as follows:

- Dr. Finita Dewi: <https://www.youtube.com/@Finitadewi/videos>. This channel provides video tutorials on various apps for language teaching and learning, such as *Learning Apps*, *Vocaroo*, *Tricider*, *Answer Garden*, and many others.
- Dr. Risang Baskara: <https://www.youtube.com/@risangbaskara/videos>. This channel discusses many recent Artificial Intelligence tools and websites that language teachers can use to support their language teaching and learning.

5.3 Green-Screen Technology

Green-screen technology (see [Figure 1](#)) has been used in education to enhance students' creativity (see <https://www.culturestreet.org.uk/workshop.php?id=14>, as a project example). The author also knows the potential of using green screen technology in an English-speaking class where students work in pairs and create a short conversation about a holiday. Then, they have to video-record their conversation and put a favorite place to visit on their holiday as a background. To guide the students in editing their green screen video, they can watch these YouTube tutorials:

- Editing the green screen using *i Movie* (e.g., for MAC users) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RU0PxLNWzFM>
- Editing the green screen using *Open Shot Video Editor* (e.g., for Windows users) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sushecqMs4>



Figure 1. An English conversation edited with green-screen technology
(accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9QBpF2i2k8&feature=youtu.be>)

After knowing their students' language learning objectives and what technology to use to help their students achieve their learning goals, it is also essential that language teachers understand language learning and task engagement principles as a base for designing their technology-supported language learning activities in their classrooms.

6. Language Learning Principles

Lessons supported with technology need to focus on how students learn a language, which includes these principles (see [Egbert & Shahrokhni, 2018](#), pp. 14-15, for more details):

- Comprehensible input: The input that is above students' current level of language abilities should be generally useful for students. For instance, for a reading class, there is a website called *Newsela* (<https://newsela.com/>) that provides various English language texts and enables teachers to adjust vocabulary in the texts based on their students' lexical levels. [Table 1](#) provides a sample of sentences from different lexical levels.

Table 1. The sample sentences

Lexical level	The first sentence in a reading text in <i>Newsela</i>
580 L	The Institute for the Future is a group that studies many different things in the world.
840 L	The Institute for the Future is a group that does research and makes predictions.
1030 L	Eighty-five percent of the jobs that people will do in 2030 don't exist yet, the Institute for the Future has predicted.
1200 L	Most of the jobs that today's students will do in 2030 -- 85 percent of them to be exact -- don't exist yet, according to the Institute for the Future.

Note. The sentences in the table are from <https://newsela.com/read/colleges-preparing-students-future-jobs/id/48279/>

- Meaningful output: After receiving the information, students should have different options to express themselves. As an alternative, the use of blogs can assist students in writing in English in ways that they have not previously experienced; as what a student said: "posting in Blogspot has been a new experience to get in touch with technology, I enjoyed posting about my interest and watching the post and opinions of my classmates" ([Trajtemberg & Yiakoumetti, 2011, p. 443](#)).
- Noticing: Teachers focus explicitly on language forms and their related functions and meanings, which should be related to language tasks that students are working.
- Feedback: Students receive explanatory feedback more than just locating or circling errors in their work. If necessary, students should have opportunities to meet their teacher to discuss and clarify the feedback ([Culter, n.d.](#)).
- Social interaction: Students should be able to use the target language actively and creatively with other people to make their learning more effective.

The teachers can consider (some of) these principles as the basis for their technological instructions and tasks. Some language learning principles (e.g., feedback and social interaction) overlap with some task engagement principles discussed in the next section.

7. Task Engagement Principles

After describing the language learning principles, this paper continues to discuss task-engagement principles (see [Egbert & Shahroknii, 2018](#), pp. 16-18, for more details) as another foundation for designing the technology-supported language tasks. An engaging task has the following components:

- Authenticity: The topic, process, and content of the task should replicate what students can do in a real-world setting beyond classroom walls. "Does it look like something people create in the real world?" ([Miller, 2013, n.p.](#)) Authenticity also shows a condition when students feel that they can learn from the task ([Shahroknii, 2016](#))
- Interest: Students should feel interested in some aspects of the task. For instance, in a reading lesson, teachers can select a text with contents that interest (e.g., talking about learners' own lives) and enable the students to look for answers to their reading questions ([Macalister, 2011](#)).
- Social interaction: An engaging task should facilitate a two-way interaction among students; every student actively talks, listens, and responds to each other's ideas. There should not be only a few students who dominate the interaction.

- Scaffolding: The students have enough time to do the task and receive appropriate feedback from their teacher or from (according to [Harmer, 2007](#)) someone with better knowledge who can help the students to make progress in completing the task.
- Learning autonomy: Students can control some aspects of the task. In [Lee's \(1998\)](#) view, students can also decide to work at their pace with their own selected learning techniques.
- Skills balance: The teachers need to ensure that the task is not too challenging to complete with the students' current ability. However, the students "should not be put to sleep by overly simple-minded tasks" ([Egbert & Shahrokni, 2018, p. 17](#)).

When classroom tasks can integrate these language task engagement principles, learners will take learning opportunities offered by their teachers ([Egbert & Shahrokni, 2018](#)), spend more time, and have a more in-depth focus on the task ([Egbert, 2007](#)).

8. Technology Standards

In addition to the learning and task engagement principles, the teachers can also use technology standards as a basis for designing their technology-supported language instructions and tasks so that they can have more varied language teaching and learning activities than using PowerPoint slides to present learning materials. Technology standards tell expectations of technology integration and goals for what teachers and students should know and be able to do in practice (Son, 2021). This section informs an international-level technology standard, namely the *International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards* (for further info, see [Ayad & Ajrami, 2017](#); [Trust, 2018](#)). As stated in the website, the ISTE standards:

Provide the competencies for learning, teaching, and leading in the digital age, providing a comprehensive roadmap for the effective use of technology in schools worldwide. The standards also ensure that using technology for learning can create high-impact, sustainable, scalable, and equitable learning experiences for all learners. (<https://www.iste.org/standards>)

ISTE provides sets of goals and performance indicators for students to achieve. In total, there are seven ISTE standards for students, as shown in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. The ISTE standards for students

No	ISTE Standards	Performance Indicators
1	Empowered Learner	Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving, and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.
2	Digital Citizen	Students recognize the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of living, learning, and working in an interconnected digital world, and they act and model in ways that are safe, legal, and ethical.
3	Knowledge Constructor	Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts, and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.
4	Innovative Designer	Students use a variety of technologies within a design process to identify and solve problems by creating new, useful, or imaginative solutions.
5	Computational Thinker	Students develop and employ strategies for understanding and solving problems in ways that leverage the power of technological methods to develop and test solutions.
6	Creative Communicator	Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.
7	Global Collaborator	Students use digital tools to broaden their perspectives and enrich their learning by collaborating with others and working effectively in teams locally and globally.

Note. The descriptions in [Table 2](#) are taken from <https://www.iste.org/standards/iste-standards-for-students>. On the website, readers can also find more details of the performance indicators of using technology for teaching and learning purposes.

As an authentic example, in the year 2020, the author completed a classroom task based on the standard of the creative communicator (see [Table 2](#)) and performance indicator that asks students to create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations. In that task, the author summarized a book chapter (read [Mendoza, 2017](#)) and explained the summary in the form of podcasts created at <https://anchor.fm/>. The author then uploaded the podcast to his blog along with some brief technology applications generated from the chapter (see [Figure 2](#)).

Facebook groups: A tool for writing enhancement and language skills empowerment

In this podcast, I summarize ideas discussed in a book chapter written by Grazzia Maria Mendoza. Enjoy!

Resource information (APA format):

Mendoza, G. M. (2017). Facebook groups: A tool for writing enhancement and language skills empowerment. In P. Hubbard & S. Ioannou-Georgiou (Eds.), *Teaching English reflectively with technology* (pp. 179-190). Kent, England: IATEFL.



Figure 2. The blog post (visit <https://calvinio.blogspot.com/2020/02/facebook-group.html>)

In the end, the author submitted the blog post to his course instructor to receive the assignment grade and feedback. As another example, Indonesian university students can create a digital poster to promote a healthy lifestyle and write a paragraph to describe the poster (for a complete lesson plan, see [Mali, 2021b](#)). In a more recent year, [Mali \(2021a\)](#) edited a book chapter that has a collection of technology-supported lesson plans for language classrooms in an EFL university setting. The lesson plans were designed based on the ISTE technology standards and integrated various technology tools, such as *Blog* (<https://www.blogger.com/>), *Voscreen* (<https://www.voscreen.com/>), *Site123* (<https://app.site123.com/>), *StoryJumper* (<https://www.storyjumper.com/>), and *Flipgrid* (<https://info.flip.com/>).

With clear goals and performance indicators, language teachers should be able to ensure that students use technology not just for the sake of using it but to help students achieve their language learning-related goals and the needs of today's world. However, the teachers should not see the standards in isolation as they can always modify the purposes and performance indicators based on their current class conditions and access to technological tools.

9. Teacher Technology Meeting

After finding a potential technology from the sources and learning the language learning principles, task engagement principles, and technology standards, what is next? Language teachers in schools or universities are encouraged to hold a regular monthly *Teacher Technology Meeting* (henceforth called TTM), let us say on Fridays in the first week of a month. This TTM is aimed to "analyze how to use technology, give one another feedback, brainstorm ideas, and play together" ([Muhtaris & Ziemke, 2015](#), p. 23). TTM resembles a professional learning network where teachers can meet, share, and learn from each other about the use of educational technology. Also, the author wishes that TTM could respond to pessimistic voices about using technology, as stated by some teachers: "I am still not really competent on how to use it. I just know very simple software like using a word processor; that is what I am familiar with" ([Silviyanti & Yusuf, 2015](#), p.

39). "Because now computer is like an essential medium for teaching, I need to brush up my knowledge because I'm way back in terms of information technology" (Yunus, 2007, p. 90).

Practically speaking, the school or department head can assign all teachers to come to the meeting and work in a group of three teachers. The teachers can then practice using one or two technology applications they find from the technological books (see Egbert & Shahrokni, 2018; Hamilton, 2018; Muhtaris & Ziemke, 2015), the AASL's website, the YouTube channels, or the *Free Technology for Teachers* blog by Richard Byrne. A teacher with excellent technological literacy can work with those who are not yet confident in using technology. Then, the group can collaboratively plan a language task incorporating two or three learning objectives derived from the ISTE technology standards and involving language learning and task engagement principles. At the end of the meeting, the group presents the lesson plan. Other colleagues can give constructive comments on the learning objectives, task activities, and potential caveats or barriers to use the technology to complete the tasks (see Boss, 2008, for other possible activities). Overall, TTM should be an avenue where the teachers can mentor each other to use a technology application in a friendly and supportive way. TTM should also provide the teachers with opportunities to discuss practical ways to integrate the app in classrooms more effectively based on the language learning and task engagement principles, as well as the ISTE technology standards.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, the author would like to summarize the essential points discussed in this paper. Firstly, language teachers need to have a clear understanding of the language learning objectives that their students need to achieve. Secondly, the teachers can utilize a range of technology tools, which have been described in this paper, to assist their students in reaching their language learning goals. Third, the teachers can consider the previously discussed learning and task engagement principles and the technology standards as theoretical foundations in planning their language tasks and instructions with technology. Of course, they may use other alternative principles, theories, and standards as a basis for designing their technology-supported language tasks and instructions. Last, the author believes that teachers with principled ways of using technology should do better in supporting students' language learning than those who design a technology-based task and instruction mainly based on their personal (and biased) experiences on what worked well with technology. In closing, based on the discussions in this paper, the author would like to present some questions for future research:

- What technology tools can best support EFL students in learning English speaking, writing, reading, or listening? How do the students use those tools? What are the potential benefits and challenges they experience when using those tools?
- How can EFL teachers make the best use of the ISTE technology standards (or other similar technology standards) to enhance their teaching and learning practices with the support of technology in their language classrooms?
- What are the perspectives of EFL teachers towards the implementation of TTM in enhancing their technological-related skills?

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