

Information and communication technologies in the teaching of esp

The use of technology plays an important role in ESP teaching for it increases student motivation and improves their language skills. Technology includes cameras, audio equipment, computer technology, video equipment, overhead projection devices, scanners, printers, CD equipment – almost any device that can access, present, manipulate and communicate words, sounds and images to enable us to create meaning. English instructors have always used some technology but the development of digital technologies has opened up new and exciting possibilities.

There are two kinds of reasons for using computer technology in English. First, there are the benefits to instructors and students from including computer technology in any learning area.

For students ICT can: 1) be very motivational; 2) be the source of a significant amount of reading, listening material; 3) be fun – and when it's fun you learn; 4) be a useful tool to explore and collect information, and link up with the others globally; 5) help students to produce excellent published work; 6) empower students as they acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes for lifelong learning and creative problem solving in the information age.

For instructors ICT can: 1) allow for the easy production, storage and retrieval (reuse) of prepared materials such as certificates and work required sheets (assessment, tests...); 2) provide free communication with other instructors or students irrespective of distances; 3) help instructors find information easily, provide access to authentic, up-to-date material on variable topics; 4) assist and complement traditional teaching (but not replace it); 5) make transferring information simple allowing to spend classroom time more effectively; 6) empower instructors providing professional development opportunities and support to undertake the challenge of using ICT for curriculum and pedagogical innovations, and to facilitate, guide, administer and assess learning.

Secondly, there are the challenges and opportunities presented by ICT that make it an increasingly important part of English in particular. These include: 1) the emergence of new kinds of texts and the consequent need to teach students to create and use these texts effectively; 2) changing social practices associated with communicating via computers and the consequent need to teach students how to make judgments about appropriate use of different avenues of communication; ICT can facilitate communication among schools, teachers, parents and students; 3) the pervasiveness and power of texts created through computer technology and the consequent need to teach students to be critical readers and viewers of such texts; 4) allowing non-native speakers to interact with native speakers; 5) enabling people leaving far apart to come together and form communities.

1. David Gordon Smith, David Smith, Eric Barber Teaching English with Information Technology. Modern English Publishing.

2. Empowering Learning and Teaching with Information Technology. Education and Manpower Bureau, July 2004.

3. <http://wwwfp.education.tas.gov.au/english/technology.htm>