

Chapter 6

Bridging the Language Gap With Emergent Technologies

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ABSTRACT

The use of technology in language instruction revolutionized the way and the feel education was provided. Several modes helped students with their language gap. Nowadays, emergent technologies including the Web 2.0, gamification and game-based learning, and immersive technologies has taken language education by storm benefitting and bridging the language gap. This chapter provides an overview of how emerging technologies are changing the paradigm and contributing positively as a bridge to confront the language gap.

INTRODUCTION

For many years, we've seen a strong bond between the use of emergent technologies as strategy to bridge the language gap language learners. This is in fact to the arrival of digital natives (Prensky, 2001) to the classrooms. These are students that needed the school system to adapt to the technological changes at the time. The use of technology provides them with valuable language learning experiences and contributes tremendously to the development of personality factors like self-esteem, risk taking, and motivation (Figueroa, 2015). Emergent technologies have become the common denominator in the teaching and learning process of languages since the years of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), to the integration of the Web 2.0, Gamification, Game-Based Learning and the most recent use of immersive technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). Recently, smartphones have given the teaching and learning process an effective way to combat the language gap due to the variety of applications they provide for language learning and their affordability. Most people might think that the use of these emergent technologies in the classroom is only for those who can afford it but that is not the case. These technologies are affordable and most come with free versions giving the chance to the educator to create and explore potential

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opportunities to bridge the language gap by using of them. The following chapter presents how emergent technologies can serve as a bridge to confront such phenomenon and provides the reader with specific educational implications and relevant classroom strategies.

OVERVIEW ON CALL AND TELL

When exploring the use of technology and its application in second language acquisition, it is important to understand the concepts of CALL and TELL. Both have been instrumental in their own right to establish the important vision of using technology as a way to bridge the language gap. CALL has an established presence on academia (Hubbard & Levy, 2006) and it is defined as the application of the computer in language teaching and learning. CALL followed a behavioristic approach when it started back in the 1950s and 1960s. It was full of extensive and repetitive language drills, grammatical explanations, and translations tests which made the English language learner bored and not engaged. Later Communicative CALL emerged focusing on the cognitive theories of the 1970s and 1980s where learning became a process of discovery, expression, and development. As part of the changes, computer-based activities were implemented and thanks in part to the emergence of the personal computer grammar was started to be taught explicitly rather than implicitly, along with simulated individual and pair exercises (Figuerola, 2015). In the last part of the 20th century, CALL moved to an integrative approach based on a socio-cognitive view and focusing specifically on providing authentic social context experiences (Figuerola, 2015). This approach implemented by CALL gave the opportunity to English language learners to work with task-based, project-based, and content-based activities along with a student-centered use of technology. Integrative CALL gave them the opportunity to develop, practice, and combine their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills as well as gaining substantial knowledge of the technology tools.

On the other hand, TELL is a more inclusive sense of technology and its impact on language teaching and learning (Bush & Roberts, 1997). It refers to the use of the computer as a technological innovation to display multimedia as a means of complementing a teaching method (Radhakrishnan, 2017). One important factor described in the work of Bush and Roberts (1997) and Radhakrishnan (2017) indicated the support given by TELL to Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), which has been very useful to helping students speak and write in a foreign language. CMC can be defined as a transaction or transference that happens between two networked computer systems (Figuerola, 2015). TELL provides the teaching and learning process with unique features like social interactivity, connectivity, portability, and immediacy supported by the internet. As part of the TELL activities, students find themselves using audio, film, online journals, infographics, email, and online messaging. TELL paved the way for creativity in the development of English language learner's instruction and empowered teachers and students with the opportunity to integrate a huge number of tools. Most of these tools are online-based and part of the Web 2.0. CALL, CMC, and TELL provide a solid foundation on the use of technology to bridge the language gap.

A BRIDGE CALLED THE WEB 2.0

The Web 2.0 changed how students of all ages received instruction. It revolutionized the way instruction was given and how educators felt about instructional technologies. It benefited greatly the delivery to

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