

Technology as a Didactic Tool for Comprehensible Input: Krashen's Perspective on Second Language Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

The discussion of the future of education will not be fulfilled without the discussion of the potential of the technology because the use of technology and its benefits glorified all over the development of education. The utility of technological gadgets and tools are well known among teachers and students. The applicability of technology is not limited in one or two subjects' areas, it is extended to all subjects. Language learning especially the learning /acquisition of second language mostly challenged with different complications. So the arrival of a new concept like techno-pedagogy, flourish the opportunity of technology in the field of language learning. Technological applications and tools help to develop proper methods for language learning and ensure the language input which is comprehended to the learner with lots of motivation and interest. This paper tries to explore the perception of Stephen Krashen, Linguist as well as Educationalist, regarding the potential of technology as a tool for gaining the comprehensible language input which precede the language acquisition.

Key Words : Technology, Comprehensible Input, Second language acquisition

INTRODUCTION

The 21st-century education witnessed the tremendous change from the traditional pedagogical practices to the techno-pedagogical practices all over the universe. The notion of Techno-pedagogy highlights the integration of pedagogical content with information and communication technology. This is an amalgam which is using the applicability of ICT in the teaching-learning process. Techno-pedagogical practices help to incorporate the goodness of technology in all subject areas for resulting better performance of the students. The inflow of techno-pedagogy can be seen in all the fields of education irrespective of the level of students and area of subjects. The existing pedagogy in learning is not sufficient enough to impart the content among the present generation of learners and the need of integrating technology to content as well as to pedagogy can ensure satisfaction among both teachers and learners (Vijayan and Joshith, 2018).

The notion of technology is not far away from the

language education thus technological tools assist the language acquisition and it will help to familiarize the new languages with ease, particularly it focuses the development of the language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing). The technological tools are very useful to non-native teachers as well as the non-native students because it assures the individualized and collaborative learning so they can tune their own acquisition/learning in some extent. The usability of technology in the area of language education especially in the facet of the second language has been entrusted by several language practitioners. The second language acquisition theories emphasized the remarkable use of technology for scaffolding the learners to gain an unknown language in an interesting and enthusiastic manner. Stephen Krashen trusted the technological interference in the arena of second language education will help to ensure the language input especially the compelling comprehensible input (Krashen *et al.*, 2016).

It will motivate the acquirers to attain proficiency in the target language.

What is comprehensible input?:

Meaningful language input offers the competency in language output in the process of language acquisition. Comprehensible input is much effective than simple language input. Comprehensible input is the language input which provides one level higher than the present competence of the individual. For making a person proficient in a language, whether it is first language or second language, only possible who gets sufficient amount of comprehensible input.

In the case of the second language, it is necessary to ensure comprehensible input for the better gaining of language in an individual. Krashen (1982) defined 'comprehensible input' as one level beyond the current level of competence. Krashen (1982) denoted comprehensible input as 'i+1'; 'i' represents the present level of competence and '+1' denotes one level beyond the present level. This comprehensible input received by learner which leads to acquire a second language or any language. According to Krashen, the second language input received by the learner must be comprehended. By giving the input as same as to the present level of the learner will not provide a higher level of acquisition. If the input is comprehensible (i+1) to the learner, it will lead to the acquisition of the second language.

Rod Ellis (1985) thrown lights towards the Second Language Acquisition Theories which gives prominence to the language input as a leading ingredient of second language acquisition and emphasized the idea put forwarded by Chomsky i.e., the role of language input to activate the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which appears in every individual. According to Krashen (1991), if the input comprehends by the learner, it will perform in the brain or (LAD) as intake. Krashen's input hypothesis suggests that the quality and quantity of output (speech) is "crucially dependent on quality and quantity of comprehensible input in the learning process (Terrell, 1993 cited from Rajaswaran and Kannan, 2015). Output (language proficiency) is highly influenced by the nature and the content of the input. Make the language input more understandable and motivating for promising the improved language acquisition.

Technology and comprehensible input:

There are lot of theories of second language

acquisition enquired how Krashen's input hypothesis is working with the use of innovative technology which helps the learner to assess the comprehensible linguistic materials for the easy and faster acquisition of language. The leverage of negative feelings, anxiety, low motivation, low self-confidence, passive moods towards a new language restrict the learners from the real language acquisition. From this vision of Krashen (1982), the following studies emphasise the need to build a motivating language environment for achieving the competency. Technology is a channel which connects the content and the learner. Technology is using as the best tool for enhancing language acquisition by providing a rich and comprehensive input must be required for motivating English language learners (Diallo, 2014).

Research by Echevarría, Vogt and Short (2013) on Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) widely implemented by school districts throughout all 50 States and in dozens of countries worldwide, provides a continuum of Krashen (1982)'s comprehensive input theory (Diallo, 2014). Krashen ensures the promising ways of using technology for the comprehension of the second language or enhancing the skill of second language. He suggested the following techniques for ensuring second language acquisition.

Narrow listening:

Narrow listening is the process that acquirers collect several brief audio-recordings of a topic which is recorded by proficient speakers or native speakers. The learner or acquirers listen to the particular recording several times as they need. These repeated listening and the familiar topic which is interested, make the comprehensible input. It is a very simple method of knowing the foreign language at very low cost (Krashen, 1996). A study conducted by Conti (2015), pointed out that even though the process has to take much effort but the end product of this effort ensures the benefits for the acquisition of vocabulary, consolidation and self-efficacy are remarkable. Narrow listening can be employed effectively as an audio library which permits students to select materials freely, to listen for content, to progress at their own pace, and to be produced to the real world of experiences and linguistic diversity of various speakers (Rodrigo, 2003).

Stephen Krashen (1996) emphasise some specific features of 'Narrow Listening'. They are:

- Repeated listening will make possible

- Create interest in the topic among the acquirers
- Familiar context ensures the input comprehensible
- Low-tech and inexpensive
- The best way to develop a pleasant attitude to obtain comprehensible input
- An easy way to get to know speakers of other languages.

Movie talk:

Krashen highlighted another technique which is useful to make the language input comprehensible *i.e.*, 'Movie Talk'. It is one of the most interesting ways to providing a high amount of comprehensible input with a high rate of vocabulary among the learners. The teacher or the language instructor can provide the description along with the movie or video which played in the silent mode. A study revealed that the Movie talk will help the learner to improve in the listening comprehension and also improve better reading (Murphy and Hastings, 2006; cited from Krashen *et al.*, 2016). Movie talk ensures more comprehensible input rather than usual music track (Krashen *et al.*, 2016). Murphy and Hasting (2006) put forth some essential benefits which are focused by this technique. They are:

- It is an excellent source for comprehensible input
- Providing deliberate, clear and simple language elements
- Learners can associate what they hear with what they seen on the screen
- Making the spoken input more comprehensible
- Replacing less familiar (common) words to more familiar words
- Assist the learner understanding.

Free voluntary surfing:

Learners or acquirers are surfing the content or information which is interested in them that will help them to acquire a second language (Rodriguez and Romans, 2009). "Free voluntary surfing (FVS) simply encouraging English as a Foreign language (EFL) students to wander through the internet and read what interests them, following their interest from site to site or site to print" (Krashen, 2011). This Free voluntary web-surfing highly make helpful to learners or acquires of the second language. The study conducted by Cho and Kim (2004) reading interesting stories of students' choice from the internet creates a great impact in English language acquisition (cited from Krashen, 2011).

According to Jackson and Von Eye (2005) internet provide complex pedagogical texts with comprehension questions and other follow up activities. It will create boredom and less interesting among students. He also suggested the need for 'Free Voluntary Surfing' (FVS) for the following reasons. They are:

- Students to get the freedom to what they want to read (Within reason)
- There is no assigned topic for the learner.
- The learner can read without any accountability
- There is no follow-up activities and comprehension questions
- There is no list of vocabulary that the learner has to remember.
- Encourage self-selected reading

Voice thread:

Voice Thread is an effective learning tool for making the language comprehensible. Voice Thread firmly establishes itself as a tool that has the exciting potential to give an actual audible voice to those language students who rarely, or if ever, speak the target language in class, and it does so by providing students with the means to construct visually-based digital conversations (Kent *et al.*, 2011). A study conducted by Mango (2017), it provides the empirical evidence that Voice Thread can be used as one of the effective web 2.0 tools to enhance students' listening skills in the foreign language classroom. The data indicated that Voice Thread arranged a secure platform for students to practice their listening and speaking without any kind of anxiety and full of their confidence level. The study conducted in this particular area shows that the Voice Thread offers the online atmosphere and voice-conferencing technology Voice Thread, which shows the applicability of tools to decrease the anxiety of the language learners it is quite comparable results to the language laboratory (Dunn, 2012). Voice tread helps to give voice to pictures and other visual effects (Krashen *et al.*, 2016) and it also helps to make English stories more comprehensible (Lee, 2012). Poelzer (2009) along with Elwood (2010) suggested the pedagogical use of voice thread such as:

- For the creation of digital storytelling projects
- Demonstrating knowledge gained in research/inquiry projects
- Documenting student progress over time
- Sharing information with an authentic audience
- Deep thinking skills as well as communication

skills (Dyck, 2007)

- Used as a means to conduct an assessment (Dyck, 2007).

Blogging:

The blogs help to augment the competencies, interactions and cultural communications. Blogging plays an essential role in emerging learners' interactions and communications in the target language. Blogs are effective tools for developing speaking, reading and writing skills (Aydin, 2014). Blogging helped to create a kind of community and a reading atmosphere in which readers assisted, motivated and supported one another along their path to develop a higher level of competence in English (Lee, 2015). Krashen pointed out that writing blogs and reacting to each other's blog helped them to develop new and deeper understandings of the text, resulting in cognitive growth and lowered anxiety (Krashen *et al.*, 2016). The major features of Blogging that can be useful for language learning:

- It is a source for getting reading materials
- It helps to structure the writing activities
- It makes possible of discussion and peers reviewing
- It is a platform for reflection and evaluation
- It provides a genuine audience
- It provides a disinhibiting context

ESL Pod:

ESLPod is a web-based English Language Learning Podcast. It is long running English language learning podcast on the web. It is very simple to use but very effective in the acquisition of language input. The ESLPod cast is using as a part of a pedagogical approach based on the researches the field of second language acquisition for delivering the comprehensible input in a pleasant manner. ESLPod help to assess the aural text (English) and a useful tool to the students who are learned English as a foreign language and who have the anxiety and lack of confidence to produce the language (Krashen *et al.*, 2016). Some features of ESLPod are

- It is not a traditional way of course with a beginning and end
- There is no quizzes or exercise
- It contains a set of broad theme
- Its content is not arranged in a sequential form
- Learners can choose the content according to their interest.

Other technological tools for language learning:

Here familiarizing other relevant technological tools and platform enrich the linguistic input of a learner for the high level of acquisition of the second language. They are:

Popplet:

Popplet is a free online tool that helps the learners for visualizing ideas. It allows the learner to build a variety of patterns including graphic organizers, timelines, storyboards, and other forms of visual organization (Dunne *et al.*, 2016). In the technological tool, Popplet learner can create a web related mind map and each Popplet denoted each vocabulary. While considering the language learning, Popplet offers productive ways in which the space for writing practice as well as collaborative learning. It is a good way for both writing and collaboration (<http://popplet.com/>).

Puppet Pals:

The Puppet Pals is a learning tool for teachers who are aware of second language learners' proficiencies and their need to develop higher-level skills, like narration, negotiation problem-solving, and reasoning. For this purpose, apps like Puppet Pals are of great value (Sandvik, *et al.*, 2012.).

Raz-Kids:

Raz-Kids is a popular application which provides a platform to experience versatile materials for reading to the students. Raz-Kids provides more than 800 e-books which include a wide variety of topics and assessments used to assess the comprehension of the students. It contains reading materials for the students according to their level (RazKidsInc, 2015 cited from Schott, 2017). The learner gets comprehend and interesting input from this technological application. It will help to improve and analyze students reading and literary growth (Schott, 2017).

Tumble books:

Tumble Book Library is an online collection of animated talking picture books, which teach kids the joy of reading in a format they love. Tumble books is an electronic picture book, it contains pictures with animation, music and sound which helps the learner to read or have read to them. Every story arises something to do by the learner like puzzles and games therefore it is easy to

assess reading comprehension. Online reading programs are offered e-books and additional resources such as games, puzzles and quizzes (Temble Books Inc, 2015 cited from Schott, 2017). An added benefit to this reading program is that learners can check and track their own improvement by exploring their comprehension assessment results (Tumble Books Inc. 2015 cited from Schott, 2017).

Book Flix:

Book Flix, is an academic online reading program which supports the students and the teachers on developing early reading skills (Scholastic, 2016 cited from Schott, 2017). The unique feature of this program is, make the provision of book pairing, the paring of fiction and nonfiction will be resulted an effective way of developing critical reading and comprehension of language skills (Scholastic, 2016 cited from Schott, 2017).

An overview of technology in language acquisition:

The technological tools like blogging, voice tread, movie talk, popplet, tumble book etc. guaranteed the natural way of language acquisition; learner attains linguistic input which is comprehensible in an interesting manner without much conscious effort. According to Stephen Krashen, the real language acquisition happens when the learner is attaining the input which is comprehensible without the block of any other negative emotions. In the classroom, most of the time the resource of linguistic input limited with a language teacher, therefore, the versatile language experience is restricted the natural way of gaining the language. So Krashen highlighted the use of appropriate technology in the language learning and it will enrich the platform for the language input which is able to experience by the learners.

- While using the techno-pedagogical approach in acquiring an alien language, it enhances motivation among the learners to acquire the language rather than the traditional approach of learning.

- Technological tools ensure the right model of language which is able to imitate the correct spelling, pronunciation, fluency, structure, and style.

- Technology helps to acquire a large volume of vocabulary within in short period of time rather than usual.

- Technology enhances the capacity among the acquirers to correct their own errors in the production of language through getting very rich target language ambiance.

- Technological tools assist the acquirers to select the language items appropriate for them according to their current state of language acquisition which ensures the input comprehensible.

Complications and problems of using technology:

Nobody can blindly say that technology is an elixir for all problem of learning. It is only a tool standing along with all other learning tools; which is not preceding over the teacher. The excessive use of technologies deviates the learner from the real goal of learning. If the teacher is failed to blend appropriate technology with the suitable content will emerge a negative effect among the learner. Sometimes the teacher is not well aware of the technology; where it is used or when it is applied, must be deviating from the real instruction and learning objectives. The technology assists the learner for receiving comprehensible language input from various sources according to their own pace but there is a number of chances to divert the attention of learners from the real acquisition of language; thus the teachers have to ensure proper monitoring for the students to direct them in a real track of learning and assist them to choose the appropriate and comprehensible linguistic materials when they are using technology. A wide variety of materials are available for reading, listening or visualizing but the authenticity of the materials could not be ensured by the learners and they show the tendency to turn away to the more enthusiastic materials. By using technology is creating a more interesting and effective way of learning at the same time it results in the worse experience if it is not regularly scrutinized.

Conclusion:

Whatever problems are facing by the use of technology; it is an amazing thing which could not be wiped out from all sector. It is productive, creative, attractive and interesting that can be a part of each and every corner of learning. While using the technological tools help to enrich the language input and make it comprehensible to the learner according to their level. Technology motivates the learner through making use of interesting language input than usual. One of the prime opportunity offered to the learner is self-choice of the content they have to read or listen. It promises self-paced acquisition in an informal manner than formal. It ensures a better platform to the learners for budding their competency in the second language by providing enough

sources to acquaint the second language as their first language. It has the choice of expressing and developing the target language skills without any negative feelings.

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