



## English through ICT: Developing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

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### Abstract

*The concept of using ICT in ELT has been in the market to such extent that it has now become imperative to use ICT tools in ELT. The integration of educational technology in teaching English language has led to some fruitful development from CALL to VLE. Nevertheless, such integration is primarily around transferring paper-based practice to tech devices, and eliciting or modeling language points using multimedia. Approach as such often requires students to have certain ICT skills to make the integration a success. With the aim of providing an alternative, this paper puts forward "English through IT" approach, quite distinctive than contemporary ones, which is aspired to develop English and ICT skills simultaneously. In addition to elaborating prospect of such approach, this paper outlines a model lesson plan and principles behind its development. It concludes with suggestion on how such an approach can make its way into the market.*

*Keywords: Integrating ICT in ELT, Content-based ELT, ESP, 21st Century Skills*

### 1. Notion of the Study

Technology and communication are two buzzwords in the current world; and the impact of ICT has been reshaping the landscapes of human life with language learning no exception. The widespread use of ICT tools has boosted the status of English since it is the primary language of modern technology. Teachers and researchers have been working on ensuring efficient and effective use of ICT in ELT for quite long time from simple PowerPoint slides to LMS. As a result, ICT tools these days are rapidly finding their way in teaching and learning English all over the world. Nevertheless, development in this field has so far been limited within two broad categories. First, using tech-devices to provide students with language practices such as using mobile apps, web pages etc. Second, using tech-tools to elicit and/or present the target language such as using video to explain a past tense, or conducting a language lesson using video conference.

Some of the tools such as a video lesson and PowerPoint slides do not require any active part from students whereas the most updated ICT tools--e.g. mobile apps, web 2.0, virtual classroom--in ELT which involves students in using those, requires the students either to have the skills to operate the tools or they need training prior to use of ICT tools. Additionally, the concept of Digital Literacy has taken a new turn recently which is having the awareness of using digital tools such as computer, web etc. in different spheres of life [1] [2] in addition to "cognitive and social competences" [3], or any other "language and literacy skills needed in order to function in such digitally mediated contexts" [4].

English language and digital literacy are two major requirements for functional survival in this increasingly tech-driven 21st century. To become such literate, people need to have communicative skills in English and fundamental understanding of ICT tools. The idea of communicative skills in English does not limit itself within the use of English in some controlled situation, but to use English to hold intellectual discussion so as to solve a real-life problem. Similarly, the days of conceptualizing digital literacy as simple familiarity of ICT tools are over and it refers to use those available tools in solving significant intellectual problem. Just as they learn their own language to be able to read and write, people should learn English as a lingua franca and about ICT tools to able to perform basic tasks expected from a 21st century citizen.

In this context, this paper present a new approach 'English through ICT' by integrating both English and ICT skills where instead of using ICT tools as a mere replacement of books or other regular physical materials, ICT skills and English language are to be taught simultaneously so as to develop both areas which are of great importance these days in all spheres of human life.

### 2. English through ICT

In this approach, rather than using ICT tools to learn English, students take part in activities to learn both ICT and English. The approach is not really a complete alien in education since for years learners have been learning English while studying another subject in the same course as in CLIL;

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nevertheless, the distinction is that in EICT equally focuses on two skills fundamentals to human resource development in 21st century.

## 2.1 Sample Lesson

Aims:	English: (a) Basic structure of a paragraph, (b) Using causes and effects expression ICT: (a) Introduction to MS Word—formatting text such as bold, italic, underlining, strikethrough, changing size and font, changing color, alignment, cut / copy and paste, spacing, creating table, (b) Downloading and uploading email attachments.
Materials:	(a) Computer with internet connection and MS Word installed (b) Email account for each. (c) Multimedia projector.
Stage 1: Setting up the context	Description: Teacher will show his/her favorite Smartphone (or any mobile device) and the reasons of liking it. After that students will think about their gadget and reasons of liking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present a picture or show it live</li> <li>• Talk about favorite Smartphone for 1-2 minutes</li> <li>• Ss, in pairs, will talk to each other about their most favorite gadget</li> </ul>
Stage 2: Pre-teach Vocabulary	Description: Students will learn the use of some words used in giving causes and effects expression such as because, because of, since, as, so, due to etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using cause and effect context (some examples if not all from the previous activity), teacher will elicit the words</li> <li>• Teacher will email them an activity—some sentences with pictures showing cause and effect—where students have to use fill in the gaps using the newly learned words, and reply them to the teacher</li> </ul> Differentiation: Teacher may ask students to do the activity in pairs/group of three students
Stage 3: Presenting the TL	Description: Student will be familiarized with the concept of paragraph—parts of it, topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher will elicit different parts of a paragraph using a well-written paragraph—it is expected that students will define the three parts from sample paragraph. Also, teacher may use “the hamburger technique”</li> <li>• Teacher will check students concepts in open class e.g. using Socratic</li> </ul>
Stage 4: Presenting TICT	Description: Students will learn basic formatting of MS Word, and downloading and sending email attachments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher will give a demo</li> <li>• Students practice (e.g. identify different parts of paragraph using different formatting option such as underlining the concluding sentence) – if available, teacher(s) can have some assistants/tutors to help students</li> <li>• Students will check in pairs</li> </ul>
Stage 5: Controlled practice / restricted use	Description: Students will practice the newly learned commands to review paragraph writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher will email students three sample—easy, intermediate, advanced—to check whether they understand the concept of different parts of a paragraph <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Students will increase the font size of the title and decrease the that of the body</li> <li>&gt; will bold the topic sentence</li> <li>&gt; will change font of supporting sentences</li> <li>&gt; will italic the concluding sentence</li> <li>&gt; Student will, in pairs, check their works sending the email to each other as email attachment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teacher will email students two sample paragraphs—both are bad paragraphs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Students will strikethrough the sentences that does not fit</li> <li>&gt; will change the color of anything they added—for example, in blue</li> <li>&gt; will align the topic in center</li> <li>&gt; will change spacing—double spacing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teacher will email students five topic sentences and five concluding sentences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Students will match the topic sentences and concluding sentences</li> <li>&gt; Using cut/copy and paste commands, students will fill in a table</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Stage 6:	Task Description: Students will write a cause and effect paragraph





Freer Practice	> The Topic: Bold, Underlined, Centered, Arial font, Font size 16, Black color	
	> The Topic Sentence: Bold, Blue color	* Georgia font
	> The Supporting Sentences: Violet color, Italic	* Font size 12
	> The Concluding Sentence: Green color, Underlined	* 1.5 spacing

## 2.2 Principles of this Approach

The lesson procedures are just a little different from a typical ELT lesson. The distinctive feature is the inclusion of two sets of skills from two focus areas--English and ICT--before involving students in controlled practice and production stage. The followings can serve as principles of this approach:

- a) Teacher recognizes equal importance of both skills. For example, avoid designing any activity which has substantially more focus on one premise than the other. They need to choose activities that are consistent with the central goals.
- b) Teacher needs to establish environment for the students that involves students in practicing both skills. One way is to include both skill areas in contextualizing any target skills. For example, while introducing the language of expressing cause and effect, teachers can contextualize by using the impact word processing software have on writing.
- c) The ICT and language skills need to be repeated nevertheless should be integrated with a different set of skills. For example, if 'talking about a process' is integrated with 'creating email groups' in one while with 'paying online securely' in a later class.
- d) Teacher's role will mainly be focused on facilitating the lesson and involve students in meaningful tasks which require both target skills.
- e) Since learners these days are comfortable with technology – it can remove the effective filters when the students share their focus of language development with developing digital literacy thus fluency is developed.
- g) ICT tools are to be used not merely as a learning tool but as necessary skills for this digital era thus both will complement each other in the learning process.
- h) Providing learners with real-life context so that the communication takes place with people not machines.

## 2.3 Target ICT Skills

With the 'fast and furious' change in the field of ICT, it will always be an extremely challenging job to define the target ICT skills to be included since what we need need today may eventually become obsolete tomorrow. Nevertheless, any ICT skill which, at the moment of teaching and learning, is expected from an educated or trained citizen falls under this category. Bearing this principles in mind, we can expect teachers and materials developers to start with as simple task as turning a computer on to regular office packages, emails, web, online drives, data management, social media, Google search, basic graphics design, LMS, virtual class, Smartphone operation, and even basics of programming.

## 3. Implications

This approach can be included in both academic and nonacademic settings. For human resources of this globalized tech-era, particularly from a developing country, expertise over these two skills is highly valued and can land them in good employment opportunities. At the same time, as a citizen of 21<sup>st</sup> century, digital literacy and English are musts for everyone. Since we expect the people of this generation to have these skills, we need to teach and/or help them to acquire these. "If we are truly interested in preparing our students to be responsible citizens in an increasingly technologically advanced society, then our way of teaching should reflect this" [5], and integration of these two must-have-skills will address this issue. It is more like a circular movement between both skill-areas where learners will use ICT skills to improve English language and will use English language to improve ICT skills.

There are some significant challenges for this approach to face and the primary one is developing course books and training teachers. Although a course like that wouldn't require a teacher to be extremely knowledgeable in ICT, teachers will need fairly strong command over ICT in addition to ELT. Nevertheless, most of the teachers out there are somehow using technology in their personal of life if not in teaching. So building on this to integrate both skills has a strong chance. Alternatively, a class can be lead by two teachers—one in ELT and the other one in ICT. Course books can be developed on this to drive the approach in action since "what the majority of teachers teach and how they teach (the things that are supposedly taken care of by methods) are now determined by



textbooks" [6]. Textbooks (or, software or apps etc.?) help teachers with ready-made materials to ease the pressure of materials development which eventually allow them to have more time to reflect on improving teaching and on helping students through effective input and feedback. Because effectiveness of using computer [or technology] depends on the ways in which it is being used [7] [8] [9], initiative as such will also help the English language teachers community who have access to technology but are failing to use those effectively.

#### 4. Conclusion

Like any methodology or approach, challenges as such are imperative. Word constraint prevents discussion on some more example lessons and popular ELT methods and approaches; therefore, while such an integrated approach can be decisive, the example lesson and stages are suggestive. It is just an initial call realize the necessity of making the 'real integration' of ICT in English language teaching happen where the modern technology will not be used just as a medium to replace traditional paper-based books, but as set of skills through which learning English language will take place to develop learners as true citizen of twenty-first century.

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