Teaching English Language with Cloud –Based Tools

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Abstract - Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has proved its advantages in offering more options and opportunities in education management. Cloud computing had been employed to reach the goals of English language teaching and learning. The aim of this paper is to analyze current uses of Cloud computing tools in transforming English language learning and instruction. The analysis will extrapolate how our future English language teaching and learning can be shaped with Cloud computing technology. The author concludes with discussion on best practices for teaching English language with Cloud computing tools.

Keywords - Cloud, English language, web-based learning, good practices

I. INTRODUCTION

After several decades of excitement in integrating web-based lessons into classes, it is now slightly becoming the past. On the other hand, we have observed the growth of mobile learning which is gradually preparing to embrace every aspect of our life including education. Digital revolution has not stopped yet, thus the teachers and students are still profoundly required to open their minds to the way learning and instruction is transformed and delivered in the Cloud.

Cloud computing classroom refers to use of ICT in systematic teaching and learning. The word ‘Cloud’ may be related to ‘trend’ which may have received negative notion in academic as they typically are often associated with fashions, that may be forgotten soon. The trend is, however, speedily growing in English language classroom scenarios and has in fact extended the meaning of learning. The day to day teaching in 21st century is shifting; it may be a requirement that teachers, as well as students are now required to be capable at using technology tools in their teaching and learning.

Foreign language teachers are familiar with students handing in their printed essays to class. Then teachers collect them, carry them home, check them and jot down some notes and finally bring them back to class. The cycle does not complete here. The essays could have been revised and resubmitted by good students; on the other hand, they could be promptly tossed in the recycling bin on the way out of the room. Besides the essay writing procedures, the class spends plenty of time on some writing problem issues. In reality, teachers are not able to ensure that the students are learning and applying target skills or students may notice that the teachers are not really spending time going through their essays. Several teachers of foreign languages realize that the traditional way of teaching a foreign language consumes time, wastes paper and fails to reach the learning goals. Many teachers integrate technologies to yield better learning outcomes. Cloud computing is emerging as a trend which the 21st century teachers do not want to miss.
II. DEFINING TERMS

"The Cloud" is a metaphor for the Internet while "in the Cloud" is popularized to refer to software, platforms and infrastructure that are sold "as a service", i.e. remotely through the Internet [1]. The major models of Cloud computing service are known as software as a service, platform as a service, and infrastructure as a service. Familiar Cloud vendors are, for example, Google, Amazon, IBM, Oracle Cloud, Rackspace, Salesforce, Zoho and Microsoft Azure. The term "Cloud computing" refers to the delivery of IT applications and services over the Internet, such as on a college or university network [2].

Cloud computing is recognized as cost-free/low cost systems to users in which they are capable of saving on the capital expenses. Clients only need to be responsible for the operating system and any other services required to run their application(s) while they use existing software available online. Cost is greatly reduced as there is no need for hardware purchase [3]. Well-known services include Gmail, Google doc, skydrive and so on. Users would only need a computer with the Internet access to log on to their applications and data from anywhere at any time. As a result, the hardware costs are brought down and that makes this service available for almost all. USBs or flash drives would not be needed because users would no longer store anything on their drives. Cloud tools offer space on a remote computer and that a business firm would choose to store data on the third vendors’ services. In addition, Cloud makes software purchases worth the money more than ever. Cloud systems allow company wide access to computer applications. As a result, all employees may be granted licenses while the employers could pay a metered fee to a Cloud computing company.

Cloud feature allows users to store work and to work in the Cloud and is always available anytime and anywhere. Online communication is simply part of everyday live when users go on mobile devices. As a result of the ability to communicate and to expose to the information, education is making the most out of this advanced technology. Textbooks, lessons, PPT, videos, research materials and almost everything are in the Cloud (web-based resources). The teacher takes role of a facilitator or coach providing contextual learning environments that engage students in collaborative activities [4]. The current teaching paradigm of the teacher as the possessor and transferor of information is shifting to a new paradigm. This change however requires many kinds of changes and a great deal of preparation. A big issue challenging educators is how to prepare both...
the teachers and the students for a future world. Technology is shaping the way the classrooms are managed [5].

III. THE CLOUD COMPUTING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

Online education is quickly becoming a major phenomenon around the world due to the ease and convenience it offers to learners [6]. The no-physical-classes appeal to people especially those who are trying to balance work, family, and other obligations while completing a degree. A fast growing rate of online education has been mostly found in higher education. Now this trend has extended to schools as can be observed from an increase in web-based programs. As education is attempted to expand, several educators reveal their doubts of the (declining) quality of the instruction students receive. While some institutions made a smooth transition to classroom in the Cloud, some have failed to offer a high quality exclusive language degree over the Internet.

Foreign Language education was firstly put in the Cloud when James Madison University made history by becoming the first college to partner with language learning software company Rosetta Stone. Through the joint venture, the online for-credit foreign language courses were offered based on Rosetta Stone’s software. This initiative project made a significant wave and a shift in how languages are taught to students. However it is a question to several educators to ask if the level of learning is adequate to earn a degree [7]. There was a number of Cloud classrooms offered since then. For example, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, by its faculty and TA offered all of its Spanish 101 instruction online. Although some professionals doubt the value of online foreign language courses, a course coordinator claimed that the number of enrolment was 46% higher over the comparable terms using a textbook. In terms of retention, it was claimed that learning from Cloud classrooms resulted in a better rate [8].

There is however doubts regarding Cloud classrooms. It is asserted that the Cloud computing students cannot learn as much as the students learning in the regular mode if they only learn online [9]. Even though online education has largely become accepted as an integral part of learning, some professionals question whether foreign languages in particular can be studied exclusively online. Learning a new language requires a great deal of speaking, hearing and social interaction, these individuals say, which cannot simply be provided through the internet. This draws discussions on whether web-based courses devalue the academic standards of classroom instruction.

Taking these concerns to the account, it is necessary to evoke the theories of language learning. It is stated that language learning does not occur as a result of the transmission of facts about language or from a succession of rote memorization drills. On the other hand, it is the consequence of opportunities for meaningful interaction with others in the target language. Thus a language teacher needs to move toward richer interactive language use, such as the one found in instructional conversations [10].

Good practice in Cloud computing language classroom includes the combination of faculty interaction and the software to create the potential for success. The courses offered by means of Cloud computing must rely on a wide variety of technologies to ensure that students spend a significant amount of time hearing and speaking the target languages. Students need to practice speaking and hearing a new language in order to learn it, and that can only be done with a partner. To meet this requirement, an institution uses Skype, Google Hangouts and other online programs and claims that the method is effective [11]. As class interaction and authenticity is the core of success in foreign language learning, some institutions make their students use video chat to speak to their instructors one-on-one for 20 to 30 minutes each week. This is claimed that it is more face-to-face time than most students receive in campus-based degree programs.

It is a controversial issue that many academic professionals have been looking for
the answer whether foreign languages can and should be taught online. It is quite understandable that a blended model combining online self-study and some form of human interaction (online or face-to-face) would be one of the best choices for EFL/ESL.

IV. LANGUAGE LEARNING BASED ON CLOUD TOOLS

Power of cloud computing at university education cannot be underestimated. The university can make important gains by offering e-learning based on Cloud computing systems. Cloud Computing is recognized as a new paradigm computing resources (e.g., be network servers, applications, platforms, infrastructure segments and services) with its dynamic scalability and usage of virtualized resources as a service through the Internet. As such, Cloud computing applications provide flexibility for all e-learning. Cloud tools can support e-education for institutions to resolve some of the common problems such as expenditure costs, quality of communication, security, privacy, flexibility, and accessibility. The universities can keep pace with ever-growing resource requirements and energy costs. Students expect their personal mobile devices to connect to campus services for education. Faculty members are seeking for efficient access and flexibility when integrating technology into their classes. If traditional e-learning is implemented with Cloud computing, it can save costs of investment in infrastructure, hardware, software and services. It also improves performance from utilizing the applications and processes in cloud. Users’ devices do not have any impact on the servers when they are working [8]. Moreover, the software existing in the cloud is automatically updated with the cloud power. In addition, since all documents are opened in the cloud by the cloud application, the format, fonts and appearance of the documents are compatible with users’ devices. E-learning in the cloud also offers options and convenience to users in taking online courses, attending the online exams, getting feedback about the courses from instructors, and sending their projects and assignments through online to their teachers. Similarly, teachers can prepare online tests for students, deal and create better content resources for students through content management, assess the tests, homework, projects taken by students, send the feedback and communicate with students through online forums. This automatically reduces the cost of organizational expenses and offers more powerful functional capabilities.

Even though e-learning based on Cloud computing enables students and administrative personnel to have the opportunity to quickly and economically access various application platforms and resources through the web pages on-demand, security concerns is a main thing that requires institutions to ensure that they receive informed consent for any information. In addition, the information must never be accessed or used beyond the purpose for which it was collected. It is a necessity that personal information in its custody or under its control is stored safely and properly.

V. DISCUSSION

Language ability is not merely the ability to speak, listen, read, and write in the traditional form. It is important that instructors emphasize on the development of the student as a whole. Therefore teaching responsibilities should not start and stop solely with language instruction. Students should be encouraged and helped to develop and practice trust-building, leadership, decision-making, communication, conflict management and technology skills. Cloud computing tools earn reputations on promoting collaborative and self-directed learning. As Cloud helps students to access applications and data from anywhere at any time, all they would need is a computer with a link to the internet. Thus the price comes cheap. However the existing concerns on education in the Cloud are about privacy, security, data integrity, intellectual property management, and other issues. Successful implementation of this technology relies on a high degree of trust between users.
Last but not least, teachers are still one most important part of Cloud classrooms in supporting this new social environment. Under this circumstance, both students and teachers move along seamlessly from chalk-and-talk to social networks to online tools for shared social learning, presenting, collaborating, and connecting in the Cloud. In fact social learning environment can significantly increase teachers-students’ engagement.

REFERENCES

(Arranged in the order of citation in the same fashion as the case of Footnotes.)


