ESL learners writing classified advertisements online

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Abstract

The research objectives of this study were to analyse the technology-mediated classified ad writing task done by the class xi ESL learners in groups in a physical classroom and the conversations that took place while doing the task. The data was collected through screenshots of the classified ad made by the learners using a tab, screen recordings of the task and teacher-learner conversation recordings. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the classified advertisements created by the learners. A thematic analysis of their conversations was done. The results revealed that...Their conversation analysis revealed their discussions centred around the content and language of the task, technical difficulties faced, knowledge of technology and attitude towards doing tasks mediated by technology. The implications are that technology-mediated writing tasks require sufficient infrastructure and technical assistance. Learners find such tasks interesting. It builds their language skills and digital literacy in the process.

Keywords

Technology-mediated task-based language learning, Learning English as a second language, learning writing skills, Digital literacy, Task analysis

Introduction

Writing is an important skill for communication. The use of technology is also becoming increasingly important. A lot of tasks that are done in real life are mediated by technology such as writing an email. All over the world studies have been conducted to investigate technology-mediated task-based learning involving ESL, EFL and other language learners such as Spanish. The results range from positive to mixed. In one such study in Indonesia, the participants felt that the use of technology helps them learn English easily, that discussing with peers and teachers is more enjoyable, and they gain greater self-confidence in learning (Putri, 2023). Likewise, in a study on a new Spanish curriculum mediated by technology, it was found that it may help in student motivation, in meaningful learning, and in fostering communicative skills. Many challenges were also identified such as time constraints, overuse of L1, and teaching contexts that are resistant to new approaches. Its affordances were promoting digital skills and engaging students in tasks. Nevertheless, assumptions must not be made regarding students' digital literacies as adding the technology component may strongly affect task complexity (Gutiérrez, 2023). The results of another study involving the Hello English application showed that EFL students positively perceived the use of mobile technology in task-based language teaching. It also affected students' learning, specifically in the context of vocabulary learning, which was the primary issue in English classes (Maufuroh, Yanto & Abas, 2022).

Similarly, the results of a study revealed that TMTBLT was effective in the development of EFL students' descriptive writing proficiency. Besides improving their writing, the task was enjoyed by the students, and multiple skills were used by them (Wang, 2022). In addition to the above studies, the findings of a study to teach writing skills revealed that teaching through technology-mediated TBLT helped students increase their writing skills more than traditional methods of teaching. Moreover, the students had satisfaction with the use of TMTBLT and preferred it over the traditional teaching method (Ahmed, Islam & Naqvi, 2021). Similarly, the

findings of a study revealed that EFL learners' had positive attitudes toward the task design of writing a script and recording a video and its implementation. They felt that they made integrated language skills gains such as vocabulary, learning skills and learning gains (Chen & Chih-Cheng, 2018). Further, in a study, upon evaluation of the effectiveness of the online task-based writing program through a one-group pre-test post-test, it was found that technology-mediated tasks helped in enhancing students' writing skills required at the tertiary level with an enriching learning experience through reinforcement, interaction, and scaffolding (Hiradhar, 2015). The use of technology in learning writing affected their motivation positively as well as negatively. Human factors and technical novelty both positively and negatively influenced the student's motivation to learn English writing skills. Vocabulary-searching and reference-searching tools were used by the learners to complete the writing tasks with an electronic learning platform called Edmodo (Baetty, 2019).

Another study revealed that the iPad group achieved higher scores in pronunciation and accuracy (speaking) and essay organisation features (writing) (Morgana,2024). Likewise, the findings of a study revealed that descriptive writing performance significantly improved in terms of task response, coherence-cohesion, grammatical range and accuracy, and lexical resource, as indicated in students' pre-and post-test results. Further, all four writing quizzes revealed an increasing trend with "grammatical range and accuracy" as the most improved writing component whilst "coherence-cohesion" was the least improved one. The results revealed that learners felt that the TBLT approach with the FlipGrid application was the most pedagogically innovative and learner-centred approach. It trained them to become more communicative, collaborative and interactive. It enabled them to produce effective descriptive written products (Robillos & Bustos, 2023). Similarly, a quasi-experimental study was conducted in the Turkish context. It aimed to investigate whether the completion of technology-mediated tasks would improve achievement in listening, reading and writing tests of young EFL learners. Data analysis indicated a higher improvement in the experimental group as compared to

the control group who completed traditional homework assignments, but not at a significant level. The study also explored the experimental group learners' opinions about technology-mediated tasks which they completed. It revealed that they perceived higher ability in English, enhanced self-efficacy beliefs in the use of technology and positive attitudes towards technology-mediated tasks (Kurt, 2021). In contrast to the above studies, the results of a study confirmed that incorporating technology into TBLT leads learners to face some difficulties in practical instruction in doing tasks, applying new technology to explore profound tasks further, digital literacy etc (Butarbutar, 2021).

However, learning technology-mediated tasks in writing skills is not stated in the English language syllabus of class xi of the school. The learners need to learn these technology-mediated tasks which prepares them for their present and the future. The objective of this research paper is to analyse the learning outcome and learning process of making a classified advertisement on a website by class xi ESL learners in a school in Delhi.

Research method

Class xi female ESL learners of a school in Delhi participated in this study. They were divided into eight groups depending upon their score in English subject in their board exams. It was ensured that each group had students of mixed ability. Each group was provided with a tab. In pre-task, the learners were given a demonstration of how to draft a classified advertisement online. Then, they were asked to create a classified advertisement on a website under the 'Situation Wanted' column. They were asked to decide the job for which they would create the advertisement. In the post-task, advertisements were exchanged and they were asked to assess the advertisements. The data was collected through a screen recording of the task, a screenshot of the advertisement and an audio recording of the conversation between the teacher and the learners. The task done by the learners was analysed based on the task range, task coherence, task accuracy and task description. The conversations captured through tabs and phone were transcribed, and coded and emerging themes were identified.

Results

The analysis is presented in two sections. The first section deals with task analysis and the second section deals with thematic analysis of the conversations.

Task analysis

All eight groups of learners created the classified advertisement on a website. Each group task was analysed based on the range of words, coherence, accuracy and description. The group-wise task analysis is presented below:

Group 1

Range

Basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae were used to communicate limited information required mainly in job situations.

- *Course*

- *Contact*

- *Educational*

- *Accounting*

- *Audit*

- *Annum*

Coherence

Words were connected with the simple connector 'and'.

- *can also speak Hindi and English*

- *EY and Infosys*

Accuracy

Basic errors in the use of the article and agreement were made in the advertisement.

- *Wanted for a job*

- *For further detail*

- *Educational qualification*

Description

- A basic description of the post required, age, educational qualifications and experience possessed, languages known, salary expected and contact details were written.

Group 2

Range

Basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae were used to communicate limited information required mainly in job situations. An adverbial clause was used.

- *Wanted a job*

- *Detail*

- *Contact*

- *Banking*

- *Accounting*

Coherence

Some words were connected with the simple connectors 'and'.

- *English Hindi and french*

Accuracy

Basic errors in the use of preposition, article, and spelling were made in the advertisement.

- *job banking manager*

- *banking manager*

- *b.com owners*

Description

- A basic description of the post required, qualifications and skills possessed, languages known, salary wanted and contact details were mentioned in the advertisement.

Group 3

Range

Basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae were used to communicate limited information required mainly in job situations.

- *Wanted a pvt.job*

- *had a degree*

- *had 3 years experience*

- *had clear communication*

- *For further details contact*

- *Details*

- *Degree*

- *Communication*

- *Flexibility*

- *adaptability*

Coherence

No connector was used to link words. The comma was used to separate information.

Accuracy

Simple structures were used but basic errors were made in the use of article, tense and noun

- *a English Teacher*

- *had a degree*

- *3 years experience*

Description

A basic description of the job required, educational qualifications and skills possessed, experience obtained, salary expected and contact details were mentioned in the advertisement.

Group 4

Range

Basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae were used to communicate limited information required mainly in job situations.

- *can work diligently,*

- *can speak English*

- *experience of working*

- *for further details contact*

- *Year*

- *Contact*

- *diligently*

Coherence

Group of words were connected with connector 'and'.

- *English and Hindi*

Accuracy

Simple structures were used but basic errors were made in the use of article and noun

- *post of teacher*

- *4 years experience*

Description

A basic description of the job required, educational qualifications and experience possessed, languages known, salary expected and contact details were provided in the advertisement.

Group 5

Range

Basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae were used to communicate limited information required mainly in job situations.

- *Speak*

- *Experience*

- *Qualification*

- *Gender*

- *speak Hindi, English*

- *are leadership*

An error was made in the use of vocabulary.

- *Gender female*

Coherence

Group of words were connected with connector 'and'.

- *English and French*

Accuracy

Simple structures were used but basic errors were made in the use of tense

- *are leadership*

Description

A basic description of the job required, skills and experience possessed, languages known, educational qualification, salary expected, sex, age and contact details were provided in the advertisement. The organisation of information was a bit flawed.

Group 6

Range

Basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae were used to communicate limited information required mainly in job situations.

- *Special*

- *Medical*

- *Achievement*

- *Dive*

- *Hostess*

- *salary wanted minimum*

- *Wanted job*

Coherence

Group of words were connected with connector 'and'.

- *English, Spanish and Japanese.*

Accuracy

Basic errors were made in the use of article, preposition, verb and agreement.

- *Wanted, job*

- *job for*

- *Have been worked*

- *special achievement*

Description

A basic description of the job required, educational qualifications possessed, languages known, experience obtained, skills possessed, salary expected and contact details were mentioned in the advertisement.

Group 7

Range

Basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae were used to communicate limited information required mainly in job situations.

- *Wanted a Teacher job*

- *Got best teacher award*

- *unique strategies to teach*

- *contact.. 23456*

- *Year*

- *Award*

- *Require*

- *Unique*

Coherence

Group of words were connected with connector 'and'.

- Peaceful mind and polite behaviour

Accuracy

A basic error was made in the use of nouns.

- *a Teacher job*

Description

A basic description of the job required, educational qualifications possessed, experience gained, soft skills, achievements, salary required and contact details were mentioned in the advertisement.

Group 8

Range

Basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae were used to communicate limited information required mainly in job situations.

- *skills are-*

- *Detail*

- *Government*

- *Graduate*

Coherence

Group of words were connected with connector 'and'.

- *English,Hindi and Japenese*

Accuracy

Basic errors were made in the use of preposition, article and spelling.

- *of bank manager*

- *in private bank*

● *Japanese*

Description

A basic description of the job required, educational qualifications possessed, experience gained, skills learned, languages known, age, salary expected and contact details were mentioned in the advertisement.

Upon entering the classified advertisement drafted by the groups of learners on a website that does automatic analysis of the writing task, all of them were assigned an A2 grade on the CEFR scale.

Thematic analysis

The teacher-learners and learner-learner conversations were recorded through screen and audio recording. Through the analysis of teacher- learners' conversations and learner-learner conversations, the following themes emerged and their description is given below:

Content

The learners discussed the content of the advertisement. They were asked to decide upon the sector in which the job is located such as the government sector. A group asked the teacher regarding the educational qualifications required for a post in the bank. They asked the teacher what to mention in 'special achievements'. They discussed the content of the advertisement such as the percentage of marks. A learner while typing the content of the ad asked other members to tell the content such as whether the job is to be in the government sector. So the group members contributed. A learner who was typing became angry with the flurry of instructions coming from the members. They discussed the organisation of the content such as educational qualifications, skills, experience, heading, languages, age, gender etc. They discussed the newspaper's name, city and date to publish

the ad. A learner was worried about the ad being too short but the other learner did not want it to be long like a para and insisted on being precise. They discussed the place of the newspaper ad. A learner wanted to know from where to begin so the other learner replied to start by writing about the name of the job required. They discussed the content and decided upon it mutually.

A learner wanted to publish on the current date but the learner corrected that it is not possible as it can be published on a future date. Since the advertisement was drafted on a real website it showed the cost of the advertisement and they compared the cost of the one demonstrated by the teacher. A group argued over the cost of the advertisement being too high.

Language

They had their conversation in Hindi which was full of words from the English language. They discussed the language of the advertisement. They had confusion about the spelling of the word 'hostess'. So they asked the teacher for the same. They had doubts about whether 'advocate' and 'lawyer' were the same and asked the teacher to confirm it. They asked the teacher for the spelling of the word 'Infosys'. They instructed the member who was typing to punctuate such as writing C.A. in the capital, adding a full stop to separate the letters C A, using commas to separate phrases, using brackets such as in B.Com (H), and adding space between words. One learner asked to remove words such as i in the beginning as the advertisement cost will increase. They discussed the use of commas and spelling, the first letter being capitalised and the rest small. A learner objected to the use of grammar. They corrected the vocabulary of one another such as a student who used the word 'dot' was told that it is called full stop. In group 6, a learner told the wrong spelling of the word 'ads' to the other learner. They discussed whether to use the spelling speak or skip. They discussed the full form of b.ed. A learner was unable to understand what to write. They asked about the word in English equivalent to a word in Hindi such as 'teaching'.

Technology mediated learning

Their conversations revealed their attitude towards, their knowledge of and problems faced by the learners in technology-mediated learning. A learner expressed that she does not feel like working on the tab. They were a bit confused when an app started updating itself upon turning on the power of the tab. They were frustrated with the slow response of the tab. The browser did not respond in one of the tabs. As a result, they were not able to move forward quickly. One of them felt drowsy. One of them faced a low battery issue. A tab hung in the middle of the task and they were not able to see. The group 2 tab stopped working. But when they were provided a tab after another group finished one of the members wanted to do the task the next day but one of them wanted to complete it that day itself and asked to type quickly. And they did it. Group 3 members did not know the educational qualifications for the teaching job so they thought about searching online. When they had to take a screenshot a member did know how to take so the other learner helped her in doing so. When a learner thought that the tab was not connected to the wifi network and wanted to know the password, another learner told her that the tab connected to the wi-fi network automatically. During this group task, a learner was busy doing other subjects' work and did not take an interest in the ad-making task. But other members tried to include her. The tab hung a lot. Group 4 learners doubted whether they could do the task in 10 minutes. Group 5 learners were not able to understand what to do regarding where to type the ad. They preferred one newspaper over another due to the cost. A learner thought that this task would cost a lot but the other learner told her that they were not going to make payment but only practice. When the task was being done, a learner reminded the other learners of them being recorded and to be cautious. They faced tab hanging and network issues. The learners knew about autocorrect features since when spelling was changed, they knew the reason. They faced network issues again. They consulted the teacher when they were unable to do the task. Their efforts went down the drain as they accidentally touched the back button and everything was erased. A learner asked how to take

the screenshot. A learner asked for the reason behind the red line and the other replied as some error. So they corrected it. When a learner was unable to do the task and she asked others to do it, they suggested searching about qualifications online.

Attitude towards task

Their conversations revealed their attitude towards the task. A learner admitted that she did not pay attention when the ad creation was demonstrated. A learner was asked to stop taking the task lightly and do it as such a question will be asked in the exam. Group 7 learners discussed off-task topics initially. A learner enjoyed doing the task. They were worried about the cost which was played down by the other. They showed the ad to the group members who insisted on reading it and asked to add details about age'.

Discussion

The objectives of this paper were to analyse the learning outcome and learning process of making a classified advertisement on a website. Upon analysis of the advertisement drafted by the learners, it was revealed that all the groups were able to draft a classified advertisement online with variance in their range of words, coherence and accuracy. However, all of them were assigned A2 grades by automated assessment on a website. The conversations shed light on the learning process. They discussed the content and language while drafting the advertisement. They also rendered help to one another in digital skills building. They enjoyed the task and they used L1 mostly. They faced technical issues while doing the task. They thought practically such as the cost-effectiveness of the ad. These results are at par with the findings of the previous studies.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the findings of the above study that the learners were able to draft classified advertisements successfully on a website. They had appropriate content but they committed errors in grammar, spelling etc. They contributed to the content and the language of the advertisement through their discussions. The teacher-learner talk is little in comparison to learner-learner talk. Technical issues occurred during technology-mediated task-based language teaching which required the teacher to solve these issues. Learners' digital knowledge varied from learner to learner and there was mutual learning. The latest digital infrastructure will smoothen the learning process and positively affect the attitude. Learners' response to the task was not very explicit but a little expression was made regarding them enjoying the task or lack of interest in it. The presence of L1 was strong as revealed from their conversations. The learners also think practically when they do tasks in the real world. Such tasks should be made a part of the language curriculum.

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