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“Use of Web and ICT in English Language Teaching in Classroom”

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Abstract:

In this era of Computer - technology and Globalization where the world has come closer and the students are going over-seas to build up their career and prospect, use of correct English is the need of changing time but our traditional methods of teaching are insufficient to excite the interest of the students. Hence some innovative and effective methods have to be adopted for English language teaching (ELT).

This paper promotes the use of technology for language learners by creating an eagerness to learn different language skills. This research will provide new direction in English Language teaching to meet the demands of today's world. The focal point of this study is to highlight the role of current web based and digital technologies in English language study which can prove to be the most effective supplementary tools for the students who opt English as second language.

Keywords:

ICT- (Information Communication Technology), ESL - (English as second Language),
PRAGMATIC- (A branch of Linguistics), ELT – (English Language Teaching)

Introduction:

English is a Second language in India (as it is in almost all the countries which have had a colonial past) and it has been perhaps evolving faster than in the country of its origin. English was introduced with the advent of British in India which had its own imperialistic designs. Hence the thrust of ELT so far had been to learn English only through British literature, History and Culture. Even today, familiarity with and interpretation of well-known English literary texts are the main objective of ELT. *The goal set before students of English before Independence was that of mastering the language for the purpose of knowing Literature, life, thoughts and expressions (Desai 1977:3) 1 .*

Objectives of teaching English to Indians in Pre-independence era was very specific which can be understood from the statement of Lord Macaulay published in his famous minutes on Indian Education on February 2, 1835. *He stated, “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of person, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste and opinion, in morals and intellect.” (Clive and Pinney 1972; and Eve 249) 2 .*

English teaching in India still follows Macaulayan model of 1835. English in the present century has proved its importance in the field of education and employment. Today the

purpose of ELT in India is to enable the learner to communicate effectively in written as well as the oral form. But still the students who study English as second language find it difficult to gain mastery over the language. It is because there are certain factors responsible for this lacuna which is very important to understand.

Factors responsible for the failure in mastering language skills in ESL classrooms:

1) Classroom situations in India:

The traditional paradigm and resources are insufficient to achieve the desired goal to meet the present day demand of English teaching in India. The reasons are stated further-

- i) In India there are mixed-ability student's classes. There are students from urban as well as from rural areas. In such condition it becomes difficult for the teacher to use "one size fits all paradigm".
- ii) Multilingualism is one of the important hurdles in teaching English language. If a teacher comes from different language background often creates problem if not perfect in Pitch, Intonation or Pronunciation.
- iii) The teacher who has ever been the center point and an important resource in Indian classrooms is observed to have mother tongue influence in teaching English language. This affects the performance in speaking skill. More over what can be the limitations in teacher centered teaching – learning process can be best understood from the following thoughts of

Failure of Pragmatics competence while teaching English:

Pragmatics is the recently emerged and still developing branch of Linguistics. The study of pragmatics explores the ability of language users to match utterances with contexts in which they are appropriate. *In Stalnaker's words, Pragmatics is "the study of linguistics acts and the contexts in which they are performed" (1972, p. 383) 4.*

All languages have a set of pragmatic conventions about language use. These conventions are social and cultural so they differ from language to language, from country to country and from culture to culture.

Why it is important to language learners?

It is important to learn about the pragmatic conventions of English so as to be able to make full use of the words you know and to avoid mistakes. An important feature of language is that the meaning of a sentence is more than a combination of the meaning of the words it contains: to understand fully, we also use information from the situation where the sentence is used. Look at the following example- [Jim and Kim are discussing their family finances]

Jim: I think we can forget the idea of a holiday this year. We understand Jim is telling Kim that they will not have enough money to go on holiday. We also understand that Jim is expressing some emotion about the idea. Either he really wants to go on holiday, or he knows that Kim does. The neutral way of saying the same thing is: **Jim: We won't be going on holiday this year.**

This example shows us an important choice: between a neutral way of saying something, and the way that emphasizes, or that expresses a personal point of view or an

evaluation. After all language is a matter of Encoding and Decoding. What you encode if you could decode properly, the purpose of language is accomplished.

This pragmatic competence definitely affects the understanding of native language if the teacher fails to understand it which is happening in all the ESL classrooms in India because pragmatic competence in language teaching has not been considered yet in Indian classroom teaching. Neither it is included in syllabus nor the text books are designed accordingly. But the problems can be solved through these technological devices because most of the gadgets and software are invented and designed in foreign countries which directly represent their influence.

In such cases use of web based and digital technologies can be the best solution to ensure the creation of intellectual assets and to create students-centric learning environment.

Since there is keen desire to teach and learn English amongst the people, they are slowly and steadily turning to the ideas like innovative techniques and tools around them for acquiring language skills. With the advent of technology in the 20th century, the process of teaching and learning has undergone sea changes. In language teaching and learning we have a lot to choose from the world of technology. The use of technology has thus become an inevitable ingredient in ELT process.

Technology In Developing Language Skills (LSRW) :

In the quickly changing environment of modern world, technology is perhaps the most important means of creating an environment conducive to language learning. It can support teachers in making language faster, easier, less painful and more engaging.

WRITING skill is the productive skill in the written mode. It is perhaps the most complicated and hardest of all the skills. As computers and software can help English language students to develop vocabulary skills and knowledge, in the same way computers can also help English language learners to develop their writing skills.

The Use of Electronic mail, Bulletin boards, on world wide networks such as the Internet makes learners and teachers to access and share Information in time and space in independent fashion. Electronic mail is a powerful means that can be used as a medium of instructions to improve writing in the student's second language learning. The aim of the language instructor in this case should be to allow students to improve their writing skills in a way that is communicative and a part of their everyday lives. Writing skill using Electronic mail shows that students need adequate instructions in writing before using computers as a supplement to the curriculum. Often the students need to feel confident in their new language before putting it into print. If done seriously and carefully the use of Electronic mail as a supplement to the class room curriculum can be effective.

LISTENING is another skill that can be enhanced quite effectively with the use of technology. This skill basically involves the ability to recognize and evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of English utterance. The learners may face difficulties in understanding the utterance uttered in a variety of accents. For this the learners can seek the help of self developed courseware and videos. Through these devices the learners can listen to different speeches uttered in different accents and thus can make a great command over Listening skill.

SPEAKING is another language skill that can be benefitted greatly by the use of technology. This skill involves ability to speak the language in a way so that it can be understood properly by others. The Speaker is expected to speak fluently with no grammatical mistakes. The most commonly used technologies for speaking skill are Text Chat, Voice Chat and Audio Conferencing technologies. With the help of ICTs the learners can be benefitted in a number of ways. The learner can get a considerable amount of reading practice in addition to writing.

READING – According to Carrell (1984 :1) *“For several students, reading is the most important of all English language skills. When dealing with the reading lessons students often experience the lack of reading strategies which are essential to overcome the challenges in the classroom.”* 5

Therefore Teachers should consider the use of ICT in teaching Reading skill which provides perfectness and accuracy while practicing sub-skills of Reading like Intonation, Word-accent and Pitch.

The uses of ICTs with E-learning involvement play an important role in helping higher education institutions to optimize the benefits of Globalization. The considerable growth in educational, industrial and research networks coupled with the growth of ICT based E-learning have a far reaching impact on the research and educational activities of Universities worldwide. ICTs and the INTERNET will continue to influence the ways in which higher education has traditionally been delivered. In the future, new technologies will lead to new modes of delivering that will advance quality-based mass education to groups and regions that have not yet been reached by the more conventional delivery models.

Use of some web based and digital devices in mastering language skills:

WEBLOG or BLOG as it is called is a web site which can be created and maintained by an individual. It mainly includes the commentaries and descriptions of events of an individual. The main purpose of Blog is to share personal feelings and interact with people all over the world. A typical Blog contains text image and links to other blogs and web pages. One of the main features of blogs is their interactive flexibility. Readers can leave their comments after reading the material from the blog.

Weblogs have an important role in the language learning process. It creates an opportunity for the students to improve their reading and writing skills. Students who are interested in creative writings can create their work and upload them. Similarly by reading different types of Information, students can improve their reading skill also. Teachers are also benefitted by the use of Blogs. Teachers can create their blogs and they can upload the materials for study on the blog. Students can access those blogs and study. Blogs are very easy to create. It is free of cost. It is simple and friendly. Language teachers have plenty of soft ware application to choose if they want to use blogs. It gives them chance for sharing thoughts and ideas of learners and to meet with other people in the world which is not possible in the class rooms.

PODCASTING was first mentioned by Ben Hammersley in the Guardian News Paper in the year 2004. Etymologically the term pod casting is derived from two words, iPod and broadcasting. It is a technology which can be used effectively for language teaching and learning. Pod cast is a series of audio or video digital media file that are released episodically and downloaded through web. This

technology can be employed to develop Listening skill. Stories, fables, and poems can be downloaded and can be played in the classroom. This will help the learners to understand the correct pronunciation of the foreign words. This will also help them to understand the Intonation pattern of the language. It can also be used to teach/learn grammar. Thus Pod casting is gaining momentum because it offers language learners extra listening practice both inside and outside the class room. It aware them to the native speakers' pronunciation of words and sentence.

Another technology used for language teaching and learning is the use of **Info graphs**. It is true that visuals help us to understand the concepts easily. The attention of learners can be obtained through visual presentation. Visuals have the ability to integrate words and pictures in a fluid and dynamic way. It is often said that "A picture is worth a thousand words". **Robert Horn made a compelling case that visualization is a language, with the publication of Visual Language: Global communication for the 21st Century in 1999. 6**

Information graphics or info graphics are visual representations of information, data or knowledge. These graphics are used where complex information needs to be explained clearly such as in Signs, Maps, and Education. In order to teach or learn language, Info graphics can be used. A visual element can be created in the minds of the learners through Info graphics. They can serve as spring boards for linguistic constructions which invariably lead to language enrichment.

Challenges and Solutions in integrating technology in language teaching:

Many linguists, literary scholars and language experts believe that the introduction of technology will make ELT and its advantages available to the global village farther, faster and cheaper. This process is still underway and will have to overcome many challenges before it reaches fruition. This process is a doubled edged sword, and we need to face challenges and overcome them in order to bring about progressive changes in ELT, be able to demonstrate reliability, credibility and quality of ICT in ELT space.

Due to the certain factors like mass migration, the globalization wave, changing student's dynamics, education in general and teacher education in particular needs to be constantly revised and reformed.

Several ELT teachers fear a lot of things when it comes to integrating ICT enabled teaching methods with their traditional way of imparting the English language skills. The questions that may spin in their minds are –

1. Will ICT provide the right kind of parameters to assess the student's performance?
2. Will the students pay attention to class room inputs or be more interested in surfing the net?
3. Will the ICT set-up always be operational? What will happen in Case of failure and system crashes?
4. Will ICT be suitable for all learners?
5. Will ICT satisfy teacher expectations, learners' need and institutional goals?
6. Will ICT diminish or eliminate the role of teachers?
7. And many more questions.

Apart from relentless efforts, strong and healthy education policies and practices, the one main aspect of making this new set-up work is *motivation*. If the teachers themselves perceive this new learning environment as a mean of professional growth and personal development, then

they can serve as role models where as learner will mould their behavior and approach to this new set-up with an open mind.

The surveys say that many teachers from different countries like China, India and Singapore felt that ELT through ICT is definitely becoming a major phenomenon but the down side could be that this could promote a world-wide monoculture and in the process may wipe out the real culture heritage. Here we need to realize that we as imparters of English need to use technology to help learners to face the rapid changes. Not only policy makers but also teachers of ELT need to contribute towards defining educational policies, programs and practices that will enable and facilitate the ELT learners to co-exist with realities through technology. There could be students who prefer conventional ELT as they may not be mentally prepared and motivated for the technology mode. When it comes to ELT teachers, their knowledge of ICT is also an important factor. Intensive training is needed for the teachers in handling of ICT technology in the teaching set-up effectively and transforms themselves into the international standard professionals. Apart from training teachers in how to handle technology mediated instruction and tools, what is needed to ensure that they know when and which tools to use in given a particular teaching situation (reading, comprehension, grammar etc.), for example, combining audio-visual content with the text books for explaining concept of grammar or combining multimedia software with reading session.

Another important factor that affects the process is that of teacher's attitudes. Rigid pre-dispositions and pedagogical conservative attitudes will hamper the process. Teachers need to realize the value of ICT, upfront. Investment in technology is yet another area of concern. Unless governments, education councils and policy makers do not earmark the required investments in knowledge building and sharing through technology, ELT programs will not influence the full capacity of technology to bridge the knowledge gap.

Conclusion:

ICT enabled English Language teaching, not only enhances the proficiency levels in students, but also provides a learning continuum and widening of the ELT market. In the era of globalization, the majority of students are attempting English language based exams like GRE and TOEFL to find better prospects and career in the country and abroad. In such case command on the language skills and communicative approach becomes absolutely necessary. Since there has been a constant change in the teaching methods and techniques all over the world in every subject, methods and techniques of teaching English need desirable and radical changes in view of the demanding job market in the global scenario. It is hoped that this work will provide teachers of English with practical insights into ICT and help them expand the repertoire of traditional classroom practices and consequently, enhance English language. As argued by Atkinson (1987:245), **"Teachers should not opt for the contemporary methods in language teaching just to demonstrate the knowledge possessed by them in order to justify their position as educationists, but should adopt or use other methods according to the condition and situation they face."** 7 . Thus, the advent of ICT can bring significant change in ELT.

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