

How Far Technology Can Interfere in English Language and Literature Teaching

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In the teaching of language or literature, from the times unknown, book reading has been an indispensable medium. The printed material has always been a final resort for the teachers as well as for those who read literature for the sake of knowledge or recreation. Since the nineteenth century, technology made its mark on the face of the world and gradually attained a permanent place for itself in the field of teaching as well. Since then, its impact upon the education field has been such that it has entirely changed the methods and techniques of teaching in every era. The culmination of this intrusion of technology into classroom is now being experienced in form of telecommunication and Web-based learning programs. Thereby, the high time has come when we must realize and understand the contribution and co-operation technology can give in the task of teaching. We just cannot afford to neglect the interference of technology, especially the Web-based techno-field and the Cyber-world, into our orthodox methods of teaching that have grown obsolete and sterile and that need to be given a new vigor and vitality in form of techno-aids of teaching like, internet, audio-video facility, e-mail interaction and so on. The techno-world, call it a devil or a boon, has brought about so many changes in the world of affairs including political, social and academic that no domain could stay oblivious to it, nor one can remain contented in the delusion of not needing this boon. This 'technosphere' (the atmosphere technology has created) has enveloped our every walk and move under its sway in such a way that no modern entity can keep itself aloof from this omnipresent phenomenon. Such is its importance in our lives and hence, the high time is up for us to consider how we can update our techniques of teaching with the help of this technological boon. An attempt has been made here to point out and explain the uses of technical aids, such as internet and other cyber facilities.

Researches show us that from the very time of industrial developments in the nineteenth century, the use of some technical devices was proposed in the teaching of English. These aforementioned devices have their own advantages, but they had some limitations as well. **Radio** lessons are useful in improving accent and intonation. Repetitions after the Radio lessons help the students to master the pronunciation and structure. **Audiocassettes** help in proving exposure to varieties of English accent and pronunciation, whereas **Videocassettes** add another dimension to the language learning process. They bring to light the non-verbal aspect of language like, gestures, facial expressions, postures, and other forms of body language. Such are the benefits of these technical boons. But, there is no other technology that has proved as profitable and revolutionary as the Internet. Today no private, governmental or academic field has remained untouched from the influence of this cyber world.

Because, the sphere of English Language has enlarged beyond the leaves of books to include Internet and the multimedia facilities of computers, the methods of teaching has also to be modified and updated by their incorporation so that the learners may get unique experiences rather than feeling tedious in the class. This cyber-technology has become the most significant driver. Never had English Language teaching grown and so fuelled by anything other than Internet. The use of Cyber technology in the teaching field has yielded incredible results which have become possible only due to the reason that computers and the internet have not remained accessible only to the few ones, but have made its way to the homes of even the commonest men. This growth can be seen in the internet using masses

ratio. The greater the number of computer and internet operating hands, the greater grows the literacy of English Language. And it's never going to diminish. The growth in internet users will also mean the growth of English users, because the language of computers and internet is English.

Today, internet has grown to be an all-favourable source of information with the additions of mailing, chatting, videos and so on. However, it will be interesting to see how English language can be taught through internet and what its advantages are. So many advantages can be cited regarding this: the internet helps in cultivating student's interest in study; it promotes students knowledge to gain an insightful understanding to Western culture; it improves interaction between teacher and students; it improves teaching effect by adding audiovisual aid to it; and also it creates a context for language learning. The above cited list of benefits is not exhaustive. The list will possibly grow longer as the future generations see more and more utility in Internet.

It is also worthwhile to understand what the roles of English teacher are for the next generation. In this internet age, there is "the renewed focus on pedagogy which is accompanied by a movement from teaching to learning. This has led to the discussions over new roles for teachers and the attempts to redefine learning." (Graham Attwell and Jenny Hughes) This new role of the English teachers will be teaching English Language and Literature with the use of means that the students themselves are interested in. Accordingly, a prudent teacher will have to make himself capable enough to use these aids first and then try to update his methods of teaching as well by incorporating the aforementioned technologies in teaching. Understanding his new role towards the next generation and their interests, the conscious teacher will have to plan his teaching making use of the gadgets and services like, mobile, computers and internet in his teaching. If the teacher does so, a number of benefits can be brought in which would be very difficult, if not impossible to achieve. He can use them to improve the competencies of the students by facilitating them with Computers and Internet in their studies so that their learning becomes advanced. He can ask the students to interact with him through the medium of internet whenever there is a need or any problem. Thus, by maintaining a consistent dialogue with his pupils through internet, a teacher can make his students to encounter and deal with more English than is possible in the traditional classroom teaching. The pupils are provided a double opportunity in this way to face and learn English. Only listening English from the oral medium of teacher, which is a usual experience in the traditional class, cannot feed the minds of the learners well with English. But when they personally face it, see it, hear it and read it; they begin to utilize all their imaginative powers try to understand and response in the particular situation very bravely. This firsthand knowledge or learning of English fills them with confidence to use the language in the same way in real life also. From many a studies it has been proved that the internet community can bring about a revolution in the understanding, reasoning, writing and speaking English. This is the reason that many a countries are turning their schools, colleges and institutions into Internet-facilitated-hubs.

Teaching English language and literature with the use of Internet has twofold advantages. It's like hitting two birds with one arrow. By using the electronic media in the English classroom, the learners firstly get an opportunity to be able to learn English through the channel which they like most. And on the other hand, they become digitally literate by being able to use these electronic instruments. The result is, they learn the language so passionately and enthusiastically. Thus, a twofold objective is attained. In this regard, Elizabeth Brandjes remarks, "mastering the use of internet for research, communication and publishing helps the students become better users to language, and at the same time, they learn a set of new skills becoming increasingly desirable in th work world." Thus, in the age

where the next generation of learners is changing so radically, it becomes more than necessary and urgency to modify the channels through which the communication is done in the classroom. Every new generation needs new ways of learning. Every new generation is more intelligent and smarter than the earlier one. Hence, it is a unanimously admitted fact that the new communication methods and channels should be discovered, or at least make use of such technical devices that are already available. At present, Internet is the only most advanced channel that can satisfyingly meet the needs of the modern learners.

After this short discussion, two questions tease my mind. First, is the Internet so profitable in classroom leaning? And secondly, in what way we can use internet to bring best of the results in the classroom?

Well, let us take the first question to task first. As regards the use of Internet to teach English language and literature, it will be interesting to know the experiences of a notable scholar Barbara Stevenson(1997), “I have found that hypertext theory and the web-based learning do, in fact, change my teaching of literature even in a traditional classroom where the only technology is the chalk and the blackboard. The electronic revolution has altered my teaching of the relationship between literature and its textual presentation.” Through the experiences of many such scholars and teachers, it becomes crystal clear that the use of the Internet and the multimedia technology does not create danger to the existence of the teacher in the classroom, but it adds ornaments to his teaching and can make the teaching more advanced to be able to impart the teaching experiences in a novel way. It will be highly foolish on our part to think that the use of Internet and computers in the classroom teaching will gradually make the reading and writing capacity of the learners weaken or they would develop a disinterest in the pupils for reading books. Besides, what is reading skill indeed? Does it mean reading books only? If it is so, the Internet also provides inexhaustible store of original text of the authors and all kinds of information which cannot be cramped within the leaves of a book. The students can open them anytime they want and read. The students are likely to generate interest in reading these books and literature of eminent authors. In fact, even the scholars and researchers prefer to rely upon this eternal information reservoir of internet, for it contains even those rare books and writings which cannot be found or located in the libraries. The world waits for us just at the distance of one click. Thus, the use of internet does not diminish the habit of reading, but strengthens and fosters it.

As regards the second question, which holds a lot of significance, it will be appropriate to have a look at the different ways through which we can exploit internet in the classroom.

1) To improve reading skill:-

Today's world is knowledge world and no other source of information is as vast and inexhaustible as the Internet. Internet has been changed into an all-inclusive omniscient phenomenon. It knows everything and can provide whatever and whenever is asked to. So, why not use this modern God -Internet- to improve the reading skill of the students? It can be done by providing them all the electronic amenities first and then asking them to go on venturing, exploring and drawing information about their respective problems or topics. Whatever the teacher may teach- a poem, essay, novel, drama, science or philosophy- the students should be set free to draw the information they want from the Internet and prepare themselves for the examination. In this way, not only they are accessed extra

amount of information in form of the reviews and articles of several authors, but their research ability also develop through frequent search for information on internet. This was about the students who learn in schools and colleges. But from the large point of view, the learner's reading skill improves greatly when they set loose on Internet. This has also brought about a gigantic change in the literacy all over the world. As Solamki D. Shamalee remarks, "English language teaching has been with us for many years and its significance continues to grow, fuelled, partially by the Internet. Graddots study (2000) suggests that in the year 2000 there were about a billion English learners- but a decade later the numbers changed."

The greater the students' engagement in the tasks on internet, the greater will be the possibility of improvement of their English reading ability, because "over 80 % of information stored on the internet is in English" and also because the learners feel much proud in learning their studies on the internet.

2) To improve writing skill:-

Traditionally, the language learners are taught to write through a practice letter by letter, words by words and sentence by sentence. No doubt, the students learn to write in this way. But the next step of writing is not writing the seen words only, but thinking and writing unseen. In this fast growing and changing world, where internet has become a global system for communication and information exchange, an innovative method of teaching writing skill has become necessity. Today, writing is done in form of the hypertext and writing Blogs, E-mails and books online. As Elizabeth Brandjes has pointed out, "World Wide Web can enhance the writing skill in classroom in several ways. The teachers and students can engage in consistent dialogue above assignment or issue which may help to foster a more positive, nurturing classroom environment." A number of selected issues can be given to the students as an assignment and ask the students to draw information about those topics from the Internet. After having collected the required information, they can be asked to write about them in form of Blogs or Emails to their teachers. Writing does not mean scribbling some words only, but means thinking about and expressing it through channel one possesses. "Once the homepage is designed, teacher can post homework, assignments, student's works, famous quotes etc." The students also get more interested and enthusiastic in this form of exercise, because the electronic media is a subject of fascination for them. As Brndjes opines, " the use of Emails on internet system promotes discussion between teacher and students as well as alumni students. The teacher becomes participants in the discussion leading and encouraging dialogue about writing and modeling the use of computer mediated communication. When the students have an access to each other as resources for sharing work and receiving criticism, they become more involved, as the writing assignment take on a more social nature." There are other possibilities as well, such as; the students may feel it more convenient and useful way of communicating with the partners and with the teacher.

Further, if an institution or a teacher gives facility to create a Web-page of their own, their students "get a chance to show off what they have accomplished." In whatever the way they use it, their writing skill is given a new impetus and they become better users of language and also it definitely gets improved. At the same time, they learn a set of skills that make them more competent in this competitive world. When the students have their own Web page and they are given an assurance of

publishing their writing, a very healthy competition emerges among them as they want to write better than the others.

3) To develop Research Ability:-

To use Internet for any purpose, one requires to be equipped with the natural instinct of exploring and investigating. When the students are given a particular assignment or a problem, they immediately understand what sort of information they need to draw and from which source. Before any second thought, they resort to the reservoir of Internet and acquire all the information they need. "Students who utilize the Web to access information realize that they have access to resources from all over the world." This frequent practice of exploring on the Internet cultivates and gradually develops research ability in them. There remains no need to explain how they should hunt, excavate and rummage around for information on internet to this Internet-oriented-generation. They understand without any extra teaching or lessons what sources they should resort to for information and how to collect and organize it orderly. Without the efforts and help of any other person, they go on learning and teaching themselves. Besides, as Brandjes points out, "use of the Internet provides students with access to millions of sources of information and classrooms provide the structure to help students learn to discriminate between useful and frivolous sources." It is also necessary to sift the information and arrange it in order in any writing piece. Many a years the scholars spend to learn this little thing and those who lack this skill make their research or writing piece one of trivial quality. Thus, if the students could learn these research skills in the period of their initial years, their preparation for the future challenges and tasks is also done.

4) Integrates the Academic skill with Computer skill:-

As has already been pointed out, the learners who are provided computers and Internet facilities for bringing in good result in academic courses are also opportunized to improve their computer skills. In the course of learning how to utilize computers and Internet for different academic purposes, the required practices of the skills to use these devices are also given and improve gradually in the students. In order to learn these computer skills, the pupils do not have to go to spend their extra amount of time and money in any institution. This is the twofold benefit of making use of these devices in academic studies. "Additionally, the students who learn the necessary skills of designing and composing hypertext, not only become competitive in terms of future job opportunities, but they also acquire the skill (computer skills) needed to publish their writing on internet." (Elizabeth Brandjes, 1997) She also remarks that "mastering the use of Internet for research, communication and publishing helps students become better users of language and at the same time, they learn a new set of skills becoming increasingly desirable in the work world."

5) Increases Digital Literacy:-

Today's world is digital world where everything is done through the medium of digital devices. Here, having traditional form of literacy- reading and writing books- is not enough. With the change of time, a new kind of literacy has become a demand and need of the time which has come to be known as Digital Literacy. In this era of Internet, those who are literate only in reading and writing, but do not know how to operate digital devices like Computers, are labeled as illiterate persons. Hence, it has become a call of the time to become digitally literate. An urgent necessity of the day is that every student, every teacher, every scholar and every layman need to make themselves digitally literate in order to make their stand firm in this fast changing world. As has already been proved, the students

who use these digital devices for academic purposes also become digitally literate which is the requirement of their career and also helps in the enhancement of their personality. The greater the proportion of the students learning things through the medium of computers and Internet, the greater will be the percentage of digitally literate people. Their capabilities and proficiencies will also be greatly strengthened and fostered by the help of these devices.

Conclusion-

Technology has developed to solve problems associated with human need in more productive ways. There would have been no scope for the development of technology, had there been no problems in the world. Applying this principle to educational technology would mean that educators should create and adopt technologies that address educational problems. As Solanki D. Shamalee remarks, “the new technology assigns new challenges and duties on the modern teacher. The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. Technology provides so many options as making teaching interesting and also making teaching more productive in terms of improvements.”

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