The Use of Technology in English Language Teaching

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English language teaching and learning has always been a matter of grave significance among the educational policy makers in India, as also in the educational field in other countries of the world. In post-independence era, first the Radhakrishnan Committee in 1958 and then the Kothari Committee in 1968 were formed by the government to make an extensive research in the then academic situation and suggest guidelines to bring about improvements in the university education. Both these committees advocated English language learning in schools and colleges as second language, for it "holds a mirror to the world", in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, and the position of a "Global Language." A plethora of techniques and methods have been proposed for the improvement in English Language teaching by scholars and researchers in the subsequent period. Many scholars worldwide through their lengthy researches brought about a revolutionary development along with some very fruitful techniques and teaching-aids which have proved of immense use and productivity in the field of English language teaching.

Today, English language is used throughout the world either as first language or in most other countries as second language. India has been in contact with British colonial powers and through them with English from the beginning of the 16th century and hence there has always been a strong kinship between English and the vernacular languages of India. This and innumerable other reasons have made the teaching and learning of English in India a need and requirement of the future, if India wants to keep its pace in educational, commercial and scientific domains with the western world. Hence is there such an interest in the improvements in the English language teaching. After the Industrial Revolution in the west, technological revolution took place due to which very useful technical-aids have been invented by the scientists to meet the needs of different fields. Many such technical-aids have also been provided for the language teaching and learning which have enhanced the results of English language learning.

The present study aims at exploring the usefulness and efficiency of these technological aids in the teaching and learning of English language and attempts to discover and provide more valuable suggestions and guidelines to bring about improvements in the same.

This study will also deal with few questions related with the use of technology in English language teaching. First, "What are the similarities and differences of language teaching and learning between a traditional classrooms and multimedia language labs under the communicative classrooms?"Secondly, what are the uses of different technical-aids available in the field? Thirdly, how can teachers give a different experience to the students by employing technology in improving their pedagogy? And lastly, how Communicative Teaching Approach developed with the use of these technologies?

Even after so many years of English language learning, researchers say, Indian rural students lack certain soft skills, such as, verbal and non-verbal communication, body language, postures, etc. To inculcate soft these soft skills the basic things needed is that the students like Radio, TV, computer and internet have come to the rescue of the English teacher.

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. "*Further a technology will not be adopted by educators where there is no perceived need or productivity gain. This is what Lankshear and Snyder refer to as the "workability" principle*."(1) A question arises with this discussion, "What are the educational problems that need to be addressed?" Such questions need to be asked at all levels of decision-making, from the teachers planning a program to a school administrator purchasing hardware and software, to an educational system officer developing policy and strategic plans.

An increasing number of educators have always believed by providing better technological support for learning, a part of the problem can be solved. "*Shank and Cleary argue that we know enough about learning to support it with computer systems, using software that allows children to experience activities, at school, that have been impossible or difficult*."(2) Let us first discuss what sort of help these technological-aids impart in the language teaching.

➢ **RADIO AND TV**

To teaching and learning effective, Radio lessons can be useful, for they provide direct experience to the students. In Radio lessons, excessive verbalization is avoided and there is variety, interest and inspiration among the students when they listen conversations on radio. As S.S. Latha observes, "*Radio lessons are useful in improving accent and intonation. Repetition will help the students to master the pronunciation and structure*."(3) Spoken

English or grammar lessons on TV help students to acquire all the skills by making a visual impact.

➢ TAPE RECORDER AND VIDEO PLAYER

Accent training is made easy with the help of video cassette player. Tape Recorder has every potential to develop the listening skill. Cassettes are played and students are made to listen exercises on headphones. Students repeat questions or answer them as a drill. "*Audiocassettes help in proving exposure to varieties of English accent and pronunciation. 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.*"(4)

➢ LANGUAGE LAB

The need for language laboratories which was felt in order to develop LSRW skills is needed by computers, lesson CDs, sound boxes, TV screens, etc along with teacher's consol are set up in the language lab. We have already seen what audio and video tapes can do to develop four skills of language in students. The interaction between the students and CDs or cassettes through microphones provides intensive listening and pronunciation practice.

➢ EDUSAT CLASSROOM

Edusat is the first exclusive satellite for serving the educational sector. As S.S. Latha holds, *"It is configured for audio/visual medium, employing digital interactive classroom and multimedia multicentric system. Edusat is primarily meant for establishing connection between urban educational institutions with good infrastructure and the large number of rural and semi-urban educational institutions that lack the necessary infrastructure.*"(5)Besides formal education, this satellite system also facilitates the dissemination of knowledge to the rural population about important aspect like health, hygiene science etc.

Let us now discuss methods and approaches which employ all the above technical-aids in English language teaching and learning.

➢ COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING(CALL)

Various research studies are showing that the investments in computer technologies result in significant improvements in learning languages. Education is central to the long-term well-being of our society and individuals, teachers and students need all the support they can get. Hence is the need to consider the potential of all available technologies. And investing in computer technology means reducing investments in other resources (eg. books, buildings, teachers etc.) Computers provide better learning outcomes that the equivalent investments in those other resources and this is the reason that computer-based instruction has been challenging

traditional teaching and learning process. *"The role of these technologies in language learning and teaching is called Computer Assisted Language Learning. CALL is a language learning and teaching approach in which the computer is used as a tool for presentation, assisting students and evaluating learning material, and has interactional element."*(6) It also includes a search for the computer applications in language teaching. *"CALL adopts the research findings of second language acquisition, sociology, linguistics, psychology, cognitive sciences, culture examinations, and natural language processing to second language pedagogy and relates them to investigation into information processing and telecommunication."*(7)

Today, after having realized importance of computers in foreign language learning, scholars and teachers have acquired tendency towards CALL. It has been taking advantages of advanced technological facilities to create the highest interactive learning environment for activities that develop LSRW skills. It has also been possible to access authentic cultural resources and bring foreign language students together with native speakers of that language.

While gradually computers and instructional technologies are becoming an indispensable part of the teaching and learning process. *"For the last 20 years,with more "user-friendly" interfaces, it has become possible for language teachers to make more complex applications for themselves"*(8) The computers are used today for drill and practice in language instructions nowadays with all its advances such as integration of speech recognition programs with multimedia software and in this way, enriching students language learning experiences. The other boon of computer's advances is the internet which provides numerous facilities for communication via target language, and access text-based and multimedia resources.

As P.C. Sharma writes: *"In many CALL studies, technology is seen as a treatment or a "magic pill" applied to the language learner and the effect of the treatment on language learning is then measured."*(9) In language classroom environment, CALL studies in three areas: those that investigate CALL in comparison with the traditional methods; those that look at instructional strategies; and those that examine attitudes and interactions through CALL. Studies in these categories clearly underscores the need for studying the language learning classroom environment. First, a study compared dialogue journals written via email with dialogue journals written on the paper. Compared with the paper and pencil group, the email group wrote more per session, asked and answered more conversations with the teacher. These studies examined the effectiveness of technology itself without considering classroom environment factors learning.

Secondly, CALL study focused on comparison of learning strategies which provides an important first step towards empirical support for principles from theory and research that can offer general specific suggestions and considerations for students learning.

Thirdly, some CALL research studies address the attitude and interaction through CALL. These studies are limited in data analysis and interpretation, because lesson, tool and learner variables are easily disregarded.

It is clear that the study of classroom environments is important to understand learning atmosphere. Besides, technological advantages in classroom provides various opportunities for students to learn and interact in the learning contact.

➢ TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH INTERNET

"In English, technology includes cameras, audio-video equipments, computer technology, overhead projector devices. Scanners and printers etc. almost all the devices that can access, present, manipulate and communicate words, sounds and images to enable us to create meaning."(10)The internet is the telecommunication and computer system that are linked together. It is an almost measureless repository of great content, but it also contains an equal amount of junk, and sifting through this large collection is a requirement. Teachers should have a developed plan of action for using the internet. The facility of internet has many advantages for the students; it is motivational and a source of significant amount of reading material; it's fun learning; it allows for the easy production, storage and retrieval of prepared material such as certificates and work required sheets; it is freed up communication and helps teachers to find information easily.

➢ COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) APPROACH

Researchers have always given a very helpful contributions in the development of the theory and practice of CLT approach. To name only the few: Brown, 1987; Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Hymes, 1972; Nattinger,1984; Nunan,1987; White,1989; Yalden,1983. As Huang and Liu say in their paper, *"Students do not simply learn the linguistic structures and grammar rules. Littlewood(1981) described the CLT approach that it pays a systematic attention to the functional as well as structural aspects of language.CLT approach emphasizes the communicative activities that involve the real use of language in daily life situation."*(11) Computers have proved to be helpful in CLT approach. Computer simulations of both the types-Instruction oriented and Fun oriented simulations- have combined the computer-assisted language learning with CLT approach. *"Instruction-oriented computer simulation aims at teaching or helping people learn. The primary function of this type of computer simulations is giving instruction to the pupils to learn themselves and constantly monitor them to see whether they have successfully achieved the goal."*(12) However, computer remains dominant in the interaction. Users receive instruction passively and have to wait to give responds. Users do not have many choices since all available choices are predetermined. This limited control of the users over the computers is partly due to the fact that users in an instruction-oriented simulation are expected to accomplish a pre-set goal in learning.

On the contrary, the fun-oriented simulations prove to be both motivational and entertaining. The primary concern in this type of simulation is to motivate the users to get interested in the simulations, and not the instruction. Thus, both the user and computer share equal opportunities to receive instruction from and respond to each other.

Though the multimedia lab shares some features with the traditional audio-lingual approach in that the teachers can broadcast the teaching materials by playing audiotapes, videotapes or CDs, it has some virtues that traditional language lab cannot compete.

Thus, till the technological revolution in 20th century, blackboards, chalk and books were the only instructional aides and the teachers dominated the classrooms. But with the advent of technology, OHP took the place of blackboards, pictures, charts, films and slides were used to create a visual impact on the students. The arrival of electronic media like Radio, tape recorder, television and video provide practical experiences to the students in language learning. Today, we know that English language has acquired a "global" importance today due to which it has become a need of the time to improvise the traditional classrooms by making teaching more modern and adaptable with technological boons. To keep off these technologies from the students is to divest them of so many learning experiences which they deserve. Only technology can come to help meet the needs of modern generations.

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