

Use of E-Learning tools in teaching English

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ABSTRACT

We are living in a world where technology is omnipresent. Due to the ubiquitous presence of technology the pedagogy of teaching methodology has also undergone a sea-change. The phrase “e-Learning” or “Technology in Education” has become the buzz word in every educational environment. Infusing technology into education is really important as it caters the needs of the contemporary learners. The classroom environment, today, is completely different from the traditional classroom. The traditional methods which are mainly based on lecturing and rote learning reduce English language learning to mechanical memorization and miserably fail in developing English language as a skill among the learners. New technologies like Internet, YouTube, Skype, tweeter, blogs, mobile phones, interactive boards and many more have added not only stimulus but also learners’ engagement and true interactivity within the classroom. The teachers can engage the learners to become skilled at English Language by using the innovative ELT techniques like English songs, movie-clippings, dramatics, advertisements, sports commentaries and many more. This paper stresses on the need to make English language lessons easy and enjoyable through innovative ELT methods. This is done first by giving a brief review about the traditional teaching methods in India and further the focus will be on instilling ICT tools in ELT. Thus this study discusses the availability of various tools of ICT and their practical uses.

We live in an era of information explosion. Once there was famine of information, today we are drowned in the cascade of information. E-learning is a catalyst agent as it has made a triumphal entry into education in the past decade and only a lay man would deny that it has brought no significant benefits to teachers and students alike. The e-learning tools are changing the world we live in and the way we learn to live. New Applications of e-learning tools as Information and Communications technologies (ICT), comprises of communication devices or applications encompassing radio; television as well as newer digital technologies such as over head projectors, projectors, interactive boards, i-pads, blogs, computers, the Internet, Cameras, Audio equipments, Scanners, Printers, E-mails, video conferencing and many more are not only influencing and supporting what is being learned in schools, colleges and universities but it is also supporting changes to the way students are learning.

Past Trends in teaching English

Language teaching in general and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular has tremendously changed over the centuries. When English entered in the curriculum of the students as a compulsory subject, it was a challenge for the English language teachers to teach to the foreign learners but they taught English as a ‘Know-ledge’ subject not as a ‘Skill’ subject because their main aim was to teach them to pass the examinations only. So they adopted ‘Grammar-Translation Method’ in which the teacher used to explain every word to students in the native language to make them understand and learn English. Despite the fact that this method ignores the development of oral proficiency of the learners, it is still popular with majority teachers in the modified form. So many other methods were also used such as bilingual method, direct method, audio-lingual method, the structural approach and the situational teaching, communicative language teaching etc. but no method was said to be a perfect method. Since then ELT seems to be swinging like a pendulum between the extremes of method as language teachers have ever been in search of better and more effective method

of teaching. Moreover, the ELT trends that were very popular in the past have vanished today and have been substituted by innovative ELT methods.

Present Trends in Teaching English

The 21st century confronts its citizenship with new choices, opportunities and challenges due to the all-pervading technology into all spheres of life. In this era, the educational institutions cannot remain mere venues for the transmission of a prescribed set of information from teacher to student over a fixed period of time rather the educational institutions must promote “learning to learn” i.e. the acquisition of knowledge and skills that make possible continuous learning over the lifetime. So it becomes the responsibility of the teachers to shape up accordingly to meet the demands of the day.

The need of the day is to equip people with proficiency in the English language and this is possible only with a proper blend of edification and e-learning tools (modern technologies). Traditional teaching and learning paradigms have been shaken by the impact of the integration of e-learning tools into educational practices. E-learning is a diverse range of technological tools and systems that can be utilized by capable and creative teachers to enhance teaching and learning situations. These are used to make learning more interesting, motivating, stimulating and meaningful to the students. These tools have been touted as potentially powerful enabling tools for educational change and reform as they are making marked inroads into the combination of digital technologies and English language learning.

Use of e-learning tools of in Teaching English

Internet

Internet is not merely a source of authentic material in English but also a source of information in the form of articles, courses, conferences and many more. The teacher can send assignments to the students through e-mails and can also take online exams. Parents can view their children's work online at any time. Students do not miss their lessons as now they can see a web cam version online and get worksheets and notes from electronic online whiteboards. Schools are linked in a network and work on projects together and prepare materials online. Every school has got its own website. Many software are also available on Internet that students can use free of cost. Spelling Bee is one of those an internet resources, which helps the students to spell English words. The teacher can also choose the level of difficulty that s/he wants to train to his/her students.

Using YouTube

YouTube videos can be used in an ELT classroom for various aspects of English as to enhance vocabulary, accents, pronunciations, voice modulation and many more. The real advantage of using YouTube in teaching English is that it offers authentic examples of everyday English used by everyday people. The teacher can use it as a tool for improving their Listening and Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. The teacher can select a part of the movie appropriate to the level of the students and s/he can show those movie clippings to the students. For the first time, s/he can mute the volume and ask the students to watch the movie attentively. Later s/he can ask the students to watch the movie once again and this time s/he can ask the students to frame the dialogues of the movie clippings simultaneously. This will improve their speaking skills. Another activity to enhance their speaking skills can be: the teacher can show a selected part of the movie to the students and further ask them to narrate the rest of the story of the movie or the climax of the movie. This will add to their creativity as well as their speech. The teacher can also prepare worksheets on the movie clippings in advance and ask the students to complete those worksheets while watching movies. This can prove a good activity to enhance their listening and writing skills. The teacher can also ask the students to write a paragraph related to the movie as: “If I were the hero of the movie.....” Or “What, according to you, should be the title of the movie?” Listening skills can also be enhanced through YouTube as news headlines are available to watch on YouTube. As the news is summarized very quickly (in the first minute for the video below), the teacher can ask students to listen to the news headlines and put those headlines in order (where they will have the headlines on a handout).

Skype

Using Skype provides unlimited possibilities for the teachers and students to collaborate with each other anywhere in the world. It provides immense opportunities for the students in a foreign language class to connect with classes in other countries to practice their language skills. Through Skype the teachers can provide mentoring or homework help to the learners. The Students can read, present, or perform for other students and also collaborate with other students on writing or research projects. They can also participate in professional development activities within or outside the school district.

Twitter

Twitter, a gift of Technology, is a social networking application that could help in improving students' English to a greater extent. As an online education technology tool, twitter's impact on engaging students in learning concepts is unlimited. The teacher can use a dozen activities for using an online education technology tool to engage students in classroom activities to develop a better understanding of concepts.

The teacher can select any genre for the story and begin the activity with a story opener which is tweeted to the students for contribution to the story line. Once all twitter network participants have contributed to the development of the story line, the teacher can analyze their work. This involves editing, story structure, creative writing, and proper use of grammar.

The teacher can ask the students to select a word of the week and tweet it around the network requesting synonyms, homonyms, and antonyms of the word. Once all responses are received, the teacher can check them for accuracy and develop a link of the difficult words for strengthening the vocabulary of the students.

The teacher can also conduct Online Debates through Twitter. It can be done with the students of the same classroom or the students of the different classrooms on the class twitter network. Examples include "Pen is mightier than sword", impact of fast food restaurants on health issue, and many more.

Smart-boards

Interactive whiteboards are good replacements for traditional whiteboards or flipcharts as they provide ways to show students everything which can be presented on a computer's desktop (educational software, web sites, and others). SMART boards help teachers use a student-centered approach to teach language arts. Language arts teachers can use SMART Boards to improve reading and comprehension, and teach grammar and writing. With a SMART Board, teachers can combine video, audio, Web browsing and word processing to teach students interactively.

The teacher can use smart board to enhance students' language skills in play way method. For e.g. 'Pictogram' (Draw a picture and guess the word) can be played. With younger learners spelling races are very popular. Word games are an excellent way of settling classes and revising vocabulary. S/he can use anagrams or jumbled sentences for the Learners or s/he

can also ask the synonyms or antonyms or the lexis or collocation words. The teacher can use different colours when writing. For eg. While teaching grammar the teacher can use the Blue colour pen for the nouns, the Yellow colour for the verbs, the Red colour for the adjectives and the Green colour adverbs.

For e.g.:

The young (Red Colour) boy (BLUE) jumped (Yellow Colour) from the tall (Red Colour) tree (Blue Colour) quickly (Green Colour).

The teacher can also display paragraphs with errors and ask the students to edit the paragraphs or proofread them. To teach writing skills the teacher can also use a story starter and ask the students to write a class story or chain story or peer story. S/he can also write sentences based on photographs as it will teach them the usage and functions of the language. S/he can further use photographs of persons (i.e. characters from book, persons from history) and can ask the students to write in “bubble” about their thoughts.

Mobile Phones

The use of mobile phones as a learning tool has a wide variety of applications. The teacher can ask the students to make a photo documentary using the camera function on their mobile phones. The teacher can assign a theme for the documentary to the students. After taking a sufficient number of photos, the students can upload the documentaries prepared by them to websites such as Flickr and type narrative descriptions for each picture to share with their teachers, classmates, family and friends. Instead of taking out a dictionary, the students can simply use their translator, and instead of trawling through books for a piece of literature, they can find the book online books and be directed to a specific word.

Podcasting

Today the students are listening to news clips, music, and video clips via the Web. They are no longer watching movies at the theatre or on the TV, they are watching via computers and hand held DVD players. The teacher can reach to these students in one new way i.e. through podcasts. A podcast is a series of digital-media files which are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and computers. Utilizing podcasts in the classroom is very easy. The teacher can download many free ESL podcasts on the Internet to use in class. S/he can assign a podcast assignment for homework and form a

discussion on the topic the next day. The teacher can also assign a music podcast that introduces students to the culture as well as how the language is often used creatively or the news channels through which the student can also learn the use of intonation and stress.

Blog

Blogging has become increasingly popular, especially in the realm of education as they are a great way to share information and generate discussion. Instead of text books and traditional methods, many educators prefer using these new techniques to help teach students and gain experience with various forms of social media. Setting up a course blog doesn't have to be complicated. Educators can use a free platform such as Blogspot, Wordpress, or Tumblr to host the blog. Nowadays, blogs can also display photos and some people are using them with audio and even video, The teacher should encourage the students to visit blog frequently. S/he should respond to student posts quickly, writing a short comment related to the content S/he should also ask questions about what the learner writes to create stimulus for writing. Writing to the blog could be required, and it may form part of the class assessment. Students should be encouraged to post their writing homework on the blog instead of only giving it to the teacher.

Conclusion

As English has turned into a universal language, its presence and value in the world has expanded enormously in the past decades. But if language teachers teach as they taught earlier, then the required goals of learning English Language may not be achieved in the present global scenario. In the past, no productive, creative and constructive activity was given to the learners to develop the four language skills. With the changing needs of the hour (time), technology is developing day-by-day. We are living in the 21st century and it is the age of technological advancement. Thus the recent trend in teaching English is the use of modern technological tools as English language teaching has been affected a lot with the availability of these tools

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PODCASTING. "learning to learn". proper blend of edification + e-learning tools. new technologies have added not only stimulus but also students engagement and true interactivity within the classroom. teachers engage students by using English songs, movie clippings, advertisements and sports commentaries in classrooms. Student-centered. Teaching aids : Overhead Projectors, Interactive Boards, I-Pads, Blogs, Computers, Cameras, Handphones, Audio Equipment, Scanner, Printer, E-mails, Video Conferencing. BLOG. However, the use of Web 2.0 tools can add interactivity to language teaching and learning environments and materials used in these environments. There have been many studies conducted to explore the use of Web 2.0 tools in language teaching settings [eg: 12-17]. The number of these studies are continuously increasing since educators and scholars have been seeking to investigate different aspects of Web 2.0 tools. English language teachers can paste a text that they determine for use in class. This tool automatically generates vocabulary, pronunciation, word roots and grammar support to help students. Exercises and questions related with the given text can also be added.