

English Language Teaching in the Modern Era: Emerging Trends, Innovative Tools, and Key Challenges

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ABSTRACT

In a developing country like India, learning a secondary language like English is essential not only because it is an international language but also to cultivate relationships, social, political and economic growth in global market. English language has undergone many changes since its origin and it continues to evolve. The need of recent time is to focus on creating bilinguals who can effectively use English to communicate as it is not just a language of literature but a language of choice for majority of other sectors. This paper reviews the recent trends in ELT (English Language Teaching) along with the role of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in enhancing traditional English teaching methods, various Tools currently available and the challenges and barriers pertaining at different levels in implementation of such integrated novel approach.

Key words: Trends in ELT, ITC, e-learning, Barriers

I. INTRODUCTION

As English has become an international language, no one would deny its significance in today's world. English, a *lingua franca*, is the most extensively spread throughout the world dominating major sectors like commerce, education, science and communication. English is not just a language of literature like poetry, fiction or drama but it also acts as a base for expressing and learning scientific inventions and innovations, gadgets and devices of modern technology and above all, a bridge language that connects individual globally. English language teaching has undergone great amount of changes over the years. When Indians were educated by British tutors, they were exposed to native language in every sense but after their departure, the richness and depth of language started fading little by little. The usual trends of language teaching, especially in India, lack both in quality and quantity and may fail to obtain universal appeal. Rigid curriculums and huge syllabi continue to intimidate students who speak regional dialect but like to excel in English.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bax (2003) offered a critical examination and reassessment of CALL with detailed view of three new categories-Restricted, Open and Integrated CALL with emphasis on shifting from Open to Integrated approach to reach 'normalization' of this technology. Parab (2015) presented famous trends in the ELT that have been used practically in recent times in the entire world with specific reference to the trends prevalent during the previous decades. Sarica and Cavus (2009) shed a light on different tools of e-learning and how their creative utilization can benefit in learning the four basic skills of any language. Shyamlee (2012) also extended the similar views on importance and usefulness of modern technology in learning a foreign language like English. Samuel and Pulizala (2014) discussed role of ITC in English Language Teaching and the tools which are currently in practice in everyday classroom teaching in a country like India. Salehi and Salehi (2012) investigated the teacher's perception of the barriers and challenges preventing teacher to

integrate ICT in classroom through questionnaire survey on 30 high school English teachers selected

from five main educational districts in the city of Isfahan, Iran.

III. TRENDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

English language teaching is a continuous process which needs to evolve time to time. The advancements in technology have proved to be beneficial for teachers to reach particular goals in education in terms of teaching a foreign language. There are currently eight key trends observed in learning English as a foreign language which are described as following:

1. Change in the Goal of Teaching

Here, the goal is to produce fully competent English-knowing bilinguals. The purpose is not to aspire to become native speakers of English, because we are already native speakers of our own language, but to focus on English as a means of communication. Secondly, English is not viewed as an end in itself but as a means to learn content such as science and mathematics. Content and language integrate learning (CLIL) is an approach where the English teacher uses cross-curricular content and so the students learn them both.

2. Early Start in Teaching English

This approach combined with implementation of newer technologies e.g. computer based games at earlier grade in schools can be advantageous. Many countries have started teaching at primary level and the results are promising.

3. Change in the approach to Teaching Culture

Both the local and native and international culture dominate in English language classes. The focus should be less on teaching native English and more on using the native language of students as a communication strategy or as an instructional tool which in turn can make learning English more effective and stress-free.

4. Changing view of an English Teacher

An English teacher doesn't necessarily have to be a native English speaker. The quality and effectiveness of a teacher is rather determined by their linguistic, teaching and intercultural competence.

5. Change in Teaching Content and Test Design

The use of native language, a range of local texts or English translations along with the use of variety of

6. E-Learning

The conventional text books are soon going to be replaced by the proliferation of tablets, Smartphone and paperless kindles. Moreover, the access to knowledge in terms of flexibility and mobility has changes drastically with the rise of World Wide Web which made information available at our fingertip.

7. Strategic Teaching and Learning

Teaching in English language classes focuses on fostering students thinking as well as language content, outcomes, and learning activities. There are significant and complex student-teacher interactions inside and outside the classroom. The gamification of learning is emerging as a way to make language learning more engaging and relevant to the younger generation.

8. Teachers as Lifelong learners

To remain competitive and employable, teachers are expected to engage in a continuous professional development or the professional learning activities from the beginning to the end of their careers. As with any other profession, teachers are also expected to assume a greater responsibility for their own professional learning, continually developing their knowledge and skills.

IV. ROLE OF ICT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

The conventional classroom teaching can be efficiently enhanced by various electronic gadgets and technology. ICT (Information and Communication Technology) aids teachers and students to practice innovative ideas in creating learner friendly environment which can give better opportunities for fruitful student-teacher interactions. Digital tools are central in what is the established and recognized field of computer assisted language learning (CALL), which is also increasingly a core part of English language teaching (ELT) in general.

Such Integrated approach can serve the following purposes:

1. To cultivate students' interest in study
2. To promote students' communication capacity
3. To widen students' knowledge to gain an insightful understanding of western culture
4. To improve teaching effect
5. To improve interactions between student and teacher
6. To create a context for language teaching
7. To provide flexibility to course content

V. TOOLS OF ICT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

The diverse tools of ICT are discussed in brief below:

1. Power Point Presentation

Power point presentation combined with LCD projector is now being used in classroom teaching on regular basis. PPT can be used to teach new concepts and ideas more interestingly than traditional chalk boards using audio-visual aids. Besides, delivering a presentation can help students in improving their speaking and listening skills and boosting their confidence.

2. Web-based learning

Also known as distance learning or more popularly e-learning, this tool is well designed, easy to learn and use. All the four basic skills in English-reading, writing, listening and speaking- can be made interactive in variety of ways. These tools provide integrated environment for teachers and students. Technologies of this kind which can be utilized in education are as follows:

i. E-mail

The most commonly used internet application; e-mail is an excellent way for learners to communicate with their instructors because of its usefulness and easiness. Teachers can use it to assign variety of activities to students which can make students better prepared ahead for brainstorming discussions in classrooms. Writing compositions or essays through e-mail can help to improve writing skills and vocabulary.

ii. Blogs

Blogs can be referred to as an online personal journal for students, a kind of digital portfolio showing development over time. Writing and maintaining a

personal blog can be very interactive when an individual participates as a writer of his/her own blog post, reviewer of other writer's post, responder of criticism and so on. Self-publishing encourages ownership and responsibility on the part of students, who may be more thoughtful (in content and structure) if they know they are writing for a real audience.

iii. Online Tests and Quizzes

Test software can be used to create interactive multiple-choice, short answer, jumbled-sentence, crossword, matching, ordering, and gap filling exercises for the web. Teachers can design their own tests easily on such software and provide students personalized feedbacks.

iv. Instant Messengers and Skype

Learners can have live interactions with not only teacher but also peers in which, through typing and reading they have a chance to improve their writing and reading skills. Moreover, most of the messenger application can be used with a webcam allowing users to see each other in a small video window while talking. Skype is a very popular example of it. Students can speak with native speakers of language and compare their pronunciation with a native speaker. Speaking and listening skills can be developed by using this application.

v. Mobile Devices

Mobile learning can be defined as any service or facility that supplies learner with general electronic information and educational content that aids in acquisition of knowledge regardless of location and time. It simply means people can learn whenever and wherever they want with their mobile phones (most popular), PDA's and other such technological devices. All skills of English can be provided using iPods, iPhones and other smart phones. E.g. text message or e-mail services, recording individual's own voice to improve both speaking and listening at the same time, having access to listen and read authentic materials such as news in English, songs, poems, or vocabulary and translations.

3. Language Lab

Language Lab has shown its presence as an essential tool for students to learn speaking English in a formal classroom environment. It has enabled them to enhance, extend, and transform their skills for better use of technology in both personal and professional

scenario. Reforms and initiatives in the technical education system are expected to provide learners strengths and capabilities in application of professional knowledge and skills; and leadership qualities including spirit of team work. Implementing these modern day tools in traditional teaching methods ensures that language education does not stop once the learners leave the classroom and that it does not need to be a burden of any kind. Learning a foreign language like English can be fun, enjoyable journey. A central aim for ICT practitioners should be to strive for 'normalization' namely the state in which the technology is so embedded in practice that it ceases to be regarded as either a miracle or something to be feared. Bax states that the state of normalization will have been achieved: 'when ICT tools are used every day by language students and teachers as an integral part of every lesson, like pen or a book.... without fear or inhibition, and equally without an exaggerated respect for what they can do. They will not be the centre of any lesson, but they will play a part in almost all. They will be completely integrated into all other aspects of classroom life, alongside course books, teachers and ...' (Bax, 2003)

VI. CHALLENGES & BARRIERS

The integration of ICT in day-to-day education is a very complex process and not always problem-free. The virtually limitless opportunities of access to information in an educational context can pose a risk of information overload and it'll require skilled teachers to filter out relevant information. Both students and teachers may lack the necessity skills to access, process and use information. Moreover, there are a number of difficulties which can act as a barrier. Different educators have classified barriers into different categories. Some researchers have classified the barriers into two major categories of extrinsic and intrinsic barriers. Extrinsic barriers are related to organizations whereas intrinsic barriers are those related to teachers, administrators and individuals. Another category grouped barriers into individual (teacher-level) barriers such as lack of confidence, shortage of time, resistance to change or institutional (school-level) barriers such as lack of effective training and lack of access to resources. Barriers can be divided as material or non-material as well. The material barrier refers to the insufficient number of computers or copies of software. This is the condition in many of the schools and institutions around the world. The non-material barrier refers to teacher's inadequate ITC knowledge and skills, difficulty of integrating ITC in instruction and insufficient teacher

time. Language teachers who are used to teaching using traditional methods for years and who are not technologically upgraded enough generally face such issues and they are required to be specifically trained to change their attitude and shift from or integrate traditional approach and modern tools. Another growing concern is that use of internet has changed the appearance and shape of English language. Many literature laureates are against the use of e-devices for the growth of English language because they opine that using English for social Networking sites and use of slangs and abbreviations is entirely different from English used for literacy purpose and that it soon will ruin the language.

VII. CONCLUSION

We live in a country like India where purpose of learning English is not just for an effective communication that connects you globally but it is also considered as status symbol. The number of individuals opting to learn English is increasing day by day. ITC tools can help such aspirants immensely as they can aid in creating an environment which is more learner centered in which it is the learner who controls the process. Such approach is more beneficial than traditional classroom methods where teacher dominates the learning process and individual with average grasping capacity lag behind. Although traditional methods still govern classroom teaching, the gradual shift towards integrated approach has been observed in past decade. The teachers should be trained to develop skills required for such innovative methods only then; they will be able to guide the students better. Despite the institutional barriers in terms of infrastructure facilities, novel ITC tools offer learners freedom to access information at their fingertip using smart phone and mobile devices. There is no doubt that a wise use of these modern technologies will change the way of learning in near future.

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