



ICT in English Language Teaching Across the Curriculum in Multilingual Classroom Context: Issues and Challenges

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M.Ed. Scholar (2017-19)

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ABSTRACT

English as a global Language plays a vital role of an indicator not only to harmonize us in the diverse multilingual context of India but also in integrating the various subjects' content (knowledge) within the school curriculum. With the time of digitalized world, the significance of teaching English shifts from narrow vocabulary acquisition to wider prospect of bridging the gap between English as a subject and English as a medium of instruction. It becomes essential for traditional way of English language teaching to be changed; as the emerging Language Curriculum Approach (LAC) needs to break down the barriers between English and others subjects, and English and Indian languages. The use of ICT in teaching English in multilingual classroom context helps to bring that change of teaching style to integrating the content and language for fulfilling the vision of LAC approach. The present paper is prepared on the basis of the researcher's experiences in practice teaching in the form of school internship programme, classroom observation, questionnaires, and by following NCF (2005), national and international projects, articles, books, journals, policies and programmes to describing of how the use of ICT in English language acquisition gives a new innovative support to the creation of multilingual person who are being able to enrich other languages. The paper also highlights some major emerging issues which make obstacle of the usage of ICT in language class instead of having ICT related sound national policies, programmes, recommendations and other positive steps towards. And at the same time, it also finds out some simple solutions, recommendations and techniques to be implemented in the usage of ICT in English Language teaching learning, so that the achieving real objectives of language learning fulfils the aims of Language Across Curriculum Approach.

Keywords: ICT, English Language Acquisition, LAC, Multilingualism.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching of any subject is being regarded as a beautiful art. Teaching as an art, according to many teachers and researchers, is constantly changing its style depending on the era we live and teach in. Today, teaching stands before a milestone, a major shift. A shift towards teaching through technology, where, it is trying to follow our times, we strive to prepare our students to embrace the new world that lies ahead them. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is such an effective tool that has already altered the way we teach and learn, taking education to another level, where a previous teacher centered approach has today become a student centered one. It is a breakthrough by all means which has revolutionized the learning process allowing knowledge to be effortlessly distributed and be able to take place anywhere and make any space is a learning space with the demands of modern digitalized world. ICTs have offered teachers and their classrooms new pathways towards language learning, they have also given students the liberty to orchestrate resources, thus, move towards autonomy and be able to devise more dialogic and synergistic approaches in the future, transforming their learning whether that is individual or group work. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in one form of ICT is today regarded as a critical element that has shifted the goal of language education from knowledge learning to aspects and ways that produce the development of attitudes and intellectual capabilities as well as of further assimilation of knowledge to the students not only in language specific subject but also language across the curriculum.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

We are teaching English and learning English, but why do we want to teach English, in contrast with other foreign languages? The given answer is that English is the most widespread language in the world. It is difficult to guess exactly how many English speakers there are. English Language Teaching (ELT) importance is in its steady progress via many means of modern communication technologies and inventions. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2003) defines ICTs as: “Basically information handling tools a varied set of goods, applications and services that are used to produce, store, process, distribute and exchange information. They include the ‘old’ ICTs of radio, television and telephone, and the ‘new’ ICTs of computers, satellite and wireless technology and the Internet. These different tools are now able to work together, and combine to form our ‘networked world’ a massive infrastructure of interconnected telephone services, standardized computing hardware, the internet, radio and television, which reaches into every corner of the globe.”

Nowadays, teachers of English around the world prefer some form of communicative teaching and learning, rather than the traditional methods of ELT which dominate the teacher-centered approach and neglect the student's communication skills. The teacher-centered approach depends mainly on the learner's memory and did not care about the authentic use of language. Although, a successful EFL teacher is not necessarily restricted to one method or another, the ICTs have changed the pace of teaching strategies to suit the goals of his materials and the needs of his students. On the other hand ICTs have given the students, many opportunities to practice English in and out the classroom. With the help of the modern technologies they have time and freedom to understand, reflect and analyze what have been exposed to. Moreover, the ICTs put forward an influential base for efficient education. Now, we need the modern technologies for a better blended method of delivery to create appropriate teaching techniques to enhance the process of learning English language. ICTs are very motivating, because they help the learners to learn the language which is carefully designed to meet the prescribed goals.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. Understanding the positive impact of ICT in English Language Teaching in classroom.
2. Identifying teachers' strategies to use ICT in ELT across the curriculum.
3. Defining attitudes of language teachers towards ICT use for teaching English language.
4. Understanding students' perceptions regarding the use of ICT in developing four skills (Listening, speaking, reading and writing) of English language.
5. Identify existing challenges which the teachers face in ELT classroom while implementing ICT.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Through the qualitative study, the researcher goes through the tools of ELT class observations, opinionnaires with teachers and students especially during schools observation programme and practice teaching in form of school internship programme to obtain in-depth understanding of concern topic. The purpose of the classroom observation was to understand what technological tools teachers use while teaching and their attitudes toward them. At the same time students' perceptions toward ICT were also understood. Analysis has been done on the basis of researcher's personal understanding, formal talks, questionnaires and discussions with teachers and students to get a vivid picture regarding the importance of ICT in ELT class.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

No doubt, motivation is the cornerstone in the process of acquiring or learning a foreign language; therefore, learners usually have a positive attitude toward computers. Even though, the modern technologies are double-edged sword, their advantages are acknowledgeable over its pitfalls. No doubt, they have significant, positive impacts on ELT; the following are some of them:

Availability of Materials

ICTs are very stimulating because of the availability of the learning materials, whether it is computer-based, in the web or on CDs; therefore, the student can learn at his own pace with a very patient tutor (the machine). Meanwhile, the use of online telecommunications for teaching and learning via the computer in the classroom across the world will consolidate the improvement of different academic skills. The availability of images, animation, audio and video clips they help much more in presenting and practicing new language.

Student Attitudes

ICTs have positive effects on student attitudes toward the language teaching and learning. Students felt more successful in school, were more motivated to learn and have increased self-confidence and self-esteem when using computer-based instruction. This was particularly true when the technology allowed learners to control their own learning.

Autonomy

Students have the opportunity to choose the element/s of language which they want to focus on meeting their learning strategies or learning styles. Here, the learner-centered approach is supported by these facilities offered by the ICTs while the tradition techniques approaches failed to give such opportunities. The student feels free to practice the language without fear from the others at their own phase and pace.

Authenticity

ICTs provide authentic learning environment, because the learner can interact with others across the continent are very motivating to the language learners. Confronting such challengeable situations is the touchstone for using the language in authenticity not artificially. The ICTs as tools for learning are very motivational; however, they are very attractive and accessible.

Help Teachers

ICTs help the teacher to prepared, produce, store and retrieve their materials easily and swiftly. The availability of different rich texts, different topics, quizzes, exercises help in saving the teacher's time. Despite the opportunities and facilities offered by the modern

technologies in assisting better teaching, but they do not replace it. So far, the skillful teacher is the only person who is shouldering the responsibility of delivering and achieving the teaching goals.

Student-centered

ICTs help the student be exposed to language clockwise and definitely they help them to write and edit their work in order to produce a well published work. Likewise, computers encourage students to do extra work outside the classroom, play language games and, hopefully, gain extra exposure to the language and improve their progress in the language and support the student-centered concept. Via the computer and the internet the students will be able to communicate with others in different places. Moreover, ICTs help the shy or the quiet students who sometimes abstain from asking questions or challenging information to communicate and ask questions. Using modern technologies in the learning environment has been shown to make learning more student-centered and improve the learning process by stimulating teacher/student interaction. Furthermore, ICTs enhance collaborative learning which results in higher self-esteem and student achievement. They promote critical thinking and student-student interaction.

ICTs in Self-Assessment

The examinations generally test the reading and writing skills of the students, totally neglecting the listening and speaking skills, which are indispensable skills for the learners in their future career. The listening capacity can be tested through computer-assisted packages like listening to a dialogue/passage and answering the questions or listening to lectures and then answering short questions or true or false statements. It will enhance their talents for taking international tests because many competitive exams follow such a pattern to test the grasping ability of the students.

Multimedia in English Language Teaching

Through multimedia, real life situations are brought into the classroom. The application of multimedia in the learning and teaching of English creates opportunity for the teacher to bring almost real life situation in to the classroom. Multimedia can be used in different ways by teachers of English Language in Large classes. There are literature books especially English plays that have videodiscs which teachers of English Literature use to supplement their lessons. The application of multimedia computers in the teaching of language enabled language teachers to make the lesson practical and authentic. By combining texts, images, sound and video in one device, learners are made to internalize more than one thing at a time.

ICT and four English Language Skills

A. Listening

Skill of listening is of key significance for English language learners to acquire. It is also a very intricate skill to teach. The concept of pronunciation, whether that is to understand or produce language, also raises problems for non-native speakers. Using CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) is a way to motivate language learners to take a dynamic role in their learning instead of acting as passive listeners. Helping learners develop listening skills can be achieved through a variety of multimedia instruments such as digital stories, Mp3 recordings or podcasts. Digital stories are embraced by children dearly as they combine interactivity, visual aids and repetition, while they enthuse them through their topics. As listening comprehension is difficult to be taught, these stories help children develop this skill effortlessly, through a fun and motivational activity while developing linguistic structure, literacy, vocabulary, sound patterns and prosody which can ultimately lead them to learn the language.

B. Speaking

The skill of speaking has become a skill of paramount significance to acquire as the listening to speech fully depending on how it is uttered. Power point projector is also good for teaching spoken English. Documentation of formal speech or debate can be made on CD-ROMS. After the presentation, the students will be made to watch formal speech or debate on certain issue/topic that has been documented. This will offer them training in public speaking and expressing themselves in English Language. As an activity, the large class can be grouped in order to have formal speech presented by each group or debating teams representing the groups. Doing this will widen the students' vocabulary as well as elaborate sentence structures. Computer-based literacy activities can also enhance children's speaking skills by engaging children into the discussion of the topic, allowing them to share their thoughts and interact with their peers, along with making decisions and learning to justify them to their group that requires integration of the literacy activities with the teaching of the speaking and the listening skill. In an Online Foreign Language Speaking Class, virtual classes are designed having in mind principles of ELT and e-learning along with techniques that raise interaction, integrating vocabulary and use of English, while providing a stress-free environment in order to motivate learners participate and produce spoken language.

C. Reading

Online reading is a task that appears to be necessary for the 21st century students. Therefore, the creation of a Web-based reading program called 'English Reading Online' was

created to narrow the gap between reading and comprehension using online reading strategies. The effective use of reading strategies is known to amplify a reader's understanding. As technology has penetrated our lives, the perception of reading for comprehension through technology has to turn into a forward-thinking way of doing so. Teacher can encourage students to visit online book clubs, journals, articles, blogs, WebPages and interact with other readers enhances their critical thinking and provides them with skills and strategies which will enable them to make the most of the ICTs available to them.

D. Writing

Writing is one of the Language skills taught at the entry point to improve the students' proficiency in English being language of Education so that they can function well in their fields of study. The teacher can utilize power point projector and Videodiscs to teach the different writing tasks that students may be engaged in. Proper utilization of technologies in the teaching and learning of English changes the teacher's role from transmitter of knowledge as in the traditional classroom to a consultant. Writing can be perplexing for many students since it requires correct use of grammar. discuss the use of blog software and Tweeter are tools that can help students practice written language, engage with the language they wish to learn and of course to share their thoughts or feelings and reflect on them. Promoting writing instruction through such an entertaining way enables more production of written language which might not have been produced otherwise. Students who also blogged rather than merely attending an in-class session showed better results from those who only received in-class writing instruction. Teachers should make use of this tool as it enhances writing performance while it is not limited within school walls as it can take place anywhere.

Teaching Literature and Vocabulary

Videodiscs contain authentic documentations that if manipulated well by the teacher will facilitate learning and teaching of English in Large classes. This technology helps the teacher to bring almost real life situation into the classroom. Interactive videodiscs are suitable for teaching literature.

Adding to that, the Internet which has nowadays become part of our lives can add to vocabulary acquisition since its incorporation in the second language classroom will prove to be a prolific source of new vocabulary, given that the learner trained and know how to use the Internet for this purpose. CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) had a 'significantly high benefit on vocabulary acquisition' without which, language input cannot be understood by language learners hence reading a text and understanding it becomes a very difficult task to complete. Furthermore, it is discussed that along with other factors that make the use of

CALL such a productive way to enrich students' vocabulary is the presentation of materials which facilitate 'student active learning' and vocabulary recall.

The findings of the study are being analyzed in the following ways-

Teachers' knowledge of ICT and their use in ELT classroom

The present study finds out that the school teachers' knowledge on ICT and their successful use in language classrooms are not satisfactory. The most common uses of ICT; the computer, the internet, e-mail, word processing; education videos and CDs are not regularly used by the teachers due to their limitations. The study finds out that most of the English teachers do not use it because they feel shy due to their little knowledge on the use of ICT. Some teachers from rural areas said that to run the computer, electricity is required but in many schools there is no sufficient electricity and school infrastructures to run and computers given by the government is under lock and key only. But, in urban schools, few language teachers are not using ICT and other technological tools because of lack of skills.

Students Perceptions in Using ICT in ELT

When teachers are showing the video clips to teach English, students are found motivated and attentive in the class. At the end of the video when the teacher asked the students to do some activities (reading the text and asking meaning of the words) from the lesson, most of the students understood his instruction and responded positively. But for some students, the teacher had to translate it into Hindi and only then students understood his instructions clearly. They enjoyed their English class throughout the session and learnt more than what they would have learnt from the traditional English class. The researcher observed that most of the time students themselves asked teacher to go ICT classroom for learning the topics and watching novel instead of go through reading line by line. They also find the differences between ICT-based ELT class and traditional ELT class and show their positive perceptions towards technology.

Challenges of using ICT in ELT classrooms

ICT revolution in modern digitalized India brings about changes in education systems, but it faces a lot of challenges. Most important challenge is the lack of teacher's knowledge of ICT tools. Knowledge of ICT is essential for making English class successful as ICT includes computer, interactive multimedia, audio devices, internet, television, mobile gadget, interactive whiteboard etc.

Lack of Smart English Classroom is also one another reason for not using ICT in language classroom successfully. In addition to these, problem in understanding British sound and pitch in English, lack of electricity during lesson, lack of school authorities' and

governments' strict steps are also viewed as challenges for implementing ICT in ELT classrooms successfully.

SOME SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of its few limitations, ICT presents a powerful learning environment for the students in the language classroom. It ensures learner centered classes. Using ICT, the students can improve their language skills and introduce with new language items easily. Information and communication technology helps the students to perform better in language learning than with regimented traditional classroom teaching. Thus we can take certain steps for using ICT in ELT class effectively.

a) To the Government

The government can train and retain teachers on how to use ICT devices so as to facilitate access to a variety of teaching-learning techniques. The government should put in place English language laboratories and library centers with ICT devices in schools as well as ensure that they contain fast network and fast connectivity.

The government should also ensure that there should be electricity in all classes because sometimes a teacher might want to use a computer but will not find electricity in the class. The government should construct and equip ICT centers in all schools even those in remote areas so as to give students all over the country an equal opportunity to use ICTs. It should ensure that, these centers have enough computers for the students and teachers i.e. atleast one computer per student.

b) To Curriculum Designers

The curriculum designers should implement Information and Communication Technology as a compulsory school subject at all levels of education, especially from the Elementary levels where the foundation of knowledge begins and needs to be solid.

c) To Educational Authorities

Educational authorities may organize refresh course and pedagogic seminars on the importance of Information and Communication Technology in the teaching and learning process of English language. These seminars should be organised to effectively demonstrate how ICTs could be managed and adapted to suit our local realities.

Educational authorities may include in school time tables periods for training students on how to use ICTs. Show them important websites where they can carry out their school research and educate them on the importance of ICT in learning not only English language but other school subjects. Thus they should make the use and mastery of ICT tools compulsory to each and every students as well as teachers.

d) To Teachers

Teachers should diversify teaching and include ICT tools in their teaching aids to ELT class. This will go a long way to reduce their work load transmitting and communicating knowledge. They should attend pedagogic seminars so as to improve on their teaching skills.

e) To Learners

It is high time learners embrace the offer of this new technology, “the cyber space” as the learner through this or through connected computers if they have, will assume more responsibility over their learning process otherwise known as the constructivist approach where the model is student centred with end results also being positive.

f) To Parents

Parents should endeavor to provide their children with money to meet up with the demands of the cyber space education. This is because the cyber space has a lot to offer. They should also consider the need to provide computers for their children, they as well as endeavor to provide them with connectivity so that they can carry out their research without any major problems. From time to time they should also check whether these children are using educational websites.

CONCLUSION

So, an important dimension of globalization which is also inseparable from English language teaching is an advancement of Information and Communication Technology [ICT]. The field of ELT has been deeply pervaded by the ICT. To sum up, the use of ICT in a language classroom is essential to spread the knowledge of English language not only in specific subject but also in across the school curriculum. However, the task requires huge capital, competent teachers, revised curriculum and institutional readiness. Finally it can say, if the national governmental policies and more sound suggestions come forward with their support, then the dream of India in English language acquisition may come true.

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