
INNOVATIVE USE OF ICT TOOLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract: Use of Technology in educational institutions has acquired greater importance and has become an innovative tool of teaching since it was conceptualized in early 1990s. At Higher Education level it needs to be brought and adopted on a greater extent yet. The impact of the delivery medium already being realized, it is time new instructional strategies and tasks were developed for the benefit of the stakeholders. This Research Paper aims to explore the various ways of using Information and Communication Technology at Higher Education level with emphasis on application of it in English language classrooms. Apart from making an attempt to study the relevance of using Technology in English language classrooms it also focuses on the urgent need for the more widespread adoption of the latest tools of ICT to enhance the quality of both teaching and learning at Higher Education level.

Key Words: innovative tool, delivery medium, instructional strategies, widespread adoption, ICT tools

Technology has impacted modern way of life to a great extent. It has changed the way we communicate and work including the modes of entertainment. In fact, greater space has been acquired by technological developments in all fields of work. English Language Teaching is no exception to this development. English teachers need to take advantage of the multi-sensory instruction facilitated by ICT to motivate and help enhance the language ability of the students.

In this age of Information Technology there is certainly a growing demand on practicing teachers to become technologically literate. The old 'top-down', didactic methods of teaching are not suitable to the needs of twenty first century learners. Several new trends have already begun to make their impact in the field of education bringing a paradigm shift in the process of teaching and learning. The continuous impact of these trends has changed the notion that the teacher is the sole gatekeeper of knowledge to that of a facilitator in learning. These new developments have put a premium on the practicing teachers to master the skills involved in new communication technologies for their success. Acquiring new techniques and using them constructively in the classrooms is the best source of strength in the changed situation. The present Paper focuses on how best ICT tools can be brought into use in English classes to make both the teaching and learning of English language more innovative, interesting and entertaining.

In Tune with Technological Changes

The increasing use and application of Information and Communication Technology in the field of

education has resulted in new trends and tools bringing a new look and vigour into the process of teaching and learning. In the backdrop of the changed scenario, it is pertinent and necessary to devise ways for appropriate and optimum use of ICT in English Language Teaching and Learning. This issue gains momentum and urgency in evolving suitable measures as the standards of English among students have been showing a declining trend due to various reasons. It has become more serious an issue at Higher Education level since a majority of students get ready for employment at this stage. The English language skills of students coming out of higher educational institutions of late have been found to be inadequate to the requirements of employability in industries.

New challenges and threats have emerged on the scene in the context of globalization with set standards of skills and competencies in all fields. It has underlined the need for reforms in the educational system with particular reference to the wider utilization of Information and Communication Technology. Consequently the question of what could be done to improve the standards and to enhance English language skills of the students acquires greater importance and urgency towards evolving a suitable strategy to tackle it. For teachers and students to become effective participants in this Information and Communication Technology landscape, education must focus on developing their skills. In contemporary society literate means being active, critical and creative users not only of print and spoken language, but also of the technological

gadgets such as film and television, computer, internet etc., along with other relevant tools in respective fields. It is in this context, this Paper attempts to study and discuss the use of ICT in English Language Teaching and Learning.

The Novel Teaching and Learning Panorama

In this age of Information Technology there is certainly a growing demand on practicing teachers to become technologically literate. The increasing influence of technology in all activities of public life cannot be undermined. Newspapers, magazines, journals and books which come under Print Media have now been overtaken by Visual Media such as the television, the Internet, websites, mobile phones, DVDs due to the technological developments. With the availability of these new resources all over the world, new pathways to teaching and learning could be laid out in general and the best use of them in particular could be made in imparting English Language Skills. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are important skills in English language learning and use of these new tools in honing these skills of students has its own impact.

Impact of ICT in the Classroom

As nations become closer through business avenues and the sharing of resources the world is becoming more of a shared society. Through the use of media, teachers are able to connect their students with the world outside their class rooms. Students are more likely to learn when information is introduced in a comfortable, natural way through Television, computer, Internet, websites, movies, DVDs and other latest tools of information technology.

Use of ICT in the classroom provides teachers and students lots of creative and practical ideas for extensive language practice. Though availability of some of these technological facilities can not be guaranteed in most of the educational institutions, their usefulness in the classrooms is seldom doubted since they not only engage the interest of the students but also allow them to learn in untraditional ways. Their use makes learning more fun and interesting and education becomes more relevant.

Television as an Effective Tool

In the current times viewing of different programmes on various channels on Television by young people has increased and this can be suitably adapted for teaching and learning in a planned way. Selective TV programs can be used as warming up activities, pre-

teaching activities as also supplementary material to update the information in the course books. As it is not always possible every time to get information on TV in the classroom, such material or information can be video graphed for appropriate use later. A careful and judicious use of TV programs definitely has its own advantage in enhancing the English language skills of students. News channels along with channels such as BBC, Discovery, National Geographic etc., are of a great help for improving particularly the listening and speaking skills of students with proper guidance from teachers.

Internet in Classroom

The Internet is clearly a highly resourceful tool that both the teachers and students can use for many activities connected with teaching and learning. Basically the Internet is a network of people and information, linked together by telephone lines which are connected to computers. There are many ways to access information on internet through various application programs such as e-mail, World Wide Web etc. English is the common language used for internet services because of its origin in the United States and this is certainly makes it a perfect tool for English language teaching. The Internet offers as a vast virtual library a wide spectrum of topics to choose from, all in one handy location. There is a growing volume of material specifically designed for English language teaching. Material on English language teaching such as lesson plans, quizzes and other related activities can be searched on gateway sites such as Dave's ESL Café, JALT, TESL-L etc. which provide an array of different activities in English language teaching and learning. While using material downloaded from Internet, utmost care should be taken to ascertain what actually suits to one's classroom situation, for sometimes one might get into difficult, or even unsuitable material to use in the classroom.

The Latest Reference Hub: The World Wide Web

The World Wide Web has become the largest reference library in the world today encompassing almost every topic on all subjects of human interest. Not only one can obtain information from it but also can contribute to it in the form of research articles with latest research findings or any new, useful information and ideas. There are quite a number of Websites on English Language Teaching and Learning which can be used in the classroom as per the requirement and need of the stakeholders. Many

Websites offering wide ranging activities that help improve English language skills are just a click away. Whether it is looking for grammar-based or for topical material one can find something that meets the requirements. Besides innumerable journals, newsletters access to academic databases related to English Language is available at the touch of a button on the system. These Websites provide wide variety of helpful material both for teachers to use in their teaching and for students a vast store of practice material to improve their English language skills.

Variety Of ICT Tools

Variety and presentation in teaching not only sustain the interest but also influence the way students learn. Preparing Power Point with relevant visuals on prescribed course material and presentation of the same in the classroom will stimulate the interest of the students thus drawing their participation in teaching and learning process. The authentic presentation through Visual Media helps put the text into a context which appeals to the students and motivates them in their understanding and learning. Use of LCD Projector with relevant and creatively

prepared slides, logging in to a suitable site on Internet or use of a carefully selected DVD in an English language classroom are only a means to help enhance the English language skills of the students. The responsibility of selection, design and application of the means chosen and its success largely depends on the teachers.

Conclusion : The advantages of integrating ICT tools in English language teaching and learning can be reaped only when the higher educational institutions transform themselves fully to the new information technologies with supporting laboratories, systems, equipment etc., required for the purpose. Relevant, careful and judicious integration of Information and Communication Technology tools makes the whole exercise of English Language Teaching and Learning productive, fun-filled and creative. Stimulating sessions centering on the four skills involved in language teaching – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing add a refreshing perspective to English Language Teaching and Learning.

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