

Effect of Using Internet through Social Media in Improving Writing Skills of the Engineering College Students

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Abstract

The people of today's generation live in a technologically improved world, where they depend more upon electronic gadgets and internet, either at their work place or at their learning place. The potential of internet and innovations in technology have not left much for the teaching profession to influence the method of teaching. The younger generation involve themselves so much in the World Wide Web, either to learn or to be entertained. They want to socialize virtually. They are being educated and entertained through internet and social media. Moreover, English being the language of the internet, a need for acquiring English language skill is evolved. Talks are there, or complaints are there about the younger generation as to how they spend so much time in surfing the net and indulging themselves in social media. But, for a language teacher, this present attitude of the students brings forth an opportunity to teach the language and to allow the students to learn at their own pace. As there are abundant study materials found uploaded in many English Language Teaching websites and many social network pages for improving language skill, the students can be diverted to visit such websites. To make it more convenient, a teacher can select such sites and edit materials and can post in their social network pages. The optimum usage of the internet and the social network can be done effectively for the teaching of the English language. Thus the present study discusses the influence of the internet and the social media in the field of the English Language Teaching.

Key words: Internet, Social network, face book, writing skills, English Language Teaching

Introduction

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:4 April 2016

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Communication is necessary for the transfer of information and knowledge. Written communication differs from oral communication. Our thoughts and ideas are put in a coherent order while we write, whereas our emotions and ideas are expressed spontaneously in speaking, caring not so much about grammar or word order. To excel in the modern globalised world, English writing is considered to be an essential skill for success. It becomes a strong belief of the experts that without certain knowledge of English speaking skills and English writing skills, career development is not possible, especially, if the concern has dealings with other English speaking countries.

Hence, it is highly recommended that English writing becomes a necessity for any global business person who wishes to advance his or her career in the global marketplace. For speaking English, there are so many informal educational centres to teach, guaranteeing fluency in a particular duration of time. But less hope is there for writing skill learners. Though courses like IELTS, and GRE aim at improving writing skills, it is only in an advanced level and people with basic writing skills can alone cope up with. In schools the students are taught English in a different manner which neither imparts creative nor efficient writing. They indulge in rote learning in order to memorize texts and notes. Creative writing or imaginative writing is not entertained since the teachers fear it may do them harm in scoring marks in the exams. But when they come to college, the students are placed in a different scenario. They have to prove their good writing skill, whether in submitting technical documents and science reports, or to submit their research papers written in a convincing manner. If a student is not skilled in the writing skill, he may fail in accomplishing his tasks. Therefore, it is the foremost duty of the English teacher to facilitate his/her students in the improvement of their writing skills.

“The initiatives for changing programs and pedagogy may come from within the profession - from teachers, administrators, theoreticians, and researchers” (Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. p. 252). There are some factors that have influenced language teaching trends in the past and yet there are a lot to identify in the present or in future. “The potential of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and other computer faces and technological innovations are likely to capture the imagination of the teaching profession in the future as it has

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in the past and will influence both the content and the form of instructional delivery in language teaching” (Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. p. 253). Gone were the days when the teachers asked the students to prepare for writing tests by rote learning and were testing their memory power. Nowadays, even the students of middle schools surf the net for doing their project works and submitting their assignments. No more do the prescribed text books come in handy all the time. Hence the internet is more accessible to the students and while coming for higher studies, they obviously have a personal e-mail address and get connected with social networks.

Acquisition of Language Skills

The need of the hour being the acquiring of the language skill, and a wide range of study materials being available on the internet, both the demand of the students and the supply in the internet can be linked by a language teacher to cater to the needs of the students, even when they are out of their classrooms. Most of the students have accounts in any one of the social networks, and among them face book is the most familiar one. There they post, comment or write on the wall. There is a negative image about the social networks, that they spoil the language, allow the people to make errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and also in sentence making. Matters get worse when people try to transliterate. But all these shortcomings can be overcome if the students are trained in a proper manner.

Today's college students, especially engineering college students are adept at using technology and communication methods. They can access network either through their personal computers or through their handsets.

Focus of This Study

For this study, the instructor opens a new face book page which almost acts another English class room - a class room away from the classroom. A set of forty students can be asked to open an account on Facebook. The students are grouped together by the instructor in his/her Facebook page. Every day the instructor posts lessons, shares links, and gives exercises. Students

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are asked to comment and actively participate in the Facebook page in which an anxiety free learning occurs.

Method

The aim of this method is to take the students from the mechanics of basic sentence writing to the ability to construct a simple paragraph. The vocabulary and chapters have been planned chapter by chapter, from simple to more complex, and the lessons build on each other. The students' writing skills will probably be improved if they do the exercises, using the instructor's every day posts. Students have no fear of answering questions as they don't have any grading system here. The instructor silently observes the answers that all the students post without pointing out the mistakes. The correct answers are also posted by her at times. The students learn all the lessons taught at their own pace without much anxiety or tension.

Lessons

The lessons can be divided into five sections.

1. Reading and Comprehension
2. Mechanics of Writing
3. Grammar
4. Vocabulary and Spelling
5. Sentence Construction
6. Guided Composition
7. Free Composition
8. Puzzles and Games

Reading and Comprehension

Reading indicates a knowledge of the language. It gives the learner full control over words and patterns they read. Reading is a good source of self-education. Reading with understanding enables the students to be ready to answer the questions related to the text they read. While answering, they use the words and structures that were used in the text. Sometimes, they extract the main ideas to get answers. Reading comprehension test can help the students to

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improve vocabulary, grammar and logical thought ability. Only a good reader can be a good writer. Hence at a primary level, passages should be given to the students for a thorough reading and questions can be asked, to check their understanding which is to be expressed through their answers. Students recognize how sentences are joined together to make paragraphs, how paragraphs form the passage and how this organization is signalled.

To give the students, pieces for reading, the instructor can outsource them from the internet. There are many websites like, www.myenglishpages.com, www.5minuteenglish.com, englishforeveryone.org, englishteststore.net, www.englishdaily626.com etc., which have exercises and worksheets for testing the students' reading and comprehending ability. Based on their level and interest, passages can be posted in the social network page, where the students are able to read it in a relaxed way. The students answer the questions after repeated reading, and take their own time to answer it.

Mechanics of Writing

It is necessary to teach the mechanics of writing to the students to help them from committing errors in punctuation and/or capitalization. Any mechanical errors are the result of taking a risk with more complex or original aspects of writing. Error-free writing is more important than just using good grammar. The mechanics of writing specify the established conventions for the words that are used in any documentation. Students can be posted some rules to be followed in punctuation and capitalization. Then exercises to test their understanding can also be shared. Students can also send their answers as a private message to the instructor. Later, the students will be given correct answers. This self-correction builds awareness of the mechanical rules of English and encourages careful writing.

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/>

[writingcenter.baruch.cuny.edu/...](http://writingcenter.baruch.cuny.edu/)

There are quizzes for punctuation and capitalization in the following website.

www.wwnorton.com/college/english/write/writesite/.../punctuation.aspx

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Grammar

Nobody ever had a dispute that the teaching of grammar is as important as the teaching of reading, writing or any other skill. The main objectives of teaching grammar are enumerated as follows:

- To develop students' insight into the structure of English language.
- To enable the students to assimilate the correct patterns of the language without rote memorization.
- To develop the mental abilities of reasoning and correct observation.
- To develop a scientific attitude in pupils towards the language.

Today, the grammar curriculum focuses on identification and recall of parts of speech on the basis of their forms and functions. Tenses, modals, word formations, prefixes and suffixes and compound words, different kinds of phrases, clauses, different kinds of sentences, transformation of sentences, punctuation and the like. "Under all these categories, the knowledge of rules is not insisted but the students should be able to do some exercises to strengthen their usage" (Teaching of English-pg.106).

www.englishgrammar.org/lessons/

www.talkenglish.com/grammar/grammar

www.englishgrammarsecrets.com

www.englishleap.com/grammar

Above are some of the English grammar websites, where we find lessons, exercises and work sheets, enclosing all types of grammar items, the present grammar syllabus focuses. Some of the grammar websites send us more grammar lessons personally to our mail, if we sign up with them. Likewise, posts of English Grammar-Facebook page can also be shared in our facebook pages so that all the students can view these, learn them leisurely.

Vocabulary and Spelling:

"From the point of view of vocabulary, there are two reasons why the learners are not able to say what they want to say. First, they may not know enough vocabulary; if this is the

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case, then the teacher can work on ways of increasing their vocabulary, like using controlled activities and techniques for the receptive learning of vocabulary” (Teaching and learning vocabulary-p. 94).

Vocabulary

There are puzzles and word games to expand students' vocabulary and to focus attention on accurate spelling. The two types of words, 'structural words' and 'content words' can be taught through posting pictures on nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions and phrasal verbs.

www.englishgrammar.org/lessons can be registered to get lessons on grammar and work sheets.

Sentence Construction:

Exercises under this heading introduce some elements of free choice in writing. The students are given sentence parts, but they must put the sentence together in their own way.

www.eslprintables.com

www.sentenceplay.co.uk

Guided Composition

The main aim of composition is to communicate one's thought in an organized way. Hence, the teacher encourages the students to express their ideas in writing in an orderly and systematic way. It promotes various writing skills – describing, narrating, summarizing etc. When the real composition starts, students should concentrate on correct vocabulary, and structure. Subject matter may be strictly controlled in the early stage. Grammar, syntax, and mechanics of writing are to be stressed to help the students to develop composition skills.

Exercises for guided composition can be given as,

Writing from substitution table

Filling in the blanks

Arranging Jumbled words/sentences

Picture composition

Writing dialogues.

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There are worksheets and activities found abundant in the following websites which can be shared in the Facebook page by the instructor for the students to do as their activity.

www.eslprintables.com

<https://en.islcollective.com/...worksheets...>

www.education.com/worksheets/writing...

Free Composition

“The ultimate aim of composition is to enable the pupils to arrange their own ideas in their own way - to choose their words to express their ideas freely. Hence the term “free composition”- H.Champion (Teaching of English- p. 204). From the five categories of free composition (Narrative, Story type, Reflective, Imaginative, and Literary writing), exercises can be given:

Paragraph writing

Paraphrasing

Letter writing

Application writing

Essay writing

Descriptive writing

Narrative writing

Story writing

Precise writing

Poetry writing

In this session, students are allowed to write of their own choice. They can write poems, short story, their personal experiences or some paragraphs on desired topics. Students can write on the wall and the friends in the group can comment on it. The instructor can also have a lively participation in it.

Puzzles and Games

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Often the final section of a chapter is a game activity. There are puzzles and word games to expand student vocabulary and to focus attention on accurate spelling. Games provide an interesting way of learning any language. It develops self-confidence and skills. These sections are intended to bring some fun to the drudgery of spelling work. Successful manipulation of games goes a long way to improve the communications skills of students. There are games, puzzles and quizzes for testing vocabulary, grammar and other language skills.

www.manythings.org/vocabulary

iteslj.org/cw

www.learnenglish.de/gamespage.html

www.funenglishgames.com/wordgames...

and many more websites are there for training students with games and puzzles. Students enjoy the sharing of these pages and also learn out of it.

Conclusion

Social media is useful for sharing knowledge among learners. It can be an effective tool in enhancing student language learning if it is designed and used appropriately. Internet sources, widely seen all through the World Wide Web can be organized and shared in one single page to all the students at one single place. Social media or social network usually distracts the students' studies. But here the social network distracts the young pupils' chats and directs them to learn language in the fashion they like most.

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