Web-Based Training in Gaining Proficiency in English Language

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Abstract

The paper discusses how websites such as www.nicenet.org can be used to create a classroom, which encourages students to learn in collaboration and use computers in an effective manner. The paper presents an acronymic representation of the word "English." The paper concludes by giving suggestions based on the students' views.

Electronic Learning

Electronic learning is a general term used to refer to computer-enhanced learning. It is commonly associated with the field of advanced learning technology (ALT) which deals with both the technologies and associated methodologies in learning using networked and multimedia technology.

English has been taught with many approaches methods and techniques for long. And by 2006, nearly 3.5million students participated in on-line learning at institutions of higher education in the United States. So, many institutions may become more involved with on-line presentations since technology plays a significant role in teaching English.

What Does English Mean Now? An Acronymic Interpretation!

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This view can be made clear by an acronymic representation of the word "English". It should be observed that "E" stands for **EMPOWERMENT**, empowerment of the teacher and the learner. "N" represents **NOVELTY**, novelty in new experiences, ideas, outlook and ethos. "G" is for **GLOBILISATION,** for in technology English plays its role as an international language, meeting all ends. For a large number of people "L"in English denotes **LEARNING** and **LIVELIHOOD.** The vast store – house of knowledge and information is easily accessible on the **INTERNET** which is denoted by the letter "I'. **"S"** stands for the dominant language of **SCIENCE and SUCCESS**. Last but not the least, those who know English has a prestige, which is a unique **HONOUR** for the teachers, students and users of English.

Thus, English is empowerment, novelty, globalization, learning and livelihood, internet, science and success and honour, the sum of which is power = technology. English can be taught and learnt through technology, by using a website for creating a classroom.

Web-based Training

E-learning for teaching and learning language is web-based training (WBT). It is a type of training that is similar to computer-based training (CBT). However, it is delivered over the internet using a web browser. Web-based training frequently includes interactive methods, such as bulletin boards, chat rooms, instant messaging, videoconferencing and discussion threads. WBT is usually a self-paced learning medium, though some system allows for online testing and evaluation at specific times.

Nicenet

Using www.nicenet.org you can create a classroom, which encourage students to learn by sharing their ideas with others and also involving themselves in collaborative learning. 'Nicenet' is more convenient for use in our schools and colleges. It is the name of a non-profit organization of Internet professionals, which provides services to teachers and others involved in education. The organizers state,

> The ICA [the Internet Classroom Assistant] was first conceived as a web-based classroom environment that could be used by post-secondary teachers with their students. The system was designed not as a replacement for the classroom, but rather as a supplement allowing greater communication and sharing of information among students and between teachers and their students. However, Nicenet does not restrict the use of the ICA for any purpose and our users have frequently found creative and unimagined uses for the ICA. (www.nicenet.org)

Therefore, the teacher has to first create a classroom and the students have to log into it by using the password and username obtained from him/her. They need to post their

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message under "New Message". They can view what others have posted as messages and comments. They can also give their views on the main issue discussed. Further they can discuss at any time that suits them. They may take their own time to think and add on points in a more presentable way. This flexibility will really motivate the students to participate in discussions.

In general the features of the classroom set up include the following:

- **Conferencing:** Create your own private, threaded conferencing on topics you make for the class or opt to allow students to create their own topics.
- **Scheduling:** Put the class schedule on-line. With a seven day advance view on your class homepage, students will have a heads-up display of upcoming assignments and class events.
- **Document sharing:** Students and professors have the ability to publish their documents on the site using simple web-based forms. No knowledge of HTML is needed. Automatically integrated with scheduling, students are one click away from turning in their assignments on-line, giving their peers feedback on published papers and receiving professors comments.
- **Personal Messaging:** Similar to traditional email but fully integrated with document sharing and conferencing, personal messaging is a great way communicate with and between individuals in your class, comment privately on conferencing postings or give private feedback on published papers.
- **Link Sharing:** Share links to pertinent Internet resources sorted by topics that you create. (quoted from www.nicenet.org)

To Overcome Passive Learning Habits

In English classes in most schools and colleges in India, many students are passive listeners and are very reluctant to express their opinion. Learning takes place only when the teacher and the learner are active participants. Sometimes the teacher also finds it difficult to get their opinion for want of time if their class is very large. So, web-based type of classroom with the help of *Net* will motivate the students to participate in discussions without any inhibitions. The teacher can have a recollection or discussion class after a lesson is done. The teacher can also have a personal contact with his/her students even in a large class.

Increase in Proficiency

E-learning increases the proficiency of the students by leading them towards self-directed and autonomous learning, for the basic aim of education at higher level is to make the learners independent.

Outcome of the Web-based Learning/Teaching in My Teaching

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- Students were exposed to new tools of learning.
- Most of them enjoyed the idea of sharing their knowledge with their teachers and peers.
- It was a collaborative learning.
- It was very lively and informative.
- They gained confidence in using new expressions and vocabulary.

Analysis of the Result

A total of 18students who attended the web-based training were interviewed. It was a semi-structured interview. During the interview-discussion regarding the effectiveness of the web-based class it was found out that 60% felt that web-based training was effective, it catered to their needs. It worked as an addition to computer-aided learning. 20% felt, however, that it was not as effective as it appeared to be. They experienced several practical difficulties, such as not being able to type in a fast manner, lack of computer knowledge and not used to combine work and learning. 7% felt that it was not worth the time spent in the lab, for they did not know how to operate a computer. Thus they had not even heard about the possibility of learning through web. 7% who excelled in the field of technology started to use other websites like Google and Yahoo for searching extra notes for their prescribed texts. 6% felt that they are not learning anything, except using a computer.

Suggestions

A few suggestions may be listed here based on the analysis given above.

The teacher can give a topic for a project and ask students to work in groups or pairs and to discuss and post their reports in the Nicenet. The teacher can motivate the students with computer knowledge to do a certificate course in computer use so as to enable them to use computer-assisted learning. Students could be given a time-frame for submitting their work. After motivating them to create an e-mail id, the teacher can post his/her comments to each group member to his/her e-mail address. Both face to face learning and on- learning should be combined.

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http://www.nicenet.org/

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