Virtual Teaching of English Language in India

Ms. R. Brindha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Scholar

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Abstract

English Language Teaching is the indispensable need of time to run the corporate and in turn to beat the world economy. This reason has instigated the corporate to make their employees proficient in English language. Therefore, the corporate confides in training their professionals through virtual learning ambience during their screening period. Amazing growth of technology aids blended learning through effective strategies combining face-to-face teaching and online learning modes. Technology plays an indispensable role in teaching English. Teachers can blend their course material with useful games, activities, LSRW exercises, grammar exercises, online exercises etc. This helps in running a classroom effectively and enhances the self-study process and group study. This research article is an effort to explore the widely trusted strategies of technology based virtual teaching of English language.

1.1 Introduction

English has become a global language in the multilingual society. Through the language skills and thinking skills trained by the ELT teachers, the basis of a child's spontaneous knowledge of language is built. Also, it gives lot of practice to the students. This is an ultimate goal of language education emphasis to build the language efficiency within stipulated durations. This includes the basic literacy level of reading and writing. To the fact, languages are learned by comprehending and communication messages either by listening or reading, i.e., receptive skills. ELT paves way to connect the productive skills and receptive skills. Prabhu (1987), Krashen (1985) and Elley and Mangubhai (1983) have stressed that language is acquired when attention is focused not on language form, but on the meaning of messages. Moving specifically into the area of literacy acquisition, a number of researchers have stressed the need for a balance of explicit skills instruction and a strongly meaningful language-learning environment (Adams 1990; Snow, Burns and Griffin 1998; Stanovich 2000). ELT concentrates to make it easy and help to bridge the gap between the burden of acquiring the language and comprehension.

1.2 Online Classrooms

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Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is the major growth point in the change of English Teaching methodology. And for the practical learning environment, the contents like web course tools, open source Moodle and, course managed learning platforms are necessary; they help teachers design material for effective classrooms. Advancement in technology has made students to enroll in online classes in order to gain knowledge and enhance their learning.

1.3 ELT in India

English language occupies an important place in the educational system of India. It is a language that continues to dominate other languages. ELT makes the learners understand the lexical as well as the grammatical meaning of a structure with the help of meaningful situations. To acquire the English language, grammar skills are more important for the basic foundation. In the study of Farjana (2014) "*In language teaching, the most important aspect is grammar teaching*." It is true that without the knowledge of grammar, nobody can communicate in a foreign language, but it will be only for the sake of communication. ELT helps the English classroom to gain mastery in the language and helps the students in expressing themselves correctly on the matters of everyday life. "*Today, English language plays a vital role in higher education, media and administration of private and government organizations. English has become a powerful agent for change in India.*' (Graddol, 2010).

1.4 The Scope of ELT In Indian Curriculum

English language occupies a significant place in Indian educational system. It is the commercial language of the nation. The proficiency of language fetches well-paying job opportunities. Company sectors expect the candidates to have command over the language skills. It is in the hands of facilitators to shape the understanding level of the learners. In such a situation, ELT provides the helping hand to all the English Faculty to solve the problem with ease. The various methodologies in the ELT, support the facilitators as well as the learners to master the structures of the language. ELT through curriculum concentrates on developing presentation skills, acquiring lexical terms, and mastering the grammar, and, ultimately it adds on to the growth in learning. It is a big challenge for the English language teachers to cater to the practical needs of learners to make them competent enough to interact with one another. It is necessary for every teacher to shape the students accordingly to meet the demands of the day. Setting proper curriculum according to the requirement of the students, institutions pave way to enhance the level of communication skills of the young learners.

1.5 The Role of ELT in Engineering Curriculum

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In the present scenario, many engineering graduates in India are found to be unemployable due to the poor language, fear of public speaking and lack of confidence. The career progress of the students is often hindered by the lack of expression of their ideas. Generally, students feel bored when sitting for and listening to long lectures. This is because, they want different environment to acquire language like listening to podcasts, watching videos, etc. Therefore, it is essential to create an atmosphere for students to enrich their knowledge and acquire the language during their class through proper channels like CALL and MALL. Recently, the number of engineering colleges has increased rapidly. This increase has created serious problems in the job market as well as in producing quality engineers. Consequently, the employability has become the core issue in the industry sectors. Candidates are highly expected to voice their ideas in English without any guidance. Engineering graduates are expected to write in English accurately as well as to speak fluently. All over the engineering colleges, English is taught only for two semesters. The prime aim of this course is to improve the language proficiency among the students. The fact is that most of them are not trained in ELT methodologies. "*Research in ELT methodologies is a new phenomenon in India as British Council has introduced professional development programs for English teachers working in schools*", (Padwad & Dixit, 2011). This paper emphasizes on enhancing LSRW skills of the students through Virtual Language Learning tools which automatically improve their communication and make them successful.

1.6 The Varied Branches of ELT

The branches of English Language Teaching can be categorized into many levels, but there are two main branches; they are verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal and nonverbal language is helpful in the process of effective communication. As English language is indispensable for all the factors, the essence of its usage avoids the misunderstandings in social interactions. ELT teachers could teach these branches through different activities and tasks. Crystal (1997) believes that English has become a truly global language and it has kept its privileged position among other world languages towards the end of the 20th century. Verbal communication can be categorized as Listening, Writing, Speaking and Reading, whereas the nonverbal communication includes body language, eye contact, gestures, postures, pause, intonation, smile, etc. ELT teachers con focus on these areas and develop the skills among the learners by using various methodologies.

1.7 Advantages of Virtual Learning of English

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Virtual learning happens with Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). CALL practices offer practical knowledge and enhance the computer skills of the students. Computer offer many possibilities to improve the skills individually; teachers at times fail to do this. It also focuses on the time consideration because computers measure the accurate timings and make the learners complete the task within the time. Consequently, it also enhances the reading and writing skills. Reading speed would be enhanced ultimately. Time measurement stimulates the learning efficiency of the students. Since computers have large storage capacity, the stored study materials would support the classes in an organized way. It is also very fast in calculating the marks with different and clear parameters. Computers help the listening comprehension also to gain authenticity. It is easy to use audio and video files through computers. It also fascinates the students to sit in front of computers and learn the usage of language positively. "*the pundits in the field of language assessment and testing to contemplate on the possible ways in which this technology can be put to work for the advancements in the profession. Such constant contemplation and research on the issue of possible use of computer technology, in the field of language assessment and testing, has resulted in many fruitful developments which have reshaped the age-old practices in the field of language testing and helped in overcoming most of the prevailing problems associated with the field*" (Reid (1986), Neu & Scarcella, (1991) and Phinney (1991)).

The English language facilitators have started using not only the computers, but also various types of laptops, tablets, smart phones, I-phones, and I-pads for assessing and testing purposes. English teaching is "a*n integrated procedure in which language performance is elicited and assessed with the help of a computer.*" (José Noijons, 1994). The use of technology for listening to audios, videos, radio and television shows have provided access to authentic speech samples. The espousal of audio-lingual theory in the 1950s brought the widespread use of the language laboratory in educational settings (Salaberry, 2001).

1.8 Mobile Assisted Language Learning

Mobile learning environment is increasing day by day. Beatty (2003) offers a further caveat that "*teachers need to be concerned about investing time and money in unproven technology*". (P 72). There are many common features in Mobile Assisted Language Learning that include voice recording, listening to audio and video file, app installation, reading books, authentic content etc. In language learning, all these features enable communicative language practice. Pinter (1988) used telephones to provide distant language learners with feedback and assistance and Dickey (2001) utilized

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teleconferencing to teach an English conversation course in South Korea. *"There are umpteen number of English teaching apps ready for a free download from the plays store in any android mobile phone irrespective of its brand. Indeed, this circumstance of abundant apps actually invites the challenging predicament of downloading the best tutorial for learning English"* (Malathy. P., 2016)

1.9 Conclusion

Innovations need to be sustained in all the stages of teaching and learning process. *"Innovation demands concentration on process; it demands that we pay as much attention to how we teach or train as to which topics get covered along the way or the tools that we employ.*" (Mann, 2013). Enabling the learners with conducive virtual learning atmosphere in the classrooms shall certainly show progress in the ELT class rooms. *"Mastery over English language rapidly turns to be a fruitful dream with the help of English teaching android apps in this electronic era"* (Malathy. P., 2016). Innovation is as '*an object or practice perceived as new by an individual or individuals, which seeks to introduce improvements in relation to the desired goals, and that is planned and deliberate*'. (Nicholls, 1983). *"Mobile phones have an indispensable role in the wide extensive growth of communication. The advent of the mobile operating system called Android, currently developed by Google, plays god for myriad conducive communication in the fields of commerce, medicine, engineering, technology and education. To state its role in education, there are umpteen teaching learning apps existing in the Google play store for a free download to our android mobiles"* (Malathy. P., 2016). Precisely stating the virtual language learning helps the faculty to plan and implement programmes in the best progressive way.

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