ICT in Teaching English Language and Learning

Dr G. Sujatha
Lecturer in English
The Hindu College
Machilipatnam
Andhra Pradesh
gsujatha64@gmail.com
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Abstract

English has become very important in today's world due to its international importance. The world has become a global village and to communicate effectively and exchange ideas, beliefs, technology there is no better medium than English. English is used in many fields more than any other language. This is why it is termed as link language, global language as well as lingua franca. In Indian context it is treated as ESL. Therefore, it is necessary to teach English and develop English language skills among the students at all levels. To teach English and develop English language skills various approaches and methods are in use in our country. But most of them are traditional, less interesting, ineffective as well as less motivating. So, it is necessary to use modern approaches and tools of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) to develop better understanding and acquisition of basic skills i.e. LSRW of English language among the students. Some of these approaches, facilities and tools are Computer Assisted Learning, Computer Assisted Language Assessment, Computer Assisted Language Instruction, Computer Assisted Language Learning, Mobile Assisted Language Learning, Technology Enhanced Language Learning etc. Modern studies and researches show positive results of integration of ICT in the field of ELT and development of English language skills. These facilities have paved the way of individualized learning and provided freedom of learning anytime, anywhere according to needs and convenience of the learners. So, we should take proper steps to integrate ICT in the field of ELT to make the learners well versed in English language skills. ICT sources can be harnessed to the efficiency and effectiveness of education at all possible levels in both formal and informal ways. The rapid advances in technology have led the development of ICT which offers new opportunities and promotes quality in English language teaching. Every coin has its two faces. Just as any other modern technology, application of information and communication technology in education comes to us with some drawbacks. These problems can be related to the teacher, technical issues or can be regarding learner's attitude. A language class can benefit in a number of ways when technology is the

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mode of teaching- learning. A teacher who comes to his work familiar with a variety of instructional material and who knows how to use it in his teaching has distinct advantages. But a teacher cannot neglect the other side of this, i.e. the limitations of using ICT tools inappropriately. A class over filled with too many unfamiliar sources of teaching will not serve the ultimate purpose of using ICT. So the teacher should have a thorough knowledge of the where and how of the instructional media through which he can make language teaching efficient.

Keywords: global village, lingua franca, various approaches and methods, ICT, teacher, learner, limitations.

We all know that English is one of the most widely spoken languages throughout the world. People from different countries communicate with each other using English. More than 60 countries have English as their official language and adopted as a second language in great many more countries. It has been estimated that around 2 billion people speak English around the world. Knowing good English will open more opportunities for us and make us bilingual and more employable in every country in the world. No doubt English has contributed significantly making the world a global village by narrowing the gap between the geographical boundaries. The advantages of having command over English can be seen in the educational, economic, social and political life of the people of the country. India is a country in which people living in different parts using their own languages. The regional languages in various parts are entirely different from one another. And the leaders and the administrators of the country cannot remain in contact with all these regions without a common link language. It is highly impossible for everyone to know all the languages in the country. As we do not have any common language at present, English acts as a lingua franca. David Crystal in his book; ‗English as a Global language' (1997) says: ―A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country and is used as a common means of communication for speakers of different native languages. Much importance is given to teaching of English in India because English is a major language of the world and English language has rich literature with scientific and technical nature. English is the only language of preventing isolation from the world and gives access to the treasure of knowledge. Learning English helps to get employment throughout world. We can be in touch with the western science and technology. It is a powerful language of communication and a binding force to keep all Indians united. The teaching of English whether for beginners or for the advanced learners has been a challenging pursuit for the teachers of English especially the area that cover the acquisition of four skills of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The use of technological resources in the language teaching and learning processes gives a good source of "authentic" one (Grant as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002: 85). Moreover, according to studies by Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (as cited in Lin, 2009), there are some

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attributes of how technology enriches the second language learning environment. Some of the important ones are: It provides interaction, communicative activities, and real audiences. It supplies comprehensible input through task-based and problem-solving activities. It facilitates focused development of English language skills using multiple modalities to support various learning styles and strategies meeting affective needs. In studies conducted by Dunkel (as cited in Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2002), these tools increase students' self-esteem, vocational preparedness, language proficiency, learning autonomy and, specially, provided immediate feedback. Consequently, technology-based activities can offer a wide variety of opportunities to enhance second language learning students. It fosters understanding and appreciation of the target and native cultures. Williams and Burden (1997) state that literature on teachers' beliefs concluded that these have a great influence on the way they prepare their classes, the kinds of decisions they make and their general classroom practice more than their knowledge about it. Educationalists, researchers and administrators have identified that the incorporation of the new media into educational institutions calls for a radical change in learning and teaching patterns. They believe that the new media will lead to a major change in the culture of learning. The new media: call for and facilitate more independence on the part of the learner, more self-directed activities and the organization of learning processes; encourage interactive work; facilitate direct feedback; call for a change in the role distribution of teacher/learner, where learners take on teaching functions; enable contents to be continually updated with minimum efforts; provide faster access to teaching materials; provide greater opportunities for individual forms of learning; but also demand more social learning in group and team work.

English Language Teaching, or ELT, refers to the activity and industry of teaching English to non-native speakers. i.e the teaching of English especially to students whose native language is not English. In the fast developing 21st century many new technologies are being introduced to teach English in the classrooms. Students get short span of attention because of the ICT in language learning. According to Pete Sharma and Barney Barret (2007), there are several reasons for using technology in language teaching. In addition to the fact that technology can be motivating, it offers the possibility to work autonomously or interact and collaborate with others. Technology also provides instant feedback on language performance in various tasks and exercises. Technology can also be an extension of the classroom and can be time saving. Finally, technology can promote language learning with fresh authentic and motivating materials directly usable from the Internet. In order to improve the whole experience of English language acquisition we have to integrate ICT (Information and Communication Technology) with current learning methodology. ICT has been proved to be a very powerful tool for educational change and reform.

ICTs can expand access to language programmes and improve the quality of teaching and learning in general. The World Wide Web expands the classroom context and provides access to

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current, up-to-date materials from the country or countries of the target language, offering learners and teachers a plethora of materials in different modes, bringing the foreign culture and language to life and making it more tangible. Multimedia can: enhance learning in different locations and institutions of diverse quality; present opportunities to students working at different rates and levels; provide repetition when repetition is warranted to reinforce skills and learning; and compensate, in the short term, for high student populations and limited numbers of trained and experienced teachers – in combination with robust teacher development initiatives and improvements in teachers' working conditions. Updates to content ware can ensure that teachers and students encounter and have the chance to work with current and authentic sources. Such encounters tie learning to the most important events of our time and underscore the general idea that knowledge itself is not fixed and finalised, that there is a universe of discoveries and a library of analyses that can be available to students. The most popular and most widely used devices appropriated by modern language teachers remain the CD player and the audiocassette recorder. The use of moving images linked to sound provides learners with exposure to all important elements of spoken communication: gestures, proxemics, pronunciation, intonation, all embedded in natural, cultural contexts. Both satellite and terrestrial radio and television programmes offer cheap access to contemporary, authentic, and potentially culturally rich programmes for the language learner. Audio exchanges via the Internet now also provide possibilities for real time synchronous oral communication. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software, CD-ROMs, and office software applications have become commonplace in many teaching/learning environments.

Language teachers working in a media-rich environment will, like their counterparts in other disciplines, need to: identify and analyze the individual learning problems of learners; make a careful and considered selection concerning the use of the media; monitor the truth of information content offered; promote efficient search techniques and be capable of conducting effective action research with the help of the computer; be able to use standard software confidently and competently; make wise and critical choices of information found. These new competencies are together called as "the new literacy". Basically, we can classify into five types of new literacy in relation to ICT that teachers need to comprehend and master alongside learners. They are: scientific, digital, critical, linguistic, and cultural literacy. Scientific literacy is that which is related to the ability to think scientifically in a world, which is increasingly framed by science and technology. This kind of literacy demands an understanding of scientific concepts as well as an ability to integrate a scientific perspective. Digital literacy relates to the ability to use ICT tools adequately and use them in a principled way to the subject matter at hand. For the language teacher, it refers in particular to web literacy, i.e. the ability to make use of the World Wide Web for language research; to the use of linguistic tools and standard programmes for exercises and testing. Critical literacy comprises the ability to evaluate the credibility, usefulness, and reliability of any given sources of information. It also includes skills in sifting and

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identifying the relevant and important in the flood of information and knowledge which threatens to engulf the unprepared. Linguistic literacy in this context refers to the ability to identify different genres as they develop, to track developments in language use and usage and to adapt authentic materials for teaching. Cultural literacy relates to observing and recording changes in the society or societies of the target language together with implications for language teaching. Such changes may be of a general nature leading to convergence between own, native culture and the target culture, or to changes particular to the target culture. Furthermore, in order to function adequately in the world of the new media, teachers need to acquire and master a whole range of new skills ranging from the technical to the organizational and conceptual.

Like the teacher, the learner also has to adjust to a new role in the learning process. The learner is increasingly seen as subject rather than object with responsibility and autonomy considered key elements in language learning. She is called upon to take on new responsibilities, often working without supervision, and this requires a greater commitment which is manifested in processes, such as the willingness and opportunity to take greater responsibility for own learning, reflection on and optimising learning strategies, and making choices concerning individual learning style preferences. Classes are likely to become much more learner-centred, with learners' time and effort devoted to authentic reading, writing, and speaking tasks related to authentic communication with partners. However, the approach suggested must take into account and optimise cognitive and metacognitive aspects of learning, such as learning processes, learning styles, preferences of individual learners. Dash and Dash (2007, :32-33) view, "the electronic media can now bring real English to all our schools, however remote, if we provide them with the channels of distribution, students will learn real English in school with much greater ease and eagerness through radio, television and other electronic devices". Karries (2008, p.32), states that the major impact of the recent developments in the teaching of foreign languages can be seen in terms of a learner centered, motivation-based and activity oriented approach to language teaching supported by television, radio, and audio-visual aids. In the context of developing countries, ICTs are often seen as an empowering tool which provides people with access to opportunities and choices that were hitherto not available, however e-devices for English language teaching and learning are still an emerging field in developing countries (Duff, 2015).

The ICT facilities are not available in most of the schools and are not in a position to afford the purchase, maintenance and other expenditure involved in its use. There is a widespread ignorance about the use, applications and advantages of ICTs on the part of teachers, head of the institution and educational authorities responsible for bringing improvement in the functioning of the school particularly related to teaching-learning and organization of co curricular activities with the help of such technologies. There is fear and apprehension on the part of teachers for losing their dominance over the teaching-learning activities and becoming

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abundant and surplus or playing a quite negligible role on account of the use and application of ICT in the instructional process. The teachers do not want to have transition to new methodologies and ways of teaching-learning. They still want to stick over the broadcast model of teaching instead of interactive model designed through the use of ICT.

Many of the students are not in favour of the transition of their role to the active independent enquirer and discoverer of the knowledge from the passive recipient of knowledge on account of the fear of complexities involved, difficulties encountered and pains taken in the independent or interactive learning methods generated through the use of ICT. Their apprehension and fear for the use of such technologies sometimes stem out of their ignorance and lack of training for the use and understanding in them. In our system, neither at the pre-service stage nor at the in-service stage there lies any adequate opportunities for equipping the teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitude and interest needed for the utilization of ICT. It should be clearly observed that a mere literacy related to the use of ICT (e.g. computer literacy) is not enough for enabling the teachers to make use of ICT with their students. There is a great paucity of such competent and skilled teachers, who can use and integrate right technology in an appropriate manner for the effective integration of ICT in dealing with curriculum bringing desired improvement in the behaviour of their students.

Though ICT tools are very helpful in the teaching and learning of English language, still these tools have some limitations. Students very often fail to learn the targeted objectives of the English language teaching and due to freedom of time and space students become careless about their targets and indulge themselves in meaningless works. Recorded programmes repeated again and again create boredom in the students that leads to the problem of indiscipline in the classroom. Many times students remain passive and inactive in the teaching learning process because they get fewer opportunities to participate actively in the teaching learning process. The integration of ICT tools needs technically trained teachers so that so that problems are not created in the class. ICT tools have changed the paradigm of English language teaching and learning process. So it is essential for a teacher to be familiar with modern ICT tools and use it properly to achieve the aims of English language teaching. Teachers understand that technology integrated tasks contribute to the development of the four skills but majority of the teachers use technology only to reinforce grammar structures and receptive skills.

Teachers know that they have to use technologies in their classes and they are making an effort to do so. However, this integration is not achieving the expected outcomes as it requires more teacher education, a change in their beliefs, not only about technology itself but also about how to implement it in language teaching and in learning in a more meaningful way. " The ICT Impact Report indicates that the majority of teachers have not yet embraced new pedagogical practices in their use of ICT and that teachers do not feel sufficiently confident in exploiting ICT

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to support new approaches in their teaching practices" (Kumar 2008). Without a responsible teacher it is difficult to make ICT purposeful in teaching.

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