Teaching of English in the Digital Age

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Demands on Teachers

The sweeping changes of globalization and industrialization force teachers to cope with the change in the perception of the learners and to take a closer look at the new roles of teachers in the light of the enormous importance being given to the use of technology in imparting the English Language. The use of technology will help the learners and teachers to move beyond the walls of the classrooms as the learning can take place anywhere anytime. It is necessary to realize that English Language Teaching is not only a work of art but also science. The teachers and researchers have to admit the fact that the demands on the teaching profession have increased and it is necessary that teachers should be innovative, reflective, technologically savvy and learner by nature.

Need for a Varied Set of Soft Skills

There are a number of factors that determine the method of English Language Teaching. New approaches to motivate the learners are required in order to help the learners to meet their needs. The learners need to acquire the English language to meet a varied set of soft skills. In other words, beyond what they usually learn in terms of grammar, spelling, four language skills, they are now required to acquire and use soft skills. In this context, teachers have to cope with the change in the perception of the learners and to take a closer look at the new roles of teachers in the light of the enormous importance being given to the use of technology in imparting the English Language.

Technology in the Classroom

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Teaching of English in the Digital Age   417

The incorporation of technology into English Language Teaching is one of the important challenges for education today as it is a great step towards revitalizing the English language classrooms. The use of technology will help the learners and teachers to move beyond the walls of the classrooms as the learning can take place anywhere anytime. The use of audio-visual aids like radio and television, computer aided instruction, internet and web based education are some of the technological innovations in certain institutions. This concept of 'digital classroom' or 'smart classroom' provides effective learning experiences by helping the learners to comprehend information, reflect on how it will effect a change in their lives, compare how it fits into their own experiences and think about how this information offers new ways to act in their enhancement of English language.

The role of the teacher in the digital or smart classrooms is very challenging. The teacher must be effectively trained to use the technology for lesson planning and student instruction. The teacher in the smart classroom is not a mere instructor but a facilitator who helps students to explore the expansive world of English. The use of technology bridges the gap between the teaching styles and the learning styles. The traditional and conventional style of lecture method which caters only to a homogenous group of learners is replaced by digital classrooms which cater to the visual learners, auditory learners and kinaesthetic learners. Audiovisuals, video conferencing, short animations, etc can be used in teaching learning process. Some of the vocabulary building exercises can be understood by means of visuals taken from different point of views and online tests for the enhancement of LSRW skills can be focused upon with the help of technology. Teachers can use PowerPoint presentations to illustrate the chapters or topics of the respective subjects. All these can have a positive impact of learning on students.

Additional Digital Devices

There are also other digital devices that can be used in classrooms for language instruction. Portable scanners, cameras, mobile phones, digital blackboards, electronic pens, touch screens etc can motivate students and also inspire the teacher to explore how best a technology can fit into the lesson plan. (David H. Rose & Ann Meyer 2002)These devices can help the learners to read text from books, documents, research papers, newspapers and the information can be scanned and pasted for further reference and documentation.

Some of the wireless devices in mobile phones namely the Bluetooth and infrared technologies are used as e-learning tools which allow the learners to access and transfer information in fraction of seconds. So the teachers have to constantly update their knowledge to keep pace with the fast changing world. Facilitators can use the online materials and e-journals available on the web for acquiring learning materials as they are a good source of information which will enable the learners to gain competency in the English language.

What Teachers Can Do

The teachers or facilitators should therefore create enthusiasm in their learners through their innovative strategies, tactics, styles and skills to instil an interest in them. At the same time, there are many teachers who use technology regularly but are not innovative.

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Teaching of English in the Digital Age   418

They use technology simply to replace old tools, such as pencil and paper, rather than using it to do things that students could not do without it.

Today's teacher must be intelligent, organized, creative, reflective, technologically savvy, and a learner by nature as teaching is not only a work of art but also science. They should teach the students to use the Internet effectively and also help them in creating their own blogs, podcasts, movies, documentaries and websites. The Internet and the Web are global systems for communication and information. Teachers and students can foster a positive classroom environment through the help of internet and web by engaging in consistent dialogue about assignments and develop skills of communication, writing and thinking.

Role of Blogs

Blogs are the perfect way for students to develop their writing skills. Earlier students wrote written responses to literature in journals. Now with the help of blogs students can comment online on literary journals and also on other student's blogs. The teacher can also involve in blogging by adding his/her comments. Any student or learner of English can jump into the blogging bandwagon and can explore and add new dimensions to the instruction by the teacher. Blogging has thus revolutionized the whole world of communication where information moves online at warp speed. Learners can be encouraged to create poetry blogs, fiction blogs, etc and take it as far as their imagination could go.

Podcasts

Podcasts are helpful in developing the reading and speaking skills of students. A podcast enables a student to hear his/her voice as the voice will be recorded and posted on the website. There can be single or multiple speakers who can create a podcast on various topics like storytelling or recital of a poem or reading out a passage, do interviews, give lectures etc. This at a later stage can help them in developing their public speaking skills as it gives them an opportunity to apply their knowledge orally.

Designing Websites as Part of Language Learning

A class of learners can also be motivated to create a website of their own so that they can form an e-community in the course of their enhancement of the English language. Learners can have individual websites or classroom websites where they can communicate with teachers and parents. They can display their projects or assignments and can share the resources with other members of the student community.(David H. Rose & Ann Meyer 2002) They can also have access to ebooks that are available online for doing reference work. It is also possible for them to create small ebooks on a desired topic with pictures, audio or video clips and make it available for others online. Ebooks are another way of combining writing and technology.

To Conclude

The paper thus emphasises on the need for technology which forms an integral part of English Language Teaching. It is necessary to realize that English Language Teaching is not only a work of art but also science.(David H. Rose & Ann Meyer 2002) The teachers and

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Teaching of English in the Digital Age   419

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Teaching of English in the Digital Age   420