TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED PEDAGOGICAL CONCERNS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

In today's tech savvy scenario, English language has become Lingua Franca, a language which has gained indispensable status, if one has to survive in the contemporary cyber world. With Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning ruling the roost, teaching of English cannot be confined to traditional teaching tools of chalk and blackboard. This global language enjoys the status of second language in many of the countries across the world. Information regarding the latest development is available in English Language and this language has become a necessity to stay connected and survive. Individual and social growth of a man cannot be perceived without this language. Technology enhanced pedagogical concerns in English language teaching have become the need of the hour. As Whatsapp, E-mails, Facebook, Instagram and other computer based applications play a positive role in catering the individual needs of a student. The present paper aims to study how a teacher's creativity coupled with technology can enhance and facilitate the acquisition of English language in a better manner.

INTRODUCTION

In the present day Techno Savvy scenario, English Language has become Lingua Franca. It has become indispensable to survive in this technology driven milieu. No nation of the west or the east can prosper and move shoulder to shoulder with rest of the world if her natives ignore this language. Prof. F.G. French rightly observes in Teaching English as an International Language:

"By accidents of history and by the rapid spread of industrial development, science and technology, international trade and by something like an explosion in speed and ease of travel and by all factors which have broken down frontiers and forced down the Nations into closer interdependence, English has become a world language. It is the means of international communications."

In the contemporary teaching scenario, a teacher dealing with English language in the classroom must not confine his strategy as well as pedagogy to traditional teaching methods. As technology has transformed this world into a global village, role of technology driven methodology has become the need of the hour. In this world of cybernetics, Whatsapp, Email, internet, mobile apps have come to assist the modern teacher to overcome the obstacles in the path of language acquisition.

Orthodoxy coupled with religious and linguistic loyalties pose as a strong obstacle in the way of a teacher teaching English as some people still consider this language as a symbol of British rule over India. This is true to some extent as this language was introduced in India by Lord Macaulay. He was the President of the Board of Education and has the credit of introducing English language to Indian education system. English language as a medium of instruction was supported by the British as they wanted to create a workforce in India to carry out the official work of the British Empire. To meet this end they not only introduced their language as a medium of instruction in the country but at the same time decided to put a ban on the publication of Arabic and Sanskrit books. As English literates were preferred for the Government jobs, many Indian luminaries like Maulana Azad supported the cause of English language in the country. In Post Independence era, the first National Policy of Education (1968) also emphasized on the need of studying English and other international languages.

The world has witnessed a tremendous growth in the field of Science and Technology in the latter half of twentieth century. India as a budding nation must keep up with this growth. To attain this goal, the study of English language must be given special importance. No doubt it is introduced in the schools at an early stage but the wide gap between theory and practice in ELT stands in the way of an effective teaching learning process. Many factors varying from orthodoxy, exam oriented approach, outdated pedagogical practices, lack of proper formulation of syllabi, lack of technology assisted teaching aides as well as a strong mother tongue influence pose as a challenge for the teacher teaching English language in the school as well as at the college level. As English language has attained the status of the second language in many countries of the world, the need to modify and upgrade the teaching methodology has become almost indispensible. It calls for a teacher to be tech savvy so that the desired goals of effective teaching can be attained.

Internet has opened endless possibilities as it provides an easy access to knowledge and improves connectivity. It has revolutionized the teaching learning process by taking the interaction between the teacher and students beyond the bounds of classroom. At the same time it has armed the teachers as well as students with the instant access to knowledge that too all with a few keystrokes. In small towns where outdated tools to teach English language were used earlier, teachers have now the opportunity to replace them with modern mobile based applications like English launch pad, Grammar up, My Word Book etc. Telecom networks are playing a significant role in bringing this trend in. Fast mobile network and free data packs have enabled the students from rural areas to learn at par with and compete with students at international level. Internet has enabled to bridge the gap and has provided an access to quality education across the country.

Multimedia aides like graphics and animation have enabled a teacher teaching English language to make his lessons interesting and student oriented. As multimedia is commonplace now a days, it has proved to be a viable teaching tool time again. It provides an opportunity to a teacher to expose the students to the real solutions of the language use and to the correct pronunciation of English through the video and computer graphics. The idea of integration of multimedia in teaching English language is not altogether new. In 1950s small language schools began the use of technology in the form of phonograph, movies, tape –recorders in English language teaching. In the following decades as there was extensive development in the field of technology, these were replaced by video projectors and slide shows. After 1980s Language Labs became an integral part of English language teaching throughout the world. In 21st century, English language teaching was invaded more by technology as the ELT now began to have integrated approach that focuses on auditory and sensory learning. This approach tends to provide a concrete/visual way of explaining the topics. As there has been a shift towards student centric learning methods of

teaching English language, the traditional methods of teaching Grammar and translation method turned out to be inadequate to achieve the required targets. Multimedia enhanced teaching strategies have gained importance enabling the teacher to cater to the individual needs of students. The activities and initiatives made by the students dominate the process and this enhances the outcome of ELT.

Audio visual aids, computer based teaching aids, projectors and mobile phones help a teacher to cultivate students' interest in learning English in a better manner. Students tend to find this difficult language more interesting when taught through technology enabled teaching aids. These aids improve the listening ability by increasing the attention span of the students. Those students who tend to get sick of English lessons within minutes get absorbed in the projected details of English language and learn for a longer span of time. Use of Power Point presentation of the study material not only increases the volume of information but it saves a lot of time. Power point presentation has another advantage over chalk and blackboard as it provides greater clarity and enhanced visibility thereby plays an important role in capturing students attention. This makes the learning environment more lively and interesting.

Integration of sound, image and light in the teaching learning process has transformed classroom teaching to be more practical from otherwise being a mere theoretical practice. While teaching the concepts of Phonetics to the students, the use of the dictionary provides only phonetic transcription of the word but hearing the word via audio aids enhances the listening and speaking capacity of the students. The problem of mother tongue influence on pronunciation of English language can be overcome by incorporating the use of multimedia as it offers students an access to pure pronunciation and intonation. Gerald New mark and Edward Diller in "Emphasizing the Audio in the Audio Lingual Approach" rightly observe (Teaching English As a Second Language English):

"Modern audio-lingual theory stresses a listening-speaking-reading-writing sequence in foreign –language instruction. The importance of ear training in developing speaking proficiency receives particular emphasis….Articulation is dependent upon hearing sounds accurately, discriminating among sound, establishment- i.e., memorization or internalization – of proper auditory sound images, and development of a feel for the new language." (98)

Technology has also been helpful in breaking the traditional theory centric teaching approach as it enables the teacher to integrate material on various grammatical concepts by incorporating the use of various mobile apps like Sentence Master Pro, Learn English Grammar, Learn languages, etc. The teacher can compose study material from existing material with the help of audio books and enable the students to get a firm hold on various grammatical concepts. Traditional method of teaching English grammar includes Drill –exercise based on grammatical rules but now a teacher has an opportunity to make use of blogs, wikis and chats to create interesting Grammar exercise. CALL- Computer Aided Language Learning allows the teacher to create such computer based programs that adapt as per the individual needs of the students.

Multidimensional use of technology helps to cultivate the associative thinking among the students. Sound and image have an impact on the students as they learn in a better manner. While introducing the new words to the students, the teacher may choose to ask the students to listen the new words and can insert some songs or puzzles before giving them sentences. Electronic based strategy, e Voc, is the latest tool that teachers can use to upgrade the vocabulary of the student. This is an effective method which enables the teacher dealing with vocabulary building exercise as it provides multiple exposures to the word in different contexts by using word mapping tools such as Word le and Word shift. There are

numerous vocabulary building games like crossword puzzles, word scrambles and picture word matches which are available for the students learning English as a second language. Online dictionaries like Yahoo! Kids dictionary supporting more than 90 languages are there to facilitate the students in vocabulary building. A better access to ICT can revolutionize the world of English language teaching.

Use of computers and mobile phones in the teaching learning process has added a new dimension to teacher student relationship as it provides a platform for communication even after the classroom teaching is over. This communication can last trough online discussions, e-mail as well as through Whatsapp. This makes the teaching hours flexible and makes the students missing the class to stay in touch with the teacher.

In recent times Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning have emerged as new technology based concepts which are based on the idea that a machine is capable of imitating intelligent human behavior. A computer can perform the tasks like decision making, speech recognition, translation between the languages of its own. Machine learning gives computers ability to learn without being programmed. While teaching English in a country like India AI and ML can prove to be an effective solution to the problem of lack of efficient and intelligent teachers in the areas which are not easily accessible. Language interface with dialogue function provides an opportunity to simulate a natural verbal interaction with a virtual teacher. These dialogue systems comprise of a chatbot that enables the learner to communicate in a natural language. Duo lingo is the English language version of the language learning app which works with a writing based chatbot as a tutor. Cambridge, Pearson, TELC and Babbel, like Duo lingo, are on their way to revolutionize the field of English language teaching in the modern world.

Overdependence on technology in every field has been widely criticized. This may lead to reducing the role of a teacher to be a mere medium which sorts out the information and presents it to the students. Over use of technology may lead towards replacing the teacher with computers. The interaction between the teacher and the taught will become negligible. It may also affect their creativity in a negative manner. Their communicative competence, no doubt, will increase but they tend to depend more on computers and other electronic gadgets for their creativity. Over use of technology may have a negative influence on the reading capacity of the students in general? They may always look forward towards reading the text on screen instead of reading books. It may also lead towards replacing the handwriting with keyboard outputs. But even the darkest cloud has silver lining. Proper formulation of pedagogical concerns and their careful implementation is bound to show excellent results in the field of ELT.

Technology assisted aids apart from providing knowledge act as cognitive tool to create constructivist learning environment. The use of multimedia should aim at offering free learning environment for the students. The end product of teaching English is the multifaceted development of students as it motivates them to be self reliant and independent global citizens who are well versed in the language. Incorporation of technology in the field of ELT is bound to pave way for effective teaching at college level. Teachers have always been thought to be the torch bearers for the society. They will always hold a pivot position in teaching learning process. The creative genius of the teacher lies in making technology his assistant. He/she has to keep himself abreast of the latest development in the field of science and technology so that these new concepts can be used effectively in class room. Pedagogical concerns based on technology are the need of hour and their successful implementation depends on the English language teachers as the entire onus lies on their worthy shoulders.

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