

Transacting with ICT in Teaching English Language and Literature

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Abstract

Technology, in the 21st century, is changing the fundamentals of our education system. It has the potential to help students to process the information and knowledge in a much easier way in strengthening their working memory and grasping power with easy to access to ICT tools. There are more learning benefits to students in rural areas and hope to create brighter future for them. The current trend in education is the effective use of Information and Communication Technology. ICT can lead to better teaching and learning and can also help higher education reach out to the under privileged and economically deprived and depressed sections of society. This paper aims at sharing role played by ICT in teaching English Language and Literature. It deals with pragmatic aspects of using ICT with the students of English Language and Literature. It advocates to make extensive use of websites, internet, blogs, e-groups, SSMs, emails, socializing portals, e-dictionaries, e-encyclopedia, ppt presentations, webcasting, audio-video teaching tools etc. The paper would be modest contribution to instigate teachers and students community to make use of ICT in the classroom. The paper deals with answers to the very pertinent questions such as: How far is ICT useful to teachers and students community? What is the role of ICT in teaching English Language and Literature? What is the role of teacher? Can ICT be helpful to improve student's proficiency of learning? etc.

KEYWORDS: pragmatic, socializing, pertinent, instigates webcasting etc.

Introduction:

The term Information and Computer Technology (ICT) today is a shifting complex of meaning and interpretation. A simple definition put forward in an exhibition by the Department of Trade and Industry, Great Britain, encompasses information use and content as well as technology itself: "Information and computer technology is the acquisition, processing, storage, dissemination and use of vocal, pictorial, textual and numerical information by microelectronics based combination of computing and telecommunication" (William J. Martin in his book 'The Information Society', P. 24). Because of its interactive and dynamic nature, ICT has the potential to meet the needs of individual students by providing opportunities to direct their learning and to pursue information, or complete tasks, in ways which meet their own interests and needs.

Technology has fundamentally altered how we live and work as how we learn. Not only has the nature of class room learning been changed, but also the very concept of the classroom itself has been redefined by the proliferation of distance education and e-learning. Information and Computer Technology (ICT) exerts universal appeal in the world of today. It is identified in most of the countries as perhaps the single most important means to the attainment not only of teaching and learning but also economical,

political and social ends. Information is that which adds to our awareness or understanding some topic, problem or event.. It is variously perceived as facts, intelligence, data, news and knowledge. It can be print on paper or can come in the form of computer software, electronic mail, video text, video, compact audio or optical digital task etc. Today, we live in an era of information explosion. Information is the flesh and blood of education system. It is the essential ingredient in new ideas, in course content and curriculum development. The ICT enhance one's ability in the production and dissemination of this educational information, and its management and control, especially, for the teaching of English Language and Literature.

ICTs as a tool help to expand access to education:

The fusion of technology in education is helping to generate excitement amongst students and is rejuvenating the passion amongst the educators. While keeping pace with the rapid development in India, education sector is also undergoing a sea change as it caters to the digital natives, who hate to wait. They need to have all information on a real time basis on their hand-held devices. ICTs a potentially powerful tool for extending educational opportunities, both formal and informal, to previously underserved constituencies-scattered and rural population, groups traditionally excluded from education due to cultural or social reasons such as dalits, minorities, girls and women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly, as well as others who for reasons of cost or because of time constraints are unable to enroll on campus.

ICT as a tool in the process of education:

ICT can be used as a tool in the process of education in the following ways:

1. **Informative Tool:** It provides vast amount of data in various formats such as audio, video, documents etc. to enhance listening and observation skills
2. **Situation Tool:** It creates situation, which the student experiences in real life. Thus, simulation and virtual reality is possible. For example interactive quizzes are used to improve the learner's comprehension
3. **Constructive Tool:** To manipulate the data and generate analysis. It helps learners to improve their analytical skills
4. **Communicative Tool:** It can be used to remove communication barriers such as space and time.

Thus, wider availability of best practices and best course material in education, which can be shared by means of ICT, can foster better teaching and learning.

The role of teacher in the use of ICT:

The roles of teachers have changed and continue to change from that of instructors to that of constructors, facilitators, coaches, and creators of learning environments. ICT has many benefits for the classroom teacher. Teachers require extensive, on-going exposure to ICTs to be able to evaluate and select the most appropriate resources such as LCD projectors, smart boards, television, electronic whiteboards, guided 'web-tours' and

internet etc. Using presentation software enables teachers to show ideas dynamically, and deliver content effectively. For example, “CD-ROMs make vivid multimedia worlds available and store large amounts of information ... that teachers suddenly have at their fingertips” (McKnight, 2002). Most importantly however, the use of ICTs in the classroom signals a shift from the conventional position of power held by the teacher to a more collaborative approach to learning. Generally computer based activities allow the teacher to assume the role of facilitator whilst students take on an increasing responsibility for their own learning. “The use of computer-based technologies can shift the emphasis of activities away from the teacher and towards the students, enhance social interaction”, (DET Computer Based Technologies in the English KLA, 1997, p.8- 9). It is expected that teachers should use ICTs for routine tasks that is for record keeping, lesson planning and development, information presentation etc.

ICT for teaching language and literature:

In the today's world of rapid development in technology, the relationship between English language and literature and ICT within the curriculum of higher education is the matter of discussion. In every field English, an international language playing very important role and getting mastery over it, is essential to be successful in career. Qualitative teaching and learning of English language and Literature especially at higher education has become imperative. Undoubtedly, human beings have made many positive efforts successfully to make teaching English language and Literature interesting, but when the technology is supported to these human efforts, the success rate gets double.

The use of ICT for teaching in classroom has changed the very nature of learning and thus remains an emerging trend. ICT assisted way of teaching acts as a catalyst in the classroom. The technological devices in the teaching field has gained popularity as it helps to minimize traditional barriers between teacher and learner, it promotes to keep learner in the center

Therefore, the integration of ICT with the teaching and learning of English language and Literature enable both teachers and learners to get exposed to the knowledge and information throughout the world. It has the potential to transform the nature and process of the learning environment and envision a new learning culture. The computer is used as a vehicle for delivering instructional material to both teachers and learners through drill and practice for the better understanding and using English language through spelling grammar checkers, desktop editing programmes etc. All these steps belong to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

Computer and mobile assisted language learning:

The year 1960 marked for the introduction of first Language learning software, it followed concordance in 1969, and the internet knowledge resources were first reported in the year 1974, while the artificial intelligence (AI) programme specially designed for language learning was launched in the year 1976. Computer games for the same purpose emerged in 1988. Thus, Computer assisted learning plays an important role in teaching English at tertiary level. While computer has grown more powerful and multimedia has become more integrated in recent time. CALL and MALL are its best examples that focus on receptive language skills.

Mobile phones are considered as miniature computers for its additional features facilities such as texting, gaming, email and recording. Mobile Assisted Language Learning

(MALL) covers PDAs, iPods and wireless computing MPALL applications consists of mini lessons of grammar points, closed ended quizzes or games testing discrete language points available through SMS, the web or downloads, the vocabulary lessons, short definitions of words with examples of use, recording lectures for better understanding, dictionary and a communicative language learning games using actions. Therefore, computer and mobile assisted language learning is becoming very significant tool in the hands of both teachers and learners to acquire both language skills and understanding the literature in the better and greater speed. Undoubtedly, its use even in rural areas is noticeable and positive one.

Language/Communication Skill:

Incorporation of Audio/Video supplements like smart board is creating interacting and interesting learning through graphical representations. Precisely, digital education in rural India has the potential to bring the rural students at par with urban India, while teaching basic grammar and all the four skills such as Listening, Speaking, Writing and Reading. The multimedia Computerized Language Lab with advance software are becoming very useful, it helps to respond to students different learning styles. The basic purpose of language lab is to focus on sound, text images, videos animation and interesting context that can be created and accessed from electronic devices such as computer, mp3 players, cell phones and iPods. By using multimedia in the classroom, the students can better understand the lessons by cultivating self thinking ability with integration of four skills. Even this is useful for the learner to learn and stimulate retention by recorded classes and presentation. Even students can improve their vocabulary by playing games and puzzles on computer. Preparing ppt on grammar using various web sites based on language teaching also becoming effective in this attempt. Internet, blogs, e-groups, SSMs, emails, socializing portals, e-dictionaries, e-encyclopedia can also be used for the enhancing the language skill.

Teaching and learning Literature Aspects:

Poetry: Through slide shows the teacher can put up the poetry on screen. The writer's image can be shown. An audio can be played where the poetry is recited, made more interesting if the poet himself/herself recites. Students perhaps may be interested in listening to the author's voice. Poems involving myths too can be visualized through images presented in slides by the teacher. Of course, the role of the teacher is the most important in making ICT effective. Hence both man and technology has to go hand in hand. Important journal articles and books can be referred to the students through the slides itself so that the teacher need not use the blackboard or spell out the names of the writers or their works. When everything is given, it encourages discussion and helps in creating a critical insight. This critical insight can be enhanced further if the students are given assignments whereby use of ICT tools cannot be done away with.

Hence it is they who would use these tools and search for information from various sources. Moreover if poems are shown on screen, it becomes easy for the teacher to point out relevant details and also contrast one poem with another, making literature lively and an involving exercise. A picture of the poet can also be shown or different pictures in varied settings, if available, so that it can be related to his/her biography and while the pictures are played, the biographical details can be discussed by the teacher. Similarly in

order to give a feel of the Romantic age, other visuals can be displayed. The combined effect of the ‘visual’ and ‘hearing’ would make students experience what is being taught. The themes, images and movement of the poem can be discussed through different slides which are innovative and effective. It will depend on the teacher how he/she prepares the slides or presentations.

Fiction: As that of poetry, movies based on novels can be shown in full or some important scenes can be presented and discussed. The themes, characterization, historical context, narration can be discussed through slide shows and presentations. YouTube can be integrated—of course with caution—to introduce certain memorable scenes from movies based on novels. Through this students can be introduced to the works of great directors.

Drama: While teaching, Staged plays can be shown through ICT tools and the minute intricacies of a play can be discussed. As a result the use of light, sound, stage setting and props all will come live before the students and thus would have a lasting impact on them. This would accomplish the dual function of literature to edify and give pleasure. For instance, BBC has a great collection of Shakespeare’s plays which can be integrated in the library.

Literary Theory: This is an area which most students dread. Their fear can be done away with by the use of ICT. The theorists can be shown on screen, their interviews or recorded lectures can be played. The ideas can be applied to literary texts and hence their relevance be made clear. Examples, pictures and other such devices can be used to make students alert and attend to it with interest.

Conclusion:

ICT helps to transcend to the boundaries of classroom. The Web quest creates opportunities for learning new techniques in accessing the resources. The learners identify their problems and can focus by using such resources. ICT can affect the delivery of education and enable wider access to the same. In addition, it will increase flexibility so that learners can access the education regardless of time and geographical barriers. It can influence the way students are taught and how they learn. It would enable development of collaborative skills as well as knowledge creation skill. It can improve the quality of learning and thus contribute to the economy. As stated in an old Chinese saying a learner learns best through seeing and doing. George Keith and Malcolm Glover also confirm the same truth in their book-“Primary Language Learning with Microcomputers” when they say:

“Tell the child something and he forgets it.

Show the child something and he remembers it.

Let a child do something and he knows it.”

So, rather than being the recipients of mere information, if a learner is given an opportunity to engage himself in meaningful activities involving ICTs, it would be more useful. What the ICT offers is resource, which helps to both teachers and students to accomplish educational change, which are long overdue and thus, nurturing the national interest of our country.

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