

IMPACT OF E-LEARNING AND THE ROLE OF A TEACHER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Within English Language Teaching, the rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) prompts changes in the ways and methods of teaching and preparing students for continuous learning and effective use of the language to communication with people from various parts of the globe. Now with multimedia computers and Internet resources available to common people, e-learning presents foreign language teaching and learning with unprecedented opportunities. New technologies like Internet, YouTube, Skype, tweeter, blogs, mobile phones, interactive boards and many more have added not only stimulus but also learners' engagement and true interactivity within the classroom. E-learning approaches should be treated as a powerful tool that teachers can use, but teachers need to learn how student learning changes with e-learning, and how to alter their teaching methodologies with pedagogical approaches that take advantage of the opportunities afforded by e-learning. A blended approach mixing face-to-face classroom methods with technology mediated activities seems to provide the highest learning outcomes. Although e-learning has potential in India, adoption has been slow and will need a major marketing and awareness effort. E-learning technologies have great potential to spread learning however, the benefits of these technologies have to reach the rural masses of India otherwise they will be one of the causes of the Digital Divide. The present paper aims to empirically determine the effects of technology, specifically the integration of e-learning within English language teaching, on students' perception of teachers' role.

Keywords: Communications, Multimedia, Internet, Techniques, E-learning, English Language.

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Introduction

Language teaching in general and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular has tremendously changed over the centuries. Twenty first century is the age of globalization and is important to grasp on various foreign languages and English language comes first. English Language Teaching has been with us for many years and its significance continues to grow, fuelled, partially by the Internet. Before two decades, students are burdened with studying, learning and grasping the materials, and of course, lectures with the collection of relevant information from prescribed texts. The need for chiseled graduates to merge successfully in the tough competition of survival in the global market is in great demand nowadays. For this, a change in the trend especially the teaching learning process of English language has to undergo a transition for the betterment. E – learning is defined as acquisition of knowledge and skill using electronic technologies such as computer and Internet-based courseware and local and wide area networks. Broad definition of the field of using technology to deliver learning and training programs typically used to describe media such as CD-ROM, Internet, Intranet, wireless and mobile learning. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM. It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video and audio. It is commonly thought that new technologies can make a big difference in education. In young ages especially, children can use the huge interactivity of new media, and develop their skills, knowledge, and perception of the world, under their parents' monitoring, of course. Many proponents of e-learning believe that everyone must be equipped with basic knowledge in technology, as well as use it as a medium to reach a particular goal.

Use of e-learning tools of in Teaching English

Internet

Internet is a source of authentic material in English as well as a source of information in the form of articles, courses, conferences and many more. It is helpful not only to the students

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but also to the teacher and the parents. The teacher can send assignments to the students through e-mails and can also take online exams. Parents can view their children's work online at any time. Students can see a web cam version online and get worksheets and notes from electronic online whiteboards. Students can prepare the material for their study from the on line sources through the internet.

Using YouTube

YouTube videos are useful for English language teaching to enhance vocabulary, accents, pronunciations, voice modulation and many more. The teacher can use it as a tool for improving their Listening and Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. The teacher can show the selected parts of the movie to the students to the level of the students. For the first time, the teacher can mute the volume and ask the questions and explains them. Later he can ask the students to watch the movie once again and present it before the class. This will improve their speaking skills. Another activity to enhance their speaking skills can be: the teacher can show a selected part of the movie to the students and further ask them to narrate the rest of the story of the movie or the climax of the movie. This can prove a good activity to enhance their listening and writing skills.

Skype

Skype is an excellent tool to teach languages, as it incorporates high levels of verbal interactions between users, or in this case between teachers and students. It provides immense opportunities for the students in a foreign language class to connect with classes in other countries to practice their language skills. The Students can read, present, or perform for other students and also collaborate with other students on writing or research projects.

Twitter

As an online education technology tool, twitter's impact on engaging students in learning concepts is unlimited. Twitter offers a way for user to micro blog in short 'blast' on any topic that the micro bloggers' readers would be interested in knowing more about .Twitter can be used by teachers to set up 'class blasts' that are sent out to students at any time about current topics, timely events or question etc. The teacher can ask the students to select a word of the week and tweet it around the network requesting synonyms, homonyms, and antonyms of the word. Once all responses are received, the teacher can check them for accuracy and develop a link of the difficult words for strengthening the vocabulary of the students

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Smart-boards

Smart board is also called touch board is one of the world's largest manufacturer of interactive white boards and they have coined the term smart board. SMART boards help teachers use a student-centered approach to teach language arts. Language arts teachers can use SMART Boards to improve reading and comprehension, and teach grammar and writing. With a SMART Board, teachers can combine video, audio, Web browsing and word processing to teach students interactively. Smart board also has games for children which can be played by teacher on interactive white board for making students motivate towards lesson. The teacher can also display paragraphs with errors and ask the students to edit the paragraphs or proofread them. To teach writing skills the teacher can also use a story starter and ask the students to write a class story or chain story or peer story.

Mobile Phones

The term M- Learning stands for mobile learning., which means learning with the help of hand held technology such as Mobile Phone, Laptop and other portable devices, Mobile is a portable device, M-learning is convenient as it is accessible virtually from anywhere. The use of mobile phones as a learning tool has a wide variety of applications. Teacher can record their lecture and upload it as a podcast and can share their link with their students. Students can use this link while studying or for references. Through text messaging with teachers , students can clarify their doubt related to classroom lesson while reviewing the lesson, and teacher can answer them instantly or in the next class or can direct them to the reference sources where they can meet their query. Mobile dictionary can be used by the students to build vocabulary. Teacher can ask a new question related to the subject taught in the class and let their students to find out answer from internet sources by using Mobile phone and to see how quickly they find out the answer. This will enable to know how well they understand the topics. After taking a sufficient number of photos, the students can upload the documentaries prepared by them to websites such as Flickr and type narrative descriptions for each picture to share with their teachers, classmates, family and friends.

Podcasting

Today the students are listening to news clips, music, and video clips via the Web. The teacher can reach to these students in one new way i.e. through podcasts. A podcast is a series of digital-media files which are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback

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on portable media players and computers. The teacher can assign a podcast assignment for homework and form a discussion on the topic the next day. The teacher can also assign a music podcast that introduces students to the culture as well as how the language is often used creatively or the news channels through which the student can also learn the use of intonation and stress.

Blog

Blogging has become increasingly popular, especially in the realm of education as they are a great way to share information and generate discussion. Authoring a blog, maintaining a blog or adding an article to an existing blog is called blogging. Individual articles on a blog are called blog post, post or entries. It can be used to inform students of classroom requirements, post handouts, notices homework and assignments or act as a question and answer board. Educators can use a free platform such as BlogSpot, Word press, or Tumbler to host the blog. Nowadays, blogs can also display photos and some people are using them with audio and even video, the teacher should encourage the students to visit blog frequently.

Advantages of E-Learning

E-Learning provides a new learning dimension to English language learners by incorporating with traditional teaching method and creating a conducive environment. It helps the learners to acquire better understanding of what is being learned by exploiting the available resources completely. E-learning certainly encourages students to learn on their own, at their own pace too. It also asks them to invest in the learning process. However, since face-to-face interaction has its own advantages, most e-learning courses offer 'blended learning', that is, some work on the computer combined with live teaching by teachers. This also takes care of peer interaction.

Moreover it creates the learners a sense of personal responsibility. Unlike traditional teaching no attendance is necessary in e-learning. It builds the learners' independence and interest of learning by sustaining for long period. Learners gains motivations, confidence and social credibility though e-learning. The major advantage is the consistency that e-learning provides. E-learning is self-paced, and learning is done at the learner's pace. The content can be repeated until it is understood by the students. It has been accepted that very young children need to learn in 'live' rather than 'virtual' situations. Therefore e-learning is not done extensively at the elementary level. However, children are encouraged to use computers (and CSs) to practice

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what they have learnt. It can be made compelling and interesting with multimedia, and the trainee can be given multiple learning paths depending on his or her needs.

The Disadvantages of E-Learning

E-learning has made remarkable progress in the past two decades, but it is still not very popular. There are some disadvantages of e-learning too. E-learning requires computers, which many schools and colleges do not have. They are too expensive to purchase and maintain, especially in the Indian context. Class members with disabilities may be functioning at a disadvantage for a number of reasons. Some participants may be technologically challenged and are hesitant to participate in full. E-learning expects students to be responsible learners who need to work on their own. E-learning cannot be used at the elementary level, as children are being taught concepts, which cannot be taught on the computer. One of the common disadvantages to e-learning is that some students, especially those for whom English is not their native language, have difficulty communicating and being understood.

The Role of the Teacher

When explaining the challenge and changing roles for e-teachers, it is a little like encouraging them to be information and environment architects. The environment they create may well be totally aligned with the work of the regular classroom so that e-learning becomes an integral part of it. Alternatively it may be a virtual classroom where the students only visit electronically. This seamless transition from what we now accept as learning to an e-learning environment will in time mean that the “e” ceases to have any particular significance.

The ability of teachers to communicate via the Internet, accessing and publishing information is very diverse. There are some who are pre-e-literate and others who utilize the internet for regular school and classroom activity. It is not unusual to find teachers storing information so that it is web-accessible but to actually make the move toward e-teaching is the next brave step.

There needs to be careful consideration of how to make best use of the teaching possibilities in the internet environment. It is not about creating large amounts of content but about designing and creating different learning opportunities and experiences. There will be content online but it should be embedded in a teaching and learning framework that is flexible and accessible in terms of design. The content is not king, it is the activity around the content that is paramount.

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The design of effective e-learning will be undertaken by e-teachers who are familiar with this new e-classroom environment. This is not the roles of the technical support people or software designers. The e-learning environment should be flexible enough for e-teachers to design and implement their own unique environments independently. Then e-teachers can leverage the distinct attributes afforded by the new technologies so that they are meaningful and motivational for e-learners. The assessment and evaluation of e-learning and the e-curriculum will not necessarily utilize the traditional models of accreditation.

Conclusion

It is the responsibility of the teachers of English and the Education system of India in general to respond to these prolific opportunities, resources created by e-learning for our English language learners. E-learning includes various activities and resources that if used by the students and monitored by the teacher could enhance the students' language proficiency and independent learning. It is true that one of the ultimate goals of E-learning is to promote students' motivation and learning interest, which can be a practical way to get them involved in the language learning, Context creation of English Language Teaching should be based on the openness and Accessibility of the teaching materials and information. During the process of optimizing the E-learning teaching, students are not too dependent on their mother tongue, but will be motivated and guided to communicate with each other. Therefore, it promises that the teaching quality will be improved and students' applied English skill scan be effectively cultivated, meaning that students' communicative competence will be further developed.

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