TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: NEW DIMENSIONS

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ABSTRACT

Technology plays a vital role in teaching English in countries where English language plays a role as a second language in a multi-lingual setting like India, Singapore, and Malawi etc. Technological approach in teaching English has now emerged as an indispensable component of English teacher, though it has already been used widely in advanced countries like Singapore, Malaysia, America, Netherlands etc., In olden days, the process of learning and teaching simply meant face-to-face interactions, reading books or printed handouts, taking notes from the teachers and completing assignments generally in the form of answering questions or writing essays. In short learning and teaching were considered impossible without a teacher, books and chalkboards... and the entire education system was used to help workers do things differently than they did before. The importance of teaching is shifted from theoretical teaching to practical learning. Hence teachers have to mould themselves and to change with ever changing classroom environment .for which they need to know what is the role of technology in teaching English in India. How is it helpful for those who are handling classes for communicative English in Especially rural areas? Do the English teachers of India have to face any hurdles while implementing the principles of technology in their teaching? Do they require visiting any educational intuitions abroad to become accustomed to this skill? Where Technological Approach included teaching is being done. This article exposes how technological approach helps English teachers of India to get more awareness to teach effectively to make students more efficient.

Key words: Approach, CALL, Language, Teaching, Technology

INTRODUCTION

Present day English teacher needs not only the content mastery and the knowledge of student's needs but also knowledge of technology and the use of technology in teaching. Technological approach deals with the technique of combining principles of technology and principles of teaching in areas where there is the requirement of the skills of interweaving technology. In many areas where colloquial language dominates teaching English becomes a difficult task...English, being an associate official language in India, enjoys the status of a language of administration medium of instruction at higher educational level and a link language it is also used in national and international seminars, conferences and intellectual gatherings. The technological approach has necessitated its use in the field of teaching English especially teaching listening and speaking skills. The demand for and use of spoken English is notably seen in news reading, announcements, tourism and hotel industry. In fact English is the only language which can meet the needs of international communication for the purposes of trade and culture. The teaching learning process which involves a competence to develop technological approach will definitely help the students those who wish to go abroad by appearing certain tests of English which demand fair proficiency in spoken English. That is why there has

been a great necessity to get the mastery over the basic skills of English.

The role of technology:

Technology cannot be a mere add-on in the language classroom because there is a strong link between teacher's assumptions about language teaching and how they use technology in the classroom (Kern and Warschauer, 2000; Mackinnon, n.d.).

The role of technology in the teaching learning process is of many folds: it is included as a part of the curriculum, as an instructional delivery system, as a means of aiding instructions, as a tool to enhance the entire learning process and also as a tool to help students understand and retain concepts better.

Students learn better when they are engaged with the technology .Through the use of technology, students can become active participants as opposed to passive ones where they simply receive instructions or information. Technology enhances the learning ability of students. Teachers can establish credibility in what they are teaching. Web based tools can be used for providing demonstrations and examples that can help students establish credence in what they are learning.

Technology also assists English language teaching by making the students to expose to various electronic gadgets to keep themselves abreast with the latest information .Digital libraries help them in gathering information at the click of a button .public address system enables them to effectively present papers and equip themselves in the art of public speaking. It becomes a platform for them to get rid of their inhibitions and improve their communication skills.

In the present English class room, students are expected to learn at different rates of speed, where in, each student gets the opportunity to work at his/her own pace in a relaxed setting without competing with others in the class. It also enables them to make mistakes and to practice skills in private in order to avoid the embarrassment that often occurs in the conventional classroom setting.

Technological Approach in teaching listening and speaking skills:

Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others say or speak. In the last four decades, communication and proficiency oriented approaches to language teaching places an increasing importance on listening comprehension. James Brown, Ralph

Nicholas, Carl Weaver were the eminent linguistics who established listening as a skill and are considered to be fathers of listening.

In the present system of Education, up to primary grades listening is acceptable as the most effective learning mode. In colleges too the lecture system draws heavily upon listening skills. Brown states "listening ability lies at the very heart of all growth, from birth through the years of formal education the better those learning skills are developed, the more productive our learning efforts"(1987:10).

Some of the activities which include technological approach are not available in the existing curriculum. They are to be practiced during the language class .The advanced skills which are learnt easily through the principles of technology could be listening for problem solving, summarizing answering questions, interpreting information filling up gaps, paraphrasing etc.We can use technology to make students good listeners to discover the rules of phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and the accent of native speakers.

The technological developments have necessitated in its use in the fields of information technology and media. Further, the demand for and use of spoken English is notably seen in news reading announcements, advertisements, .tourism and hotel industry.infact, English is the only language which can meet the needs of international communication for the purposes of trade and culture.

The communicative approach tries to promote authentic communication. For example, students write dialogues to learn the techniques of turn taking, negotiation, politeness, and etc.these collaboration tools can support the objectives of a language program, such as authentic communication and collaborations.

At a basic level, teacher has to create the English Environment in the English class room by asking the students to take part in the following activities to develop listening and speaking skills in the pronunciation and dialogues.

Discussing work/ current problems with family or colleagues

Making arrangements/exchanging news etc… over the telephone

Making arrangements /exchanging news etc... With acquaintances.

Chatting at a party/ other social gatherings
Hearing announcements over the loud speaker
Receiving instructions on how to do something /get somewhere

Attending a lecture / seminar

Being interviewed/interviewing

Hearing a speech /lecture

Attending a formal occasion wedding/prize getting/other ceremony

Getting professional advice (from a doctor for example)

Being tested orally in a subject of study.

The technology allows us to store and access audio files. Before the advent of computers, the language laboratory was used to teach pronunciation and dialogues, and to show films. The content of this material has not changed, but it is more accessible to students and teachers. Further, such films can be found on the internet and used to teach units such as pronunciation and dialogues.

For example

1) At the airport: Play a record of announcements in the classroom and ask the students when the flight would take off, how long we would have to wait

2) At the railway station: Play a record of announcement, asks the students about the number of platform on which the train arrives, the time of the departure/arrival of the train etc.

3) Playing English movies: Play a movie of English and ask the students what the central theme of the movie is, the words which are repeating for more than two times, differences in the accent of the roles etc.

4) Playing the radio for news: Play the radio in the class room, ask the students to listen, after the completion ask them headlines, important events, etc

5) Hearing announcements over the loud speaker

6) Watching a film/theatre show/television program

7) Listening to recorded/ broadcast songs

Such files can also be easily created by teachers for teaching and by students for projects. Audio files, for example, merely need a microphone and speakers, both of which are built into new computers. Movies are a little more difficulty, they can be recorded on digital cameras, loaded on a computer and edited using special software (this is an inbuilt feature in the Mac Book).students can collaborate on mini projects to create 2-minute audio or video clips such as short

conversations or interviews; here, the advantage is that students practice using language in a project that interests them.

And also activities include rehearsing dialogues, completing information gap activities, playing interactive games, discussing topical issues, problem solving, role playing and completing speaking tasks Chris Sion (2004), suggests 20 lead ins that are communicative and bring in conversation. Some of them are

Bring in a picture

Show a video clip

Tell an anecdote/story

Tell a joke

Play/ sing a song

Read or ask student to read out a short text on a related topic

Begin with a question or proverb

Ask a rhetorical question

Allow something indistinctly on the board and get the student to guess what it is

Play a tape or CD of some snippets of information connected with the topic

Mime the topic or some details connected with it

Brainstorm associated words and concepts

The primary aim of developing speaking skills in classroom is to stimulate students' talk about subjects that interest them in the class room and give them the confidence to do so. The underlying aim is to encourage them to speak English in real life situations. The activities there fore should be more on fluency and not on accuracy. In order to facilitate fluency in speaking, maximum time should be allotted to students' talk, ensuring an even participation. This motivates them to express fluently and appropriately. Classroom activities can be planned to include everything from dyadic to small group.

A teacher has to make a careful choice of topic distribute the talking time governed by turn talking, monitor correction, focus on interaction, coherence of the students' conversation and strategies like adjacency pairs, opening and closings, turn talking and develop conversation with skill and confidence.

Thus while encouraging fluency as a primary objective, the teacher should make the exchange of talk and collaboration as a desirable end some suggested tasks of interactive negotiation of meaning.

Two way rather than one way tasks (Doughty and Pica, 1986) with required information exchange being a crucial factor (Pica and doughty, 1988)

Problem solving tasks rather than debate –style tasks (Duff, 1986)

Absence of the teacher from student groups performing collaborative tasks (Pica, 1987)

Task based activities rather than topic based activities (Penny Ur, 1991)

Pairs with different L2 proficiency levels and L1 backgrounds (Varonis and Gass, 1985)

A task based interactional approach reflects a sounder pedagogical principles, "learning by doing",. In coping with the task at hand the learners make their own choices at the conceptual as well as linguistic levels. The teacher can make a creative use of everyday authentic material such as pictures, photographs, maps, charts, sign boards etc...A maximum use of pictures may be made to create the right kind of 'pressure' to call in to active use of the students' latent knowledge of the language. The conversation can extend from casual chat to formal discussion in formal occasions.

One component of authentic communication is interacting with unfamiliar people in a distant location; examples are telephonic conversations with officials and video conferences with a team that allow people to interact in real time. Here, we need technology that can transmit voice (and visuals, if possible) in both directions. (This is similar to the 'human network' proposed by a company like Cisco)

Software such as Skype and hardware such as a webcam can connect computers at distant locations, allowing participants to interact. The constraint here is that this has to occur in real time, for which adequate infrastructure such as loud speakers, mice, tape recorder, radio, computer, stereo and other audio units, electricity and connectivity is required.

With the help of above exercises and the technological uses the students should be trained to cope with the demands of life which are nonexistent in any edited text. Thus a combination of tasks, subtitles, video or audio can be easily selected to accommodate individual preferences and learning styles. A combination of written and aural media may provide the input that is more comprehensible and also make learning experiences suitable to individual abilities, needs and learning styles.

In this way listening and speaking become infused in to the curriculum. And the opportunities for regular practice are easily created to transfer from the direct lesson to the integrated lesson .The conventional teaching listening methods hardly help but the modern techniques of listening and speaking skill certainly make the students ready for even critical listening and fluent speaking .Hence the teacher has to plan day to day class room activities very carefully to help the students to overcome their hurdles.

Technological Approach in teaching reading skill:

Today we acquire knowledge from various resources in the world. The growing number of books and magazines show that we are reading more than ever before. Besides, science and technology too have given us considerable leisure to enjoy reading. The academic success of the students depends on their reading habits.

Textbooks are created to provide teachers and students with texts and exercises for teaching and learning. With the advent of the internet, students and teachers have access to vast resources, some of it more current than what textbook can offer.althouh teachers are wary of allowing students to use the internet fearing that students will plagiarize, the internet provides new opportunities. Since material on the internet is not reviewed for factual accuracy, the quality of the information is uneven. This provides an opportunity to teach students to evaluate information from different texts. Asking students to find the answer to a simple question (such as "how many official languages does India recognize?")Will throw up multiple answers; from hereon can proceed to showing students how to evaluate sources, not to depend on secondary sources, and to go to the primary sources. This teaches the skills of critical reading.

The internet also offers an opportunity for extensive reading. Instead of the limited universe in the textbook, students can look up additional information by following their interests or explore alternative views.

Technological Approach in teaching writing skill:

Using the computer-word processing programs, such as Microsoft Word and LateX, have altered the way one write. It is easier to press keys than to form letters by hand; we can delete, insert and move text allowing us to recognize information; when programs

are bundled with linguistic tools, spelling and grammar are automatically checked, and the final output is neat and legible.

The question arises as to how much access to computers should we allow students? However, the skills involved in writing are highly complex, in writing ,attention has to be paid both to higher-level skills of planning and organization as well as lower-level aspects, such as spelling and punctuation(Flower and Hayes,1981)Student writers find it difficult to coordinate these complex skills and the problem is further compounded if their language proficiency is weak. Composing on the computer appears to help lower-ability students(Dalton and Hannafin,1987)and ESL writers (Pennington,1993),because computers support some of the processes in writing, such as forming letters and checking spelling, leaving the students free to generate and expand their ideas.

CALL and English Language Learners

Emerging technologies and computer assisted language learning (CALL) used with Ells are "ideal for fostering reading and writing skills in the target language, literacy, and technological literacy skills. it can help teachers different content, process, and product for ELLs so the issues of language proficiency level, motivation, interest, background knowledge, and learning preferences are addressed. This enables ELLs to have full access to the curriculum enabling them to reach the same goals as main stream learners.

Limitations of teaching English with technological approach

1) More theoretical than practical: The syllabus is framed with a lot of theory, and the time slot allotted is very less and the syllabus is heavy filled with lessons in detailed and no detailed. On part of this there are many listening and oral activities for student's exposure.

2) Heterogeneneous class rooms: India is a multi-linguistic country with every single language with its own unique features. The teacher faces many difficulties like the students come from different demographics, with different educational backgrounds, different socio-linguistic backgrounds, different boards of educational system and different socio- economic backgrounds. The teacher finds it difficult to handle students of such varied

backgrounds. The heterogeneity hampers the attainment of objectives fixed for the course.

3) Faulty methods for teaching English language

Skill based teaching is very much in vogue in professional courses. It is really an uphill task for the language teachers to teach the four fold skills for a professional student without proper orientation. They hasten with the syllabus under the pretext of syllabus completion adopting all conservative methods.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that the teaching involving technological Approach will certainly give the good results. As day by day the preference for English is growing the Teachers of English should also develop their skills in teaching to help the students to go through the various competitive examinations, to take part in social etiquettes effectively, to understand the accent and the pronunciation of native speakers, and to know the technological usage in learning from various sources. By knowing about the recent trends taken place in the education system under weaving technology the teacher must be able to upgrade himself/herself to present as effectively as possible towards the benefits of the students. For which teacher must be aware of the technology, Technological innovations and the different technological approaches. When a teacher is aware of the competence of teaching with technology he/she will definitely assist the process of learning to overcome all barriers which make students feel shy and inhibited.

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