POPULAR APPROACHES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract:

English language teaching methodology has undergone a huge change due to the influence of computers and the Internet. There is a demand for literate people to gain skills in the new forms of literacy which include the use of a large variety of online tools viz. Blogs, social networking sites, video and audio sharing tools and many more. Blended Technology has brought a lot of updation in the Teaching Learning process. New multimedia technology actively involves the users in responding and creating material. CALL has evolved as a field, at a rapid pace over the recent past years and it has been conveniently classified into various categories like Web2.0, MALL and virtual learning. Blended Learning is a model of learning which provides a lot of benefits to meet the challenges of the modern -day teaching and learning process. There are many Apps for Learning English available on online medium. Through an explosion of new teaching and learning methods in the last few decades there is something for every type of learner out there.

Keywords: evolution, computer – assisted language learning, web, blog, podcast, video sharing

Introduction:

This paper describes the emerging trends in the teaching – learning process of the English language. English language teaching methodology has undergone huge change because of the influence of computers and the internet. There is a demand for literate people to gain skills in the new forms of literacy which include the use of a large variety of online tools – blogs, social networking sites, video and audio sharing tools and many more. The impact of these internet – related media is different from that of the earlier mass media revolution.

Blended Technology in the Teaching -Learning Process:

In 20th century education, the efforts to shift from a didactic approach which was mostly focused on the transmission of knowledge and skills to what is popularly known as "active learning", where the focus is on students' interest – driven activities that are generative of knowledge and competence. We believe a shift of equal if not greater magnitude will come to dominate educational dialogue in the present century. (Scardamalia & Bereiter).

The 21st century is witnessing a definite shift from the industrial age to the knowledge era. Beat Schwendimann, a Post Doctoral Research Associate at University of Sydney, in his article, Teachers as 21st Century Knowledge Workers, raises question, " Are teachers still relevant in the age of online learning environments and Google ?" The question is not as simple and straightforward as it appears to be. Google and online learning environment have changed the way knowledge is processed and shared. According to Schwendimann, " Competent teachers are a key for high-quality education and raising education standards". The perspective of seeing the teacher as a high -grade knowledge worker is very relevant for us to discuss in our higher education setting. For the top – level graduates to choose teaching as a career, we need a

platform that challenges the knowledge -age worker. Presently, the high achieving knowledge workers are not attracted to work in the teaching industry.

Further, he even criticizes the educational model in practice places of learning where people are "organized like an assembly line with strictly regulated hours, students grouped by age and strictly artificial divisions between disciplines "(Schwendimann, pg 4). He also sites various examples of schools around the world that see teachers as 21st century knowledge workers. His arguments based on examples apply to all levels of education anywhere in the world. There is an evident shift in thinking from school millennium to the third millennium.

In other words, teachers have moved from instruction -based approach to construction – based approach, where learners, with the help of teachers, construct knowledge. According to Uschi Felix ," exponents of third millennium thinking clearly believe in pedagogies that foster the acquisition of meta- skills and knowledge; relevant/ negotiated curricula, collaboration; lifelong learning; global learning and access to real-life tutors and informants ". As a result of this, social constructivism has gained momentum as the "obvious pedagogical paradigm" (Uschi, pg87).

Educational Technology in India:

Along the lines of Open Course Ware (OCW) by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in India, the IIT 's and IIS 's initiated the National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL). As mentioned in their project document, the objective of NPTEL is to make sure that high quality learning material is available to students in engineering institutions across the country by using the advances in information and communication technology. Another long term objective mentioned on the website of NPTEL is "to forge strong ties with major academic initiatives worldwide such as MIT OCW, Commonwealth of Learning, British Open University, Australian Open Universities and Digital Library Initiatives and with industry for developing new technological tools for learning and dissemination. The number of things that must be done simultaneously is enormous. The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) , also known as Sakshat, in its Mission Document states that "for India to emerge as a knowledge super power of the world in the shortest possible time it is imperative to convert our demographic advantage into knowledge powerhouse by nurturing and honing our working population into knowledge or knowledge - enabled working population ". The need to launch NMEICT in 2008 was to enhance the current enrollment rate in Higher Education from 10% at present to 15%. The freely available resources in NPTEL website are also integrated with Sakshat.

Traditional Vs Computer -Assisted Learning:

When films and radio became readily available, they were powerful media, but remained largely in the control of a small group of people with the general public being a passive audience. New multimedia technology actively involves the users in responding and creating material. Traditionalist educators argue that the long-standing multimedia- aided language teaching is displacing the old methods of teaching. The truth lies somewhere in between the two modes of thinking. Computer – Assisted Language Learning would complement the traditional methods of language acquisition.

Evolution of Computer -Assisted Language Learning (CALL):

Computer assisted language learning (CALL) has evolved as a field, at a rapid pace over the recent past years. It has now incorporated a diversified range of applications. CALL is represented through organization's and conferences such as CALL and Euro CALL in Europe, CALICO and IALLT in United States of America and do on. All these organizations and conferences contribute to the significant increase in the volume of CALL- related activities, leading to an explosion of information. Language teaching through mass media has long been part of the language learning system. Rapid development in the field of computers and multimedia means that there is an increase in the number of individuals who not only use multimedia content but also create content in the form of web logs or blogs or multimedia podcasts. The line between personally authored media and mass media is becoming more and more blurred if not obliterated. Content creators or developers on the web already have audiences larger than major newspapers and Television channels. The sudden emergence of multimedia and the success behind the websites such as YouTube illustrates the need to learn these new forms of literacy.

Dimensions in CALL:

CALL can conveniently be classified into three categories viz. Web 2.0, MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) and VL (Virtual Learning). Web 2.0 is a more participatory version of the internet with huge collaboration and democratization, which includes social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and many more. A new wave of Community Language Learning has started to find its rightful place with the boom of social network technologies. These services can help other users to learn languages by direct communication or mutual corrections. Some of the most prominent communities at present are memorise, language – lab, busuu, livemocha, italki etc. For example, Moodle is a free and open source of e- learning software platform which is intended to help educators generate online courses with opportunities for meaningful interaction and collaboration.

Lessons and Teaching Strategies:

Demonstrations on different language learning activities:

1. Development of Language – Specific Modules and Blocks
2. The Moodle Reader Module for Extensive Reading
3. Research on Language Learning via Moodle
4. Reports on National and International Conferences
5. Links, Resources, of Discussion Forums.

Blog:

Blog (web log) is an open source format which is used for expression of ideas in the form of discrete entries. It is a form of a website maintained by an individual with commentary on the topic of one's choice be it social, political or personal. Blogs are primarily textual. Audio and video blogging are also becoming very popular these days. The teacher can have a blog with updated entries about different topics related to language learning. A class blog can be created by the teacher for students to read and respond to each other's posts. One example of free blogging software is www.blogger.com.

Wikis:

Another medium for self – directed writing is Wikis. Wikipedia is an open source website which provides information on different topics. It is a web based encyclopedia that anyone can edit. Anyone can contribute articles to Wikipedia, but the topic has to be new. More than Wikipedia, the website that would suit the needs of language learners is Simple English Wikipedia.

Podcast:

Podcasting is also a tool that can be utilized for language teaching and learning. Broadcasting of audio or video content on the internet is termed as Podcasting. Podcasts can be either live or recorded. The BBC website has a separate section for podcasts under the topic 6 Minute English. Each podcast is six minutes long and it has explanations and examples to help you improve your knowledge of English Language across an extensive range of topics.

Video Sharing:

Video hosting and sharing sites like YouTube, Vimeo, Dailymotion, Blip.tv, Metacafe, Flickr,Qik, Veoh,etc.have created a revolutionary change in the way the internet is perceived. Using videos for language teaching has been one of the most effective ways to achieve success in the classroom.YouTube and BBC 's International commercial television channel have collaborated to firm an online channel for enabling English Language Learning/Teaching. There are many YouTube channels that offer ELT video content like British Council Learn English, Anglo – Link, Rachel 's English, Macmillan ELT, and so on.

Mobile -Assisted Language Learning (MALL):

The other dimension of CALL is Mobile – Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which offers the opportunity for the learners to have far reaching connection with language learning materials through applications in handheld mobile devices. MALL can be termed as a subset of both Mobile Learning as well as Computer -Assisted Language Learning. With MALL students can access language learning materials on their smartphones. It also improves connectivity of the students who can now communicate with their teachers and peers anywhere and anytime.

Virtual Reality Learning:

Virtual Reality is another dimension of in CALL, where learners can take different avatars to explore, create and interact through chat and increasingly voice with one another. Second Life (SL) is one such virtual world, which is accessible through the internet. In SL, the users are called Residents and they interact with each other through avatars. Language learning is the most prevalent kind of education in virtual worlds.

English Village as a community of English Language Teachers:

Second Life English Community is an open community for language learners and teachers. SL experiments is a community of language teachers using SL. Language Lab is the first large scale language school that opened its doors to the virtual world. VIRLANTIS is a free language learning community in the virtual world.

Blended Learning:

Blended Learning is a combination of the face-to-face model and the online learning model. In a regular classroom setting, the teacher faces the students and delivers content and leads the instruction. This is the traditional method . With the arrival of internet, few things changed in

the world of teaching – learning . Now the students can access the content online. They may choose to work or even any place of their choice. This model is called the online learning model. Blended learning is a combination of these two models. For example, the teacher may prefer to deliver content in the form of presentations to the students. The students watch the presentation at home and come to the classroom for discussion on the topic. This method is known as Blended Learning.

Benefits of Blended Learning:

Blended Learning models provide a lot of benefits to meet the challenges of the modern -day teaching – learning process. The chief advantage of this model is that it saves time. The teacher can upload necessary information in the cloud for the learners to read or watch at their own convenience. Instead of spending time in classroom in lecturing, the teacher can have the students watch a presentation online and then spend the classroom time in discussions and higher order thinking activities. Blended Learning model also gives the ability for the teacher to add pictures and videos to match the different learning styles of the learners. The learner can also pause and rewind the lectures for taking notes on that presentation. If the teachers watch the presentation in the class, the advantage is to use valuable teacher time in addressing the needs of individual learners who need more attention. This way the teacher provides diffearentiated instruction and tries to address the needs of a diverse group of learners. This model also gives the opportunity for learners who are shy to speak in the traditional classroom setting to participate in discussions online.

Blended Learning model favors the student – centric approach that promotes personalized learning and collaborative work which fosters exchanges around the world beyond cultures and countries. There are many new types of software developed for producing, uploading, downloading and playing digital audio files in the form of podcasts. This has provided a wonderful opportunity for language learners to make flexible use of a wide range of audio materials.

Another website, EnglishCentral.com uses speech recognition to assist language learners in improving their pronunciation and listening skills. This is also free resource launched in 2009 with funding from Google. Learners can choose the video of their choice from the website, listen to the video at controlled speeds, read and repeat what they hear, and then receive feedback on their pronunciation and syntax. The advantage of using podcasts is that the learners can get access to content at the time and place of their choice. They also provide learner autonomy in selection of content which enables learners from different levels to use the content effectively to their advantage.

Another website that could be really helpful for the learners in improving their writing skills is www.tricider.com . This is a very simple brainstorming and voting website. We can post a question or a topic and ask the students to contribute different ideas as answers. Each idea can have pros and cons, which can be entertained as comments. The teacher can assign groups of students to think of pros and another group to think of cons and see which group can come up with the most convincing answer and argument. The students can also be entertained to create their own questionnaires and circulate them through Twitter, Facebook or else medium to

collect opinion.

Barriers to Teachers using Technology:

An English Language Teacher needs to look beyond traditional pedagogies and use of print media in order to prepare students for careers that require active participation in new literacies prevalent in the digital age. In fact, the concept of literacy has reinvented itself. Although traditionally it was understood as the ability to read and write, now an understanding of what it means to be literate requires to be extended and expanded. In a traditional classroom, the teacher speaks and uses a blackboard to express oneself. The landscape of a modern classroom is different in more ways than one. A modern classroom is a Smart Classroom, which would have videos and data projectors, sound systems, video conferencing facilities, Wi-Fi connectivity, Television, DVD players, video document cameras, etc. There is no doubt that the skill and competence needed to create an ambiance for smart learning is one of the essential attributes of teachers at any level in the educational system. The rest of the planet is moving in the direction of Web 3.0, the next generation of Internet, but in India the reality is that we are yet to taste the fruits of Web 2.0. The educational system and the teaching community should wake up to the realities of this digital age. The educators should put their hands up and take the initiative to improve the effectiveness of teaching/learning by reinventing and redesigning the above – discussed new literacies to suit the Indian learner.

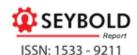**Some of The Best Apps for Learning English :**

The list of the best Apps for Learning English are:

- Duolingo – The Top all- rounder
- Quiz your English – The best app for exam preparation
- The British Council – The Best one for Grammar
- 6000 words – The best app for vocabulary
- Beelingu – The best one for reading
- HelloTalk – The best one for speaking
- Grammarly – The best app for writing
- USA Learns – Best suited for beginners and intermediate English
- BBC 6 minutes – Best suited for intermediate and advanced levels
- ESL POD – The best app for intermediate learning

Conclusion:

Teachers require support from their administration in order to be successful in their efforts of meeting the needs of all the learners. In sum, differentiated instruction is universally accepted by all the classroom teachers, especially language teaching professionals. ELT specialists are expected to vigorously and sincerely attempt to meet the learners where they are in the learning curve and move them along as fast as possible in the context of a mixed – ability classroom. Teachers are expected to use both pre – assessment and ongoing formative assessment data to help guide their teachings, so as to meet the needs of all learners. When all the teachers embrace this kind of strategy, students will definitely begin to reap the benefits and rewards through

increased student learning and achievement. In the conclusion, it is quite apparent that there has been an explosion of new teaching and learning methods in the last few decades which can have a positive impact in the lives of people who need to learn English, as there is something for every type of learner out there. Thanks to technological advances and human creativity in using new technologies, learning new languages has become and will continue to become easier and more entertaining with time.

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