

The Role of Information Communication Technology in English Language Learning and Teaching at Tertiary Level

Abstract

In recent two decades, there has been a gradual growth and implementation of Information Communication Technology in various fields. ICT registers its footprint with huge and strong impact in the educational field. It is a boon to language learners and teachers. ICT opens new learning opportunities and challenges to English language learners as well as teachers. Allan (2004) points out that ICT offers a rich blend of learning opportunities and boost up the learners' confidence level (p.9). One of the major reasons for using ICT in classrooms is to prepare the current generation students for a workplace where new technologies and computer applications are omnipresent. ICTs are actually playing vital roles in changing the trend in teaching learning process. It encourages learner-centered teaching environment. This shift is rightly advocated by Ruschoff and Ritter (2001), "learning as a self-structured and self-motivated process of knowledge construction" (p.231). The learners' responsibilities have been considerably increased and teachers are asked or forced to equip themselves with the latest teaching methods, techniques and technology. This paper aims to highlight the major significant qualities of ICT and how they can be used as pedagogical tools to enhance learning abilities of English language learners at tertiary level.

Key words: ICT, English language learners at tertiary level, learner-centered.

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a set of technological tools and resources used to transmit messages and manage information. People might even think that education was happening before ICT, still this paradigm shift is absolutely necessary because this is the age of information and technology, an age that needs that teachers the collecting of this information and not just simply teach. It is very unfortunate that the country like India, ICT is largely connected with the use of computer and internet. There are certain problems need to be addressed regarding ICT; people have insufficient knowledge about ICT and they do not know what one uses ICT for and how one uses it. Technology integration is presently one of the hottest buzzwords in teaching-learning process.

Role of ICT in learning

ICTs help to spread education in wider aspect. It multiplies opportunities to learners those who want to explore latest advents and acquire more knowledge in all perspectives. Technologies help to humans and sometimes it replaces human beings. In teaching field, one can accept this very truth, because the evolving latest technologies help for self-learning. Radio and Television are used as instructional tools for many years to widely support distance learning. Later, computer and Internet equip them with huge range of information regarding respective fields.

Internet reduces the burden, distance and opens many doors to reach the desired sources. Initially only city people availed this luxury and slowly it reaches to rural places too. The growth was rapid after the invention of internet.

Internet gives plenty of opportunities to all kinds of learners. It encourages kids, adults and young learners to strengthen and widen their knowledge and interest toward the technology. Learners start loving the latest technology and it stimulates their learning process. The print materials lose its popularity and online sources gain fame.

The Role of Teachers in ICT teaching-learning process

In conventional teaching methods, teachers teach facts using text books. The teachers are mainly considered as resource people to gain knowledge. The latest technical aids are boons to teachers and transformed teaching-learning process in a better and progressive way. It even changes the role of teacher or mentor to guide or facilitator to help learners to be mastered in choosing, accessing, analysing, assessing, organizing and storing information. But the practical problems faced by the schools and colleges are, they acquire computers, internet connection, LCD projectors and then they train their teachers with some crash courses to use the technology to teach their students. The main problem here is the lack of focus and involvement from both the sides. The government or the management fail to motivate the teachers to realise the need of ICT. The rightly motivated and technologically sound teacher helps to transmit the valid and huge information to a big number of students in a stipulated time. According to Zepp (2005), teachers should understand the objectives of education with effective use of ICT. In other words, teachers should impart and influence the learners using technologies to enhance the teaching-learning process. This can be viewed as an experience and should be enjoyed by the teachers and they unlock various opportunities to learners.

It is a known fact that internet is full of information, anything is available within the reach of fingers. The fact is the information become knowledge if the teacher uses the multimedia to make topics interesting and more comprehensible. Consider a teacher struggling to explain the different cultures, food habits and clothing of a particular tribe or any particular country people, it is better to show a two-minute video clip this would have changed the entire teaching-learning experience different and meaningful. Listening to the voice of Rabindranath Tagore while reading his stories, poems will help the tertiary learners to connect with the author. The entire process gets a positive vibration with the appropriate use of ICT. It should be used to fill in the inadequacies that the teacher is facing.

Role of learners in ICT teaching-learning process

The current generation is technically sound multimedia generation. The learners are surrounded by information whether they required it or not. The tertiary learners aware of latest technologies and their usages effectively. So, it is tiresome and boring for them to listen to the sermons and lectures in a lifeless classroom. This idea is further strengthened by Grimus (), who states, teaching through ICT the tertiary learners are prepared to face the future advancements based on proper comprehension (p.362).

The role of learners focuses on (a) how involved they are in learning, (b) how well supported they are and (c) how meaningful their learning is to them.

“computer systems are increasingly being used to provide learning experiences when and where they are needed. This provide students with greater independence not only in terms of when and where they learn but also what they learn” (Cradler and Bridgeforth, 2002).

In our conventional type learning, it is not possible to provide an individual teacher to monitor the progress and learning experiences of the student. The closest to this is the apprenticeship system. The ICT helps the learners to get an individual attention. The efficient teacher can facilitate the learner effectively through ICT teaching-learning process.

THE LATEST AND POWERFUL TOOLS OF ICT

1. Interactive White Board

The interactive white board looks similar to a whiteboard but it connects to a computer and a projector in the classroom to make a very powerful tool. It would then become a huge, touch-sensitive version of the computer screen. The computer connected with the board can be

controlled using two ways which are the mouse, or touching the board with a special pen or even finger and everything will be displayed on the board.

Advantages of using Interactive White Board

Obviously, it increases the motivation of students. Multiple software that can be used in interacting with the board could cater the need of all types learners. Different coloured pens are also provided in order to write on the board and highlights the important ideas. The use of interactive white board can ease not only to students, but also teachers in delivering their lesson. There are number of online teaching materials and activities are available in different websites. The best example for a website which contains lots of classrooms activities would be the BBC website. By having everything online, it is not even necessary to have a printed material, as all the information and exercise can be available and done by using the website and the interactive board.

2. Use of WEBSITES for Teaching English

Website is an internet technology that can be used in teaching-learning process. It is used especially in a larger number of students' class. It gives ample opportunities for teaching and learning. The teacher can incorporate the online and offline teaching materials to overcome some of the challenges of teaching and learning in a large class. In a large class, it is waste of time and materials to be distributed in the classroom instead the teacher can post the materials and inform the students two or three days earlier to download those materials especially that are relevant to the topic being treated. Lesson plans, exercises and reading materials are available on. English language teaching websites.

(Eg) www.techingenglish.org.uk

Websites can be used to give written assignments or exercise to the students.

3. VIDEODISCS

Videodiscs are used for teaching literature especially novel or play. The teacher after introducing the themes, characters and settings to them and asked them to read the text which will be followed by showing the film version to the students. The class can be divided into groups and while watching the movie, the teacher can discuss them through forwarding or playing back. The teacher should assign different activities for different groups and the tertiary

learners are asked to watch the full movie and prepare the assigned work and that should be properly comprehended to the teacher.

4. Reading & Writing facilitative e-tools

These are few ICT tools can help to improve reading and writing skills such as online boards, online journals, blogs, wikis and e-books. These are actually used to create digital material, portfolio and help learners to work in collaborative projects. These are mainly used to develop their professional writing skills. They can be accessed by following these links.

<https://webwhiteboard.com/>

<https://penzu.com>

<https://www.wikispaces.com/content/classroom>

<https://www.blogger.com/>

similarly, the e-books can be used to develop the tertiary learners' reading skills. Most of the books are available in audio formats, so that it helps to correct the learners' pronunciation skills, built in dictionaries help for better understanding and interactive activities help them to comprehend the whole reading. The learners can access these e-books on multiple devices such as tablets, mobile phone, kindle and laptops.

5. Listening & Speaking – Facilitative tools

The tertiary learners' listening and speaking skills can be developed through ICT tools such as,

- Video and audio files
- Podcasts (syndicated audio files) and
- Vodcasts (syndicated video files);
- Audio video sharing libraries like You Tube.

These can be used to enhance their listening and speaking skills. Some of the activities briefed here can be used in language classrooms to kindle the learning habits of the tertiary learners.

Conclusion

ICT creates the opportunity to construct powerful learning experiences. It can be used to support conventional methodologies like large number of students' lecture, writing assignments and examinations. ICT helps to improve and enhance the teaching-learning

process. The focused and motivated technologically sound teacher can facilitate the tertiary learners to enhance their language learning and enrich their four skills. The interactive teaching-learning method helps to assess and understand the content effectively. Dunkel (1990) rightly acknowledged, the ICT learning encourages the learners' self-esteem, language proficiency and overall academic skills.

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