

English Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age

G. Padmavathi

Asst. Prof. of English, H&S Dept. Teegala Krishna Reddy Engineering College, Medbowli, Meerpet, Hyderabad
500097, India

The word 'innovation' is derived from Latin word 'innovare', which means to change something new. In other words it can be said that 'innovation' involves the practical implementation of new ideas.

Due to tremendous progress in information and communication technology, the scenario of contemporary teaching techniques is entirely changed. And the teacher of 21st century should shed traditional concepts and techniques of classroom teaching and should adopt the recent and innovative teaching techniques.

Teaching English depends on the potential excellence, skills and update knowledge of English teachers. The role of English teacher in present context has remarkably changed because of various factors such as social, cultural, economic and technology developments across the globe.

The subject of teaching English at this level is very wide and the difficulties the teacher faces are at large. Due to globalization the world is changing rapidly, hence a teacher has to improve and update knowledge of innovative techniques to meet the demand of changing era.

English language teachers must be innovative, imaginative, and resourceful and have thorough knowledge of the subject and adopt new techniques to change socio-economic status of the country.

Computer assisted language learning:

Language learning software was first created in 1960, concordance started in 1969, and the artificial intelligence programme specifically designed for language learning appeared in 1976. Computer games for language learning emerged in 1988, e-mail project were used by 1988. The internet knowledge resources were first reported in 1974.

Computer assisted language learning plays a vital role in teaching English at tertiary level. While computer has grown more powerful and multimedia has become more integrated, CALL. The major focus of CALL is on receptive skills. The internet is mainly a reading and listening to audio and video files. Though the limited access of CALL, it reached its full potential.

I. Blogs

Classroom outside the classroom:

Blog is derived from weblog. It is a diary or regular opinion columns posted on the internet. In blog, the writer posts diary entry which others can read and comment on it.

Weblogging is for learners' autonomy. The blogs are used in two main ways in English language teaching. The first, learners can be encouraged to write and post their blogs. If learners are learning to write journals or engaged in other form of extensive writing in the classroom, it is the right place to check their ability of writing. The learners are asked to post their blogs to create wider and more meaningful audience for their writing. The experience of

creating publicly available blogs may be motivating their learners and encourage to develop the new set of writing strategies.

The second, the most common in the language learning, the teacher can write the main blog entries, which learners can then comment on them. Even teacher can send assignments or projects to students on the taught topics, by which students can complete the work and send back to teachers. It is very easy for the teacher to access the work through the blog and students can rectify their mistakes. So, the blog can encourage teachers to control teaching outside the classroom.

II. Social networking

Social networking websites are started in 2003, and it is the most popular way to network. In July 2006, for instance, a social networking site- MySpace received more hits than Google (Gefter 2006). Other well known social networking sites include Face book, Friendster, Bebo and YouTube. In addition to general social networking sites, there are more specific sites, for instance, mytep allows English language teacher to network. Most social sites have group creation facilities which teachers can use to set up outside class discussion environment (Thelwall 2008) and YouTube and Flicter provide opportunities to improve communication skills as well as language learning. For example, learners can be encouraged to make a video of their presentation and post it in the public domain on YouTube and learners can use sharing sites to find and exchange resources with other learners (Godwin-Jones 2005).

III. Wikis

A wiki is a web based platform for collaborative writing. It is used within a private domain as well as public domain for collaborative. The important feature of wikis is particularly used for language learning which record of all drafts is. This emphasizes and focuses on the writing process as well as written products.

An example of a private wiki used for language learning can be found in Mak et al (forthcoming), who describe a wiki based project to produce a school brochure for parents at a Hong Kong secondary school within the public domain. Learners can be asked to be collaborative as class to produce a Wikipedia entry (McDonald 2007). Such project promotes peer to peer collaboration, increase motivation, empower learners to construct knowledge, and enable progress assessment (Zorko 2007).

IV. Massively Multi- Player Online Games

Game based learning has many faceted benefits motivation, critical thinking, and engagement in learning. Games can be either designed especially for language learning objectives from existing well-known games like the Sims (Purushotam 2005) within the latter paradigm: One of

the most promising approaches involving web 2.0 games, called massively multi player online games or MMPOG.

The first gives a platform for an online game for millions, and second is particularly user created virtual world where user can interact in much the same way with the real world. It is a very difficult task to engage the learner in extensive communication in English outside the classroom, but the games provide large scale opportunities for interaction.

V. Mobile Phone Assisted language learning

Mobile phones are considered as miniature computers because of its additional facilities like texting, gaming, email and recording.

Mobile Phone Assisted language learning covers PDAs, iPods and wireless computing. MPALL applications consist 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.

The most important features of Mobile Phone Assisted language learning are- social interactivity, context portability, sensitivity, connectivity, individuality and immediacy.

Due to greater opportunities of Computer Assisted Language learning, more and more language learning is likely taking place outside classroom setting.

Digital age language learning:

The powerful information and communication technologies available have opened up new social and educational opportunities, creating new needs and requiring the development of new skills. 'The development of literacy and communication skills in new online media is critical to success in almost all walks of life.' (Shetzer and Warschauer 1999:171)

Digital age language learning, this new concept focuses on the need of adopting new technologies to incorporate digital literacy skills to language curriculum.

Digital age language teachers have four important responsibilities:

1. To know the availability of the online resources and to make language learning effective.
2. Context based selections of the resources according to students group and develops suitable activities that will create opportunities for enhancing both language and digital skills.
3. Need to teach the skills necessary to function in the digital age, including reading and writing digital text and communicating and publishing online.
4. Digital literacy skills are done seamlessly and in an integrated manner so that the language course is a coherent whole rather than a collection of loose components.

Some important characteristics of digital age:

1. Authentic resources and activities.
2. Online books.
3. Collaboration and communication.

4. Hypermedia.
5. Skills of integration.
6. Just in time learning.
7. Knowledge.
8. Language, style, registers.
9. Multimedia.
10. Netiquette.
11. Online tools.
12. Production.
13. Reading.
14. Spell checks.
15. Text manipulation.
16. Web page publication.

Language skills need to be combined with digital skills in order to be useful in the 21st century. Taking in to account both present and future needs of students will result in curricula and teaching that are up to date, interesting motivating and relevant for digital age.

The multimedia language lab:

Multimedia language lab is developed to respond to students for 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.

This tool can develop all four skills of language. Silverman and Hins (2009) found that both English language learners and native speakers who used video clips to illustrate vocabulary items showed greater improvements in vocabulary knowledge than those who did not receive the multimedia instructions. Even students can improve their vocabulary by playing games and puzzles on computer.

1. Writing: On internet, there are many websites where one can get exposure to write article, short stories and poems. Students can write and get responses from peer group of experts for further developments.
2. Listening: By listening recorded talks of experts and native speakers, lectures of eminent persons and English sound track movies such as 'pride and prejudice' 'water lilies' 'ghost and plays of shakespeare's can enhance listening ability and improve their interest in learning. And listen native speaker records and make self correction by listening to the correct responses and learn proper pronunciation, stress and intonation by self control.
3. Speaking: Speaking skills are improved by getting instructions on soft skills and involving oneself in the talk show chart and many more group activities.

Language laboratory has following facilities to enhance learners' skills: online tutorials, teaching materials-audio recording, video recording, computer, LCD, soft skills' teaching software, external web location, games and quizzes, tests, interactive teaching tips for common errors and pronunciation, functional grammar, building vocabulary power & group discussion.

In the present scenario it is time to shed away our post colonial indignation and get into the right track of learning effective language skills.

VI. Audio-visual aids in teaching English

F. M. Noel rightly says, "Good instruction is the foundation of any educational programme. Audio-visual training aids are component parts of that foundation."

Teacher takes help of some instructional aides to teach English more efficiently and successfully. Prof. C.S. Bhandari opines, "Our aim of teaching English is to impart certain skills without making the process of teaching and learning monotonous."

Audio visual aids are effective tools to impart good education. These aids are divided as video, audio and audio-visual aids. Video refers as seeing, audio refers as hearing and audio-visual refers to combination of both.

These aids are CD, DVD, tape recorder, e-book, graphics, pictures, charts and are used to create the requisite interest and motivate the students to learn the language. The main purpose of audio-visual aids is to enable the teachers to make his teaching effective and interesting. Good models are presented before the students to teach effectively. In this way it can be said that audio-visual aids direct sensory experience to the students.

Classification of audio-visual aids:

- Bulletin board
- Flannel board/graphs
- Slides film strips
- Overhead projector
- Tape recorder/gramophone
- Radio
- T.V. / Video

VII. Context Based Approach

Context Based Approach is a substitute to conventional way of teaching grammar in classroom. It is a bridge between knowledge of English grammar and the use of English language in real life communication, instead of memorizing the rules and contextualize them. They can easily differentiate the structure and meaning. By doing so, learners would gradually recognize the right structure for the right context. An elementary exposure to English language and its basic components aims to help the undergraduate students, who are already exposed to the language. Context Based Approach is usage based one, which could be effectively used in CLT. The core objective of the approach is useful in real life communication. The ultimate purpose of the approach is to raise grammatical consciousness, an awareness of the communicative function of grammar, and ability to distinguish between different grammatical systems.

This broad umbrella definition fuses certain techniques of grammar translation method, structural approach to language and communication approach. Like in grammar translation method, students are asked to compare and contrast the meaning of the sentences, like in structural approach, students are asked to identify the right solution for the particular context by group work.

The advantage of using context based approach for teaching grammar is that students would comprehend why a particular rule is applied in a given structure and when best to use that structure in real life context. This would make the students confident of their communication as they would know exactly what they mean by using a particular grammar structure.

The purposed approach would give a boost to communicative approach and help to have command of the language in undergraduate college.

VIII. Conclusion

Due to globalization, English has got the status of global language, world language, and international language. English is a powerful market language and transaction of modernization. The changing scenario of English is impacted on English curriculum and teaching methodologies to cater the need of present era.

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Author's Biography



G. Padmavathi, Asst.Prof.in Teegala Krishna Reddy Engineering College, M. A. and B.A. from OU Hyderabad. Her area of interest is on ELT and English Lit. Working as Editor for the college News letter and Souvenir.