



AN EMERGING NEED FOR USE OF E-LEARNING AND ITS IMPACT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE DURING AND POST COVID ERA

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ABSTRACT

English, as a global language, undoubtedly, enables the people to communicate cogently, keep in touch, do business, and, of course, share their cultural heritage in the modern globalized world. Barring English, no other language has gained such a recognition, especially when it comes to global communication. In India, English is perceived as a status symbol. Even the parents who are unable to afford expensive English medium education, do aspire to send their children in such types of institutes to learn English. Thanks to the information and communication technology (ICT), that has hailed to render English teaching and learning process easily accessible to common people; the lock down during Covid Era proving to be a blessing in disguise for such learning and empowering. In the early days of technical innovations, teaching resources like audio cassettes, popular movie clips, and video clips etc. were used as excellent media to illustrate varieties of spoken English. These resources were, however, considered to be expensive and beyond the reach of common man. Now, with the integration of ELT with technology, E-learning has enabled common man to learn and communicate in English effectively; and the process, once supported with right kind of material and pedagogy under the lens of native wisdom, becomes obviously more enjoyable. Over to that the requisite knowledge and skill simulated through computers have brought a sort of revolution in human learning and emerged as an inseparable trend in

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Education as well as in English teaching and learning. Web-based classes have emerged as the most promising alternative to study English. Such advancements in E-Learning are providing opportunities to create well-designed, learner-centered, interactive, affordable, efficient, and flexible learning. Needless to emphasize, E-learning, today, has truly hailed to contribute to a plethora of new possibilities in ELT. The very process is, however, not, at all, without its own challenges which, of course, need to be taken care of. I have, through this research paper, tried to undertake an assessment of these emerging trends of E-Learning, and its impact on teaching and learning of English language.

Key Words: Challenge, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) English Language Teaching (ELT) Methods, Trends.

1. INTRODUCTION

Past Trends in teaching English

Language teaching in general and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular has tremendously changed over the last few decades. To commence with, it had been, more like a challenge for the language teachers to teach a language which was completely new, when it was introduced as an essential part of the curriculum. They taught English as a ‘Know-ledge’ subject not as a ‘Skill’ subject because their main aim was to teach them just to pass some examination. So they adopted ‘Grammar-Translation Method’ in which the teacher used to explain every word to students in the native language to make them understand and learn English. Despite the fact that this method ignores the development of oral proficiency of the learners, it is still popular with majority of the teachers, may be in little modified form. As the need arose, many other methods of ELT viz the bilingual method, the direct method, the audio-lingual method, and the structural approach found their way creeping in. None of these methods, was, however, found to be a perfect one. Since then, ELT seems to be swinging like a pendulum between the extremes of methods as the language teachers have ever been in search of better and more effective ones. Moreover, the ELT trends that were very popular in the past, have vanished today and have been substituted by innovative ELT methods.

Emerging Trends in Teaching and Learning of English

The 21st century confronts us with new choices, opportunities and challenges due to the all-pervading technology into all spheres of life. In this era, the educational institutions cannot remain mere venues for the transmission of a prescribed set of information from teacher to student over a fixed period of time rather the educational institutions must promote “learning to learn” i.e. the acquisition of knowledge and skills that make possible continuous learning



over the lifetime. So it becomes the responsibility of the teachers to shape up accordingly to meet the demands of the day. The need of the day is to equip people with proficiency in the English language and this is possible only with a proper blend of edification and e-learning tools (modern technologies). Traditional teaching and learning paradigms have been shaken by the impact of the integration of e-learning tools into educational practices. E-learning is a diverse range of technological tools and systems that can be utilized by capable and creative teachers to enhance teaching and learning situations. These are used to make learning more interesting, motivating, stimulating and meaningful to the students. These tools have been touted as potentially powerful enabling tools for educational change and reform as they are making marked inroads into the combination of digital technologies and English language learning.

Definition of E-learning

E-learning or electronic learning has been defined in a number of different ways in literature. In general, it is the expression broadly used to describe “instructional content or learning experience delivered or enabled by electronic technologies (Wagner, Hassanein & Head 2008)¹. According to Steeples and others (2002) E-learning use information and communication technologies to enable access to online learning/teaching resources. It covers a wide set of applications and processes, such as Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration.² ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device , radio, tv, cell phone , computer, hardware and so on to teach and learn English.

Advantages:

1. E-learning helps in developing the basic four skills for learning English (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing). All the four basic skills of learning a language are equally important. Listening is one of the most important skills while learning English. E-learning includes all the senses to learn English in a better way. It provides audios and videos to listen and watch as much as you can, which improve students with weak listening skills. E-learning provides unprecedented opportunities in developing their reading skills, due to the unrestricted availability of course materials online.
2. E-learning plays an important role in promoting flexible learning. Through E-learning students have access to the coursework 24 hours/day which gives them more flexibility on time to follow up what they missed in the classroom and it helps to improve their English. With E-learning, both students and teachers can perform their tasks from anywhere.



3. E-learning helps in promoting active and independent learning if it is implemented in the right way. It reduces the effort of teacher and helps students to rely on themselves and have different learning styles of English. Web-based learning promotes active and independent learning.
4. E-learning enhances the efficacy of knowledge and qualifications via ease of access to a huge amount of information.
5. It is able to provide opportunities for relations between learners by the use of discussion forums.
6. E-learning is cost effective in the sense that there is no need for the students or learners to travel.
7. E-learning always takes into consideration the individual learners' differences and help them in learning.
8. E-learning helps compensate for scarcities of academic staff, including instructors or teachers as well as facilitators, lab technicians etc.
9. The use of e-Learning allows self-pacing. For instance, the asynchronous way permits each student to study at his or her own pace .
10. Everyone, who are part time students or are working full time, can take advantage of web-based learning. Part time job doers can pursue their studies through online mode.
11. Now personally, I feel, connected to students 24 hours. If you have access to the net 24x7, you can train your students anytime and from anywhere. This was a blessing in disguise which I felt during lock down.
12. The students can ask doubts easily which sometimes they hesitate during traditional classes.
13. The students have access to the best teachers of the world through e learning.
14. Through these tools, The students can connect, communicate and collaborate online.

Various E-learning tools:

Internet:

Internet is not merely a source of authentic material in English but also a source of information in the form of articles, courses, conferences and many more. The teacher can send and assess the assignments to the students through e-mails or especially designed learning apps and They can also take online exams. Parents can view their children's work online any time. Students do not miss their lessons as now they can see a web cam version online and get worksheets and notes from electronic online whiteboards. Schools are linked in a network and work on projects together and prepare materials online. Every school has got its own website. Many software are also available on Internet that students can use free of cost. "Spelling Bee" is one of those internet resources, which helps the students to spell



English words correctly. The teacher can also choose the level of difficulty that he/ she wants to train his/her students.

Using YouTube:

YouTube videos can be used in an ELT classroom for various aspects of English as to enhance vocabulary, accents, pronunciations, voice modulation etc. The real advantage of YouTube in teaching English is that it offers authentic examples of everyday English used by everyday people. The teacher can use it as a tool for improving their Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. The teacher can select any part of a movie appropriate to the level of the students and s/he can show those movie clippings to the students. For the first time, s/he can mute the volume and ask the students to watch the movie attentively. Later s/he can ask the students to watch the movie once again and this time s/he can ask the students to frame the dialogues of the movie clippings simultaneously. 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 will add to their creativity as well as their speech. The teacher can also prepare worksheets on the movie clippings in advance and ask the students to complete those worksheets while watching movies. This can prove a good activity to enhance their listening and writing skills.

Skype:

Using Skype provides unlimited possibilities for the teachers and students to collaborate with one another all over the world. It provides immense opportunities for the students in a foreign language class to connect with classes in other countries to practise their Linguistic skills. Through Skype, the teachers can provide mentoring or homework help to the learners. The Students can read, present, or perform for other students and also collaborate with other students on writing or research projects. They can also participate in professional development activities within or outside the school.

Twitter:

Twitter, a gift of Technology, is a social networking application that could help in improving students' English to a greater extent. As an online education technology tool, twitter's impact on engaging students in learning concepts is unlimited. The teacher can use dozens of activities for using an online education technology tool to engage students in classroom activities to develop a better understanding of concepts. The teacher can select any genre for the story and begin the activity with a story opener which is tweeted to the students for contribution to the story line. Once all twitter network participants have contributed to the



development of the story line, the teacher can analyze their work. This involves editing, story structure, creative writing, and proper use of grammar. 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. The teacher can also conduct Online Debates through Twitter. It can be done with the students of the same classroom or the students of the different classrooms on the class twitter network.

Smart-boards:

Interactive whiteboards or digital boards are good replacements for traditional whiteboards or flipcharts as they provide ways to show students everything which can be presented on a computer's desktop (educational software, web sites, and others). 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. The teachers and the students can save their classwork for future references.

Mobile Phones:

The use of mobile phones as a learning tool has a wide variety of applications. The teacher can ask the students to make a photo documentary using the camera function on their mobile phones. The teacher can assign a theme for the documentary to the students. 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. Instead of taking out a dictionary, the students can simply use their translator, and instead of trawling through books for a piece of literature, they can find the book online and be directed to a specific word.

Podcasting:

Today the students are listening to news clips, music, and video clips via the Web. They are no longer watching movies at the theatre or on the TV, they are watching via computers and hand held DVD players. 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 on portable media players and computers. Utilizing podcasts in the classroom is very easy. The teacher can download many free ESL podcasts on the Internet to use in class. S/he 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 students can also learn the use of intonation and stress.

Blog:

One can create a blog to post regular thoughts, experiences etc. To a web page creating a community of learners around a specific topic. The readers can comment on the topic. Blogging has become increasingly popular, especially in the realm of education as they are a great way to share information and generate discussion. Instead of text books and traditional methods, many educators prefer using these new techniques to help students and gain experience with various forms of social media. Setting up a course blog doesn't have to be complicated. Educators can use a free platform such as Blogspot, Wordpress, or Tumblr to host the blog. Nowadays, blogs can also display photos and some people are using them with audios and even videos, The teacher should encourage the students to visit blog frequently. S/he should respond to students' posts quickly, writing a short comment related to the content S/he should also ask questions about what the learner writes to create stimulus for writing. Writing to the blog could be required, and it may form part of the class assessment. Students should be encouraged to post their writing homework on the blog instead of only giving it to the teacher. Moreover, many other ICT resources like Reading Rockets, Oxford Owl, OUP etc. can be used to learn English effectively. Hot Potatoes software, www.teachertube.com, www.eslhelpdesk.com are most popular podcasts to learn English. In addition to the above tools many online Voice Recording Tools like vocaro, audiopol are the simplest tools to learn accurate pronunciation. The teachers can become the best resource persons by creating their own Mind Maps for all the topics by using Bubbl.us. writeandimprove.com is another new technology to learn English. The students and teacher can use kahoot.com for game based learning.

Disadvantages of E-learning

Every aspect has its own pros and cons. In the same line, E learning also has its own demerits. In spite of these advantages, E-learning is not free from criticism. For example, Oppenheimer, (1997), Kraut et al., (1998) have been dubious about the advantages of computers and online learning over traditional classroom teaching methodology³. For the former, computer education does not help learners to think and it kills their creativity. Phipps and Merisotis (1999) state that though the E-learning had many advantages, the dropout rates have been very high when compared with traditional class-room⁴. The reference here is to distance type of E-learning. This goes in line with what our study is trying to uncover. While addressing the various issues faced by the students' community in virtual learning, Larsen et al. (in Elango, 2008) observed that online students may not be able to determine their

academic needs, concerns, and other pedagogical attributes of education.⁵ It was also observed by Jana, and Ramos that those who thrived in the traditional classroom or who enjoyed face-to-face lectures may find it difficult with online learning and vice versa (in Elango 2008). The most noticeable condemnation of e-Learning is the complete absence of vital personal interactions, not only between learners and instructors, but also among colleague learners.⁶ (Young, 1997; Burdman, 1998).

The disadvantages of e-learning that have been given by studies include the following:

1. E-learning as a method of education makes the learners undergo contemplation, remoteness, as well as lack of interaction or relation .
2. With respect to clarifications, offer of explanations, as well as interpretations, the e-learning method might be less effective than the traditional method of learning .
3. When it comes to improvement in communication skills of learners, e-learning as a method might have a negative effect.
4. Since tests for assessments in e-learning are possibly done with the use of proxy, it will be difficult, if not impossible to control or regulate the unwanted activities like cheating.
5. E-learning may also probably be misled to piracy and plagiarism, predisposed by inadequate selection skills, as well as the ease of copy and paste.
6. E-learning may also deteriorate institution's socialization role and also the role of instructors as the directors of the process of education.
7. E-learning can only be useful to learners who are motivated.
8. A big number of students do not have Internet connection and therefore the students are unable to fulfil the online requirements.
9. Most of the online assessments are limited to questions that are only objective in nature.
10. There is also the problem of the extent of security of online learning programs.
11. The authenticity of a particular student's work is also a problem as anyone can do a project rather than the actual student itself.
12. The assessments that are computer marked generally have a tendency of being only knowledge-based and not necessarily practicality-based.

CONCLUSION:

According to Almosa (2002), regardless of all the disadvantages of e-learning, there are a lot of benefits which inspire its use and also encourage the search for ways to reduce its disadvantages.⁷ Language learning is generally a complex process and in this process, language teachers cannot be far away from the technology. With the changing needs of the hour, technology is developing day-by-day. I would like to say that although my proposal is



not radically new, but many of us in the field of language teaching must be unwilling to realize and accept that the use of E-Learning in ELT setting is better equipped to enhance English Teaching and learning skills. We are living in the 21st century and it is the age of technological advancement. As the world progresses, the use of e-learning, electronic devices, internet, computers in teaching and learning process increase too and we have to synchronize ourselves with it and increase our abilities to be able to work with technologies to boost our knowledge. Our approach in this regard should be eclectic and pragmatic. Suitable E- learning methods should be adopted by the teachers according to their needs. They should select features of any methods, which may be effective in particular circumstances. The more teachers and learners get familiar with technologies, the more they can use and incorporate them with their teaching techniques. These technologies provide teachers with practical and creative ideas and make them create their own eclectic methods. Within scope of my short article, I could not explore all the aspects of the use of E-Learning, but tried to indicate broadly how its use impacts on teaching and learning of English language learning in general and now there is an emerging need to shift the emphasis on the use of E-Learning in ELT.

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