INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVISATIONS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

English language teaching has undergone tremendous changes over the last few years. Many career alternatives are nowadays emerging, which are based on communication skills, soft skills, technical skills, interpersonal skills, etc. The onus has shifted over the years from a grammar based approach to a more communicative and functional focus. In the last few years, Content and Language Integrated Learning has assumed centre stage. There has been a tremendous emphasis on e-learning, content development, use of digital tools, etc. The student is no longer a passive listener; rather the teacher assumes the role of the facilitator. Learning English, which is a second language, has to be made enjoyable for the students, which is best possible with the maximized used of digital materials. Hence, the paper focuses on the novel and improvised tools and techniques that a teacher should adopt for the teaching of English language in the changed scenario.

Key Words: Innovations in English Language Teaching, Digital Teaching, Communication, Technology in Teaching.

English language has been taught since ages. But today it needs many alterations and improvisations to cater to the citizens of the globalised world. Education is the field, which has been deeply affected by technological innovations. Only those teachers, who update and upgrade themselves with these innovations that come their way, will stand the test of time. The objectives behind the change in teaching and learning methods have been from the conventional Grammar & Translation Method, to the learning of English language as means of communication with the virtually shrunk world.

There has been a huge paradigm shift which has encompassed all areas of English Language Teaching. The barrier of location for people in different parts of the world has been reduced by some of the latest technologies such as the web, internet, mobile devices such as Personal Digital Assistant (PDA's), iPhone etc. (Sarica & Cavus, 2008). The onus has shifted from the syntactical to the functional; and from the manual to the digital. Besides, the subjective approach has been replaced by the contextual method. The constructivist approach focuses on students solving assignments at the end of the lesson to consolidate the teaching and learning of the learners. Furthermore, the student is the focal point and the teacher becomes the facilitator, who promotes creativity and boosts confidence. Thus, through the present paper, the researcher has attempted to prove that the latest technologies and application based innovative and improvised teaching-learning is the need of the hour today.

Web based technologies provide various new possibilities and latest trends for teachers and students. Internet based learning has recently been one of the fastest growing aspects in the field of education. It is widely accepted that advances in information technology and new developments in learning science provide opportunities to create well-designed, learner-centered, interactive, affordable, efficient, flexible e-learning environments (Khan, 2005) Hence we have to elicit the latest methodologies and apply the newest innovations for catering to the new breed of modern day learners. The following factors may prove beneficial in introducing these variations to these new generation learners:

Blended learning

As teachers combine digital media with more traditional forms of teaching, their course materials and resources reflect the trend. Teachers should increasingly include technology-mediated learning in their courses. With reference to blended learning in higher education, it has been defined as: 'a combination of technology and classroom instruction in a flexible approach to learning that recognizes the benefits of delivering some training and assessment online but also uses other modes to make up a complete training programme which can improve learning outcomes and/or save costs' (Banados, 2006: 534).

There are several advantages of blended-learning, and perhaps the biggest is that it can be done anytime / anywhere. Rapid growth in communication has given us gadgets which can aid such learning. On-the-move training enables students to study in cafes, trains, airports or any waiting area for that matter. Such training using mobile technologies could be in the form of interactive gap-fill type exercises, a short quiz or test, or teaching listening skills to the students through podcasts or viewing vodcasts (video podcasts).

Blog Writing

A blog is an online journal or informational website displaying information in the reverse chronological order, with latest posts appearing first. It is a platform where a writer or even a group of writers share their views on an individual subject. **We investigated blogging as a form of personal communication and expression, with a specific interesting uncovering the range of motivations driving individuals to create and maintain blogs (Nardi et al., 2004). Blogs are well suited to serve as on-line personal journals for students, particularly since they normally enable uploading and linking of files. Language learners could use a personal blog, linked to a course, as an electronic portfolio, showing development over time. By publishing the blog on the internet, the student has the possibility of writing for their classmates. Pinkman (2005) indicates that blogging becomes communicative and interactive when participants assume multiple roles in the writing process, as writers who write and post, as readers/reviewers who respond to other writers' posts, and as writer-readers who, returning to their own posts, react to criticism of their own posts.**

Blogs aid in language learning as they provide the readers a chance to comment on what they read. Self-publishing encourages ownership and responsibility on the part of students, who may be more thoughtful (in content and structure) if they know they are writing for a real audience.

Mobile learning

Research has already revealed that the young generation is more techno savvy and learners faster through gadgets. Mobile phone learners can surf on the web and they can also learn vocabulary from the dictionary that cell phones include. Mobile learning is also defined as any service or facility that supplies learner with general electronic information and educational content that aids in acquisition of knowledge regardless of location and time (Lehner & Nosekabel, 2002).

Online resources are more accessible with a mobile app or a mobile-friendly version. Word able (Playlingo Ltd. with Cambridge University Press) turns vocabulary-learning into a fun, competitive game you could play with your friends. It has built-in, spaced repetition and active-recall learning to make new words stick. Essential English (Oxford University Press) uses mobile technology to provide free resources for teachers and students, including flashcards, phrasebooks, lesson plans and activities. Meanwhile, Tri Pro English Website and Mobile Apps helps learners to practice their listening through free, high-quality recordings divided into levels and coupled with comprehension questions.

Multi-literacies and trans-languaging

English is used in global communities as a common language of communication, alongside other languages. Knowledge of other languages is an added advantage rather than diminishing factor. Nowadays teachers are encouraging learners to use their own languages. This requires complex social and cognitive skills. English-only classrooms are slowly becoming a thing of the past and are rapidly being replaced by bi-lingual and multi-lingual classes. Teachers are using pedagogical strategies that encourage inclusive education within a supportive multilingual learning environment. One has to be aware of beliefs about speakers of other languages and how they can impact on establishing and maintaining an inclusive learning environment. The teacher assesses the individual learners in a manner that takes their linguistic background into account.

English is, by its nature, a language of multilingualism and multilinguals, and English has established itself alongside other languages in many speech communities around the world. This process takes on different forms and intensity and generates a good deal of intellectual debate in the field of applied linguistics. (Brutt-Griffler & Kim, 2016); (Kramsch, 2016); (Seidlhofer, 2011); (Widdowson, 2003)

Online and Digital Media

Because of all the exposure to the online and digital media, language learning has been drastically improvised. Online environment helps to improve the target language, encourages learner independence, and has great potential for the development of intercultural and communicative skills. Students have now learnt to work independently from the teacher to find the information they need and do a lot of work on their own. They can practice at their own pace, work with each other in groups and actually enjoy the learning of English language. Meredith J.C. Warren affirms the potential of technology to engage students, increase interaction and "enter into dialogue with one another". (Warren: 2016)

Writing on the pedagogical potential of videogames and their interactivity, (Hergenrader: 2016) articulates them as a "robust, multi-valent text capable of sustaining many different

types of readings". The continuous advancements in technology open new possibilities and challenges of learning and teaching in the digital world.

Teaching through Role-Play
The grammatical and rule based teaching has to be replaced by the teaching of functional and applied English. Situational and contextual teaching of English language will actually help the student to use English appropriately in the given conditions. Interactive, two way teaching needs to be encouraged and promoted to give hands on experience to the students. Joanna Budden in British Council Teaching English (BBC) on her article with the title Role Play said that role-play is any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation.(Budden)

The role play would seem to be the ideal activity in which students could use their English creatively and it aims to stimulate a conversation situation in which students might find themselves and give them an opportunity to practice and develop their communication skill. (Donough and Show: 1993)

Thus, the teacher has to involve students in role-plays to improve their communication skills in English and to develop their confidence. Teacher has to give various contexts and ask them to participate in role play and conversations. Teacher plays the role of facilitator.

Overcoming limitations
Several lacunas arise when a teacher tries to innovate or improvise. Wedell (2009) argues that this is because of a failure to take into account lessons from innovation theory. He is referring to thinking about who will use the innovation, how they will use it and what barriers there might be in successful adoption of an innovation. In simple terms, he is talking about who is likely to be using these innovations and under what conditions. This consideration of innovation and its relation to context is 'situated' and therefore should be concerned with the development of an appropriate methodology (Holliday: 1994).

For appropriate and suitable methodology to be actually implemented and learning to happen, tools need to be sufficiently flexible so that they can be tailored to specific contexts and facilitate the kind of growth desired. According to Edge and Mann, we can bring innovation by keeping the following in mind:-
   • The practice of continuous quality improvement within one's teaching.
   • Innovation is based on many small changes rather than radical changes.
   • Ideas for change and improvement come from teachers and students themselves
   • Teachers take ownership for their work and related improvements. (Edge, J. & Mann, 2013)

Students learn better with the use of technology. Learning English through the web, using new trends will make students to learn the language. Web based technologies provide various new possibilities for students to explore different facets of English language. The general apprehension for second language acquisition, (in this case for English), goes when the teacher uses the ICT tools with which the student is much more familiar. Thus, the

student no longer avoids learning English , rather gets more fascinated towards it because of these innovative methods.

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