

## Globalization and Improving the Teaching and Learning of English Language through ICT

Dr. Chirag Patel - Asst. Professor, Head Dept. of English, Madhav University, Rajasthan, India.

**Abstract:** *The influence of information and communication technology (ICT) on language learning has been acknowledged globally such that the integration of ICT in language learning has become indispensable in today's teaching learning environment. This is because of the fundamental role it plays in the advancement of the frontiers of knowledge in language learning. This is more so when the world is fast becoming a global village where the use of modern technological gadgets to improve language learning has become imperative. This paper examines some stereotyped but strenuous methods of language learning and highlights some of the prospects (expanding access to and improving the quality of teaching and learning, enhancing language competence and learners' interaction and verbalization, among others) derivable from using ICT for optimal performance. Some of the challenges (no internet facilities, erratic power supply, overcrowded classrooms and so on) facing the use of ICT in language learning in a developing country like India are also discussed. Provision of internet facilities in Educational Institutions, regular supply of electricity are some of the recommendations made to improve language learning through ICT.*

**Keywords:** *Language, multimedia, language teaching (FLT), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Fulcrum.*

### Introduction:

The English language is generally acknowledged as a global language, in view of its numerous functions and preference over several other languages around the globe. English is not only the mother tongue in Britain but also the mother tongue of several other countries like Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand, to mention just a few. It is also used as a second and a foreign language (EFL) in many countries like India and many other developing countries. Based on the foregoing, it has become imperative for English Language teachers and learners to realize the fundamental role of information and communication technology as a catalyst in the advancement of the frontiers of knowledge in language acquisition which is a prerequisite to the viability of the global economic development. The innovations that ICT has brought in teaching-learning process include: E-learning, e-communication, quick access to information, online student registration, online advertisement, reduced burden of keeping hardcopy, networking with resourceful persons, etc. However, the presence of all these factors increased the chance of excellent integration of ICT in teaching-learning process. Therefore, the training of teaching staff in the pedagogical issues and administrators in administration should be increased if teachers and administrators are to be convinced of the value of using ICT in their teaching-learning process and administration.

### The Role of ICT in Teaching and Learning:

We are living in a constantly evolving digital world. ICT has an impact on nearly every aspect of our lives - from working to socializing, learning to playing. The digital age has transformed the way

young people communicate, network, seek help, access information and learn. We must recognize that young people are now an online population and access is through a variety of means such as computers, TV and mobile phones.

As technology becomes more and more embedded in our culture, we must provide our learners with relevant and contemporary experiences that allow them to successfully engage with technology and prepare them for life after Educational Institutions.

It is widely recognized that learners are motivated and purposefully engaged in the learning process when concepts and skills are underpinned with technology and sound pedagogy. Learning and Teaching Scotland aims to provide resources for practitioners, parents and pupils to engage with these technologies in order to inform and enhance the learning experience.

### **The Importance of using ICT in Teaching-Learning Process:**

Several studies argue that the use of new technologies in the classroom is essential for providing opportunities for students to learn to operate in an information age. It is evident, as argued that traditional educational environments do not seem to be suitable for preparing learners to function or be productive in the workplaces of today's society. She claimed that organizations that do not incorporate the use of new technologies in institutions cannot seriously claim to prepare their students for life in the twenty-first century. This argument is supported by Grimus , who pointed out that “by teaching ICT skills in higher educational institutions the students are prepared to face future developments based on proper understanding” (p. 362). Similarly, reference reported that “what is now known about learning provides important guidelines for uses of technology that can help students and teachers develop the competencies needed for the twenty-first century” (p. 206). ICT originally is applied to serve as a means of improving efficiency in the educational process. Furthermore, it has been shown that the use of ICT in education can help improve memory retention, increase motivation and generally deepens understanding. ICT can also be used to promote collaborative learning, including role playing, group problem solving activities and articulated projects. ICT allow the establishment of rich networks of interconnections and relations between individuals. Some authors maintain that technology has the power to change the ways students learn and professors teach. Still other authors posit that technology can “revolutionize” the learning process. In other words, ICT extend professors’ and students’ capabilities, and their well determined use can transform roles and rules in the classroom. Many people recognize ICTs as catalysts for change; change in working conditions, handling and exchanging information, teaching methods, learning approaches, scientific research, and in accessing information. Lecturers could use ICT to facilitate learning, critical thinking and peer discussions. Reference, recognize that technology-based teaching may not be essential in all classes but generally it is most facilitative as a result of providing relevant examples and demonstrations; changing the orientation of the classroom; preparing students for employment; increasing flexibility of delivery; increasing access; and satisfying public demands for efficiency. “The whole purpose of using technology in teaching is to give better value to students”. This better value should also impact the learners/students’ performance. Reference [16], argue that ICT holds much promise for use in curriculum delivery. Thus, technology can effectively improve teaching and learning abilities, hence increasing learners’ performances. ICT has the means to aid in the preparation of learners by developing cognitive skills, critical thinking skills, information access, evaluation and synthesizing skills. In addition, ICT provides fast and accurate feedback to learners. It is also believed that the use of ICTs in education could promote „deep“ learning and allow educators to respond better to different needs of different learners. ICT-supported learning environments could be beneficial to a constructivist teaching approach.

**ICT in Communicative/Learning modes:**

In any teaching-learning situation, learners can respond at ease for communicative mode of teaching. According to Madhavi (2010), communicative method for learning languages combines extensively, high-quality content with flexible and interactive multimedia technology. This comprehensive language learning method can act as a total solution for self-teaching, as well as teaching support to formal courses. Through a wide range of activities, a variety of skills could be developed in a learner. A learner needs to communicate in oral and written comprehension, as well as oral and written expression.

In order to achieve those stated objectives, Madhavi (2010) has identified three possible learning modes as:

- The Guided Mode: this offers a step-by-step course. When organized into learning paths, this mode focuses on the acquisition of functional language patterns across a broad spectrum of themes. In this mode, a learner at the Junior Secondary Educational Institutions (JSS) level in India or lower intermediate level in some other countries can learn pronunciation, grammar, functions of words and vocabulary by applying the rules.
- The Free-to-roam: this gives a learner the option of learning by topic or by linguistic skill. This mode is particularly useful for learners who are at the senior secondary Educational Institutions (SSS) in India or intermediate level of learning and also for teachers who want to familiarize themselves with the content available to them.
- The dynamic mode: here, the advanced learners can immediately be immersed in an authentic learning context through the various dialogues and videos which illustrate every day and professional life and line with current pedagogical trends, familiarize learners with the voicing of the language using recordings made by native speakers.

Closely related to the communicative/learning modes is the use of language laboratory which can be used to enhance language teaching and learning processes through teacher's console with language learning software.

This serves as a platform for learning, practicing and producing language of teaching. The functional use of language laboratory according to Schrum (2000) is attributed to the following objectives:

- To maintain good linguistic competence through accuracy in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.
- To develop pragmatic competence, to understand the grammar form, function and state of normality.
- To enrich the discourse competence, to prepare the learner to be able to produce contextualize written text and speech.
- To acquire strategic competence to use both spoken and written language to use in a wide range of communicating strategies.

In teaching phonetics for example, the sound of English language can be written down using the International

Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for adequate exercises. The use of minimal pair perception exercises (sheep – ship, zeal – seal, ten – then, bird – board, shout – tout, port – pot) helps learners learn the sound of English. This can also be well practiced on pronunciation exercises with the help of software or by using CDs in language laboratory.

**Influence of ICT on Language Teaching and Learning:**

Many arguments have been advanced on the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on the teaching and learning of language. While some are of the opinion that it would make students smarter and enhance the teaching and learning of language, others posited that there is no certainty about its possibilities because many educators are not yet familiar with the technology to use and how to apply it in the teaching – learning process (Morse, 1972). For instance, there has been a great deal of debates in the past few decades on the pedagogical worth of computers in the classroom. While some researchers have suggested that technology often remains antiquated, limited to the simple writing assignments and browsing the internet (Cuban, 2001), others have suggested that this has been due in part, to educators' limited knowledge of the role played by communication technology in language instruction, a situation which shows that the use of computer is only a medium in which a variety of methods, approaches and pedagogical philosophies are implemented (Garret, 1991). This implies that the use of ICT in language education has its merits and challenges.

**The use of ICT in Language Education:**

Information and communication technology (ICT) is of immense help in virtually all areas of teaching and learning. In the field of language education, there is now so much emphasis on on-line learning, which has been seen as the great liberator by freeing both teachers and students to accomplish learning in new and exciting ways by sourcing information from the Internet (Schrum, 2000). Other prospects of ICT in language can be summarized as expanding access to language programmes, improving the quality of teaching and learning, providing access to current/ up-to-date materials and offering teachers and learners an avalanche of materials in different modes.

Specifically, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2006) stated amongst others that

- English lessons that incorporate multimedia applications can exert powerful motivation and provide bored students with exciting new ways to learn.

- The use of ICTs enhances English Language competence as well as the quality of learners' experience.

- The effective use of ICTs removes the time and space limitations found in traditional teaching, as classroom dialogue can now extend beyond the time and space constraints.

- It allows students to learn more autonomously and thereby raises self-esteem and confidence.

- In enhances learners' interaction, verbalization and involvement in group collaborative learning.

It is pertinent to note that television with its array of foreign channels, as provided by DSTV and other cable channels can be of tremendous help in language acquisition. Information and communication technology helps the students to perform better in language learning than with regimented traditional classroom teaching. Online learning has the potentials to offer anyone with an internet connection access to a wide expanse but inexpensive education just as e-learning and computer allow Educational Institutions to deliver classes to students anywhere in the world (Educause, 2010).

**Enhancing the quality and accessibility of education:**

ICT increases the flexibility of delivery of education so that learners can access knowledge anytime and from anywhere. It can influence the way students are taught and how they learn as now the processes are learner driven and not by teachers. This in turn would better prepare the learners for lifelong learning as well as to improve the quality of learning. In concert with geographical flexibility, technology-facilitated educational programs also remove many of the temporal

constraints that face learners with special needs (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Students are starting to appreciate the capability to undertake education anywhere, anytime and anyplace.

One of the most vital contributions of ICT in the field of education is- Easy Access to Learning. With the help of ICT, students can now browse through e-books, sample examination papers, previous year papers etc. and can also have an easy access to resource persons, mentors, experts, researchers, professionals, and peers-all over the world. This flexibility has heightened the availability of just-in-time learning and provided learning opportunities for many more learners who previously were constrained by other commitments (Young, 2002). Wider availability of best practices and best course material in education, which can be shared by means of ICT, can foster better teaching. ICT also allows the academic institutions to reach disadvantaged groups and new international educational markets. As well as learning at anytime, teachers are also finding the capabilities of teaching at any time to be opportunistic and able to be used to advantage. Mobile technologies and seamless communications technologies support 24x7 teaching and learning. Choosing how much time will be used within the 24x7 envelope and what periods of time are challenges that will face the educators of the future (Young, 2002). Thus, ICT enabled education will ultimately lead to the democratization of education. Especially in developing countries like India, effective use of ICT for the purpose of education has the potential to bridge the digital divide.

#### **ICT enhancing learning motivation:**

ICTs can enhance the quality of education in several ways, by increasing learner motivation and engagement, by facilitating the acquisition of basic skills, and by enhancing teacher training. ICTs are also transformational tools which, when used appropriately, can promote the shift to a learner centered environment. ICTs, especially computers and Internet technologies, enable new ways of teaching and learning rather than simply allow teachers and students to do what they have done before in a better way. ICT has an impact not only on what students should learn, but it also plays a major role on how the students should learn. Along with a shift of curricula from “content-centered” to “competence-based”, the mode of curricula delivery has now shifted from “teacher centered” forms of delivery to “student-centered” forms of delivery. ICT provides- Motivation to Learn. ICTs such as videos, television and multimedia computer software that combine text, sound, and colourful moving images can be used to provide challenging and authentic content that will engage the student in the learning process. Interactive radio likewise makes use of sound effects, songs, dramatizations, comic skits, and other performance conventions to compel the students to listen and become more involved in the lessons being delivered. Some of the parents of the respondents opined that their children were feeling more motivated than before in such type of teaching in the classroom rather than the stereotype 45 minutes lecture. They were of the view that this type of learning process is much more effective than the monotonous monologue classroom situation where the teacher just lectures from a raised platform and the students just listen to the teacher. Learning approaches using contemporary ICTs provide many opportunities for constructivist learning through their provision and support for resource-based, student centered settings and by enabling learning to be related to context and to practice (Berge, 1998; Barron, 1998). The teachers could make their lecture more attractive and lively by using multi-media and on the other hand the students were able to capture the lessons taught to them easily. As they found the class very interesting, the teachings also retained in their mind for a longer span which supported them during the time of examination. More so than any other type of ICT, networked computers with Internet connectivity can increase learner motivation as it combines the media richness and interactivity of other ICTs with the opportunity to connect with real people and to participate in real world events.

**ICT enhancing the scholastic performance:**

Based on the extensive usage of ICTs in education the need appeared to unravel the myth that surrounds the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as an aid to teaching and learning, and the impact it has on students' academic performance. ICTs are said to help expand access to education, strengthen the relevance of education to the increasingly digital workplace, and raise educational quality. However, the experience of introducing different ICTs in the classroom and other educational settings all over the world over the past several decades suggests that the full realization of the potential educational benefits of ICT. The direct link between ICT use and students' academic performance has been the focus of extensive literature during the last two decades. ICT helps students to their learning by improving the communication between them and the instructors (Valasidou and Bousiou, 2005).

The analysis of the effects of the methodological and technological innovations on the students' attitude towards the learning process and on students' performance seems to be evolving towards a consensus, according to which an appropriate use of digital technologies in education can have significant positive effects both on students' attitude and their achievement. Research has shown that the appropriate use of ICTs can catalyze the paradigmatic shift in both content and pedagogy that is at the heart of education reform in the 21st century.

**Problems/Constraints of the use of ICT in Language Education:**

The view that the internet and other forms of information and communication technology are of immense benefit to the education system is incontrovertible. The internet is repository of enormous content but it also contains an equal amount of junk and obscene sites which, if not regulated and censored before students are allowed to work on it, can lead to all forms of moral decadence, especially among teenagers and youths. The teachers are not totally immune from the obscene sites. The success or failure of a teaching – learning situation in language acquisition rests to a large extent on the teacher. However, it has been discovered that many teachers are yet to upgrade or familiarize themselves with ICT and its application in the classroom setting (Morse, 1972).

Considering the above notion, it can be inferred that the integration of ICTs in language education is still being faced by the general apathy on the part of both the learners and the teachers.

In addition, poverty and perhaps economic mismanagement can be seen as great impediments to the viability and sustainability of the use of ICTs in English Language teaching and learning process not only in India but also in some other developing countries.

Furthermore, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA 2000) has identified the following as major constraints to the use of ICTs in language education:

- Electricity, phone lines, internet facilities etc. are either unreliable or expensive.
- Video recorders and other ICTs are locked in storage closets because only few teachers know how to operate and incorporate them into their instructional programmes.
- ICT trained teachers often quit teaching for more lucrative jobs because teaching is not attractive especially in India.
- Poor maintenance of the existing ICT gadgets (where provided) is a debilitating factor against the use of ICT in language education.
- There are no language and computer laboratories in virtually all Educational Institutions in India. Large or overcrowded classes may interfere with the objectives of the use of ICTs..

## Conclusion and Recommendations:

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) cannot be underestimated in language teaching and learning process because emerging technologies make it pertinent and practical to approach learning in ways that have been advocated by scientists, theorists and educational psychologists. It is imperative for modern day teachers and learners to keep abreast of the modern trend at improving teaching and learning of English Language through the use of Information and Communication Technology. Suffice it to say that information and communication technology has revolutionized society globally, including how language instruction is taught and delivered.

The internet in particular has become a conduit where people can learn, share and collaborate in ways not possible many years before now. A great deal of success however comes from preparing students to interact and learn in this internet age. Therefore, if ICT is integrated into the teaching and learning of language, our renewed approach to the teaching and learning of English will go a long way in making ICT a more rewarding partner in the teaching-learning process.

In the light of the foregoing, it is recommended that teachers should upgrade and familiarize themselves in the use and application of ICT facilities in the acquisition of language education.

The commitment and enthusiasm to the teaching and learning of English through the effective use of ICT should be of utmost importance not only to the curriculum planners and education policy makers but also the teachers and the learners of English.

In order to facilitate the integration of ICT into language learning, the following should be put in place:

- Constant/regular supply of electricity
- Provision of computers in Educational Institutions for learners and laptops for teachers of English language.
- Recruitment of an adequate remuneration of competent instructors.
- Regular computer training and re-training for English language teachers.
- Provision of internet facilities in Educational Institutions.

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