

Role Of ICT In English Language Teaching And Learning

Dr. M.V.S.S. Prakasa Rao¹, Dr. M.A. Zulfikar Ali², Dr. Konisa Ramu³, Dr. Seera Hemalata⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India.

ICTs (Information and Communication Technology/Technologies) in English Language Teaching and Learning of the English language is one of the main concerns of many educational institutions because English is not only an international language and a lingua-franca of the world's citizens, but it is also the storehouse of knowledge (Bhattarai, 1995; Harmer, 2007). Therefore, attempts have been made to enhance English language teaching (ELT) and make it more advanced. Many research scholars (Acevedo, 2016; Ince 2014; Liu, 2012) in their research studies have concluded that English language teaching and learning (ELTAL) is effective and more successful with the integration of ICTs. According to Adams and Brindley (2007), "English is a subject ready to think about new ways of constructing reading and writing, and about the pedagogical value of collective work and the possibilities afforded by the renaissance of learning made possible through ICT" (p. vii). Likewise, Rank et al. (2011) discuss that the web 2.0 applications can be exploited to the advantages of the students learning English language and literature, which create several possibilities of learning opportunities such as exploring and investigating, composing and creating, reflecting and evaluating, presenting and performing; and communicating and collaborating. ICTs, the digital technologies, are powerful educational tools; and their use has a significant role in the transfiguration of the pedagogy of teaching and learning (Ludvigsen & Mørch, 2010; Sutherland et al., 2009). Angeli et al. (2015) view that a good combination of technology and pedagogy is very important to ensure that the learners are able to take advantage of technology inclusion for the opportunities of learning integrated skills of language.

Key Words: communication, information, language, learning, pedagogical, technology.

Introduction

ICTs provide opportunities for exploring the communicative power of the English learner by engaging them in exploring literary texts and several other interactive activities in exciting ways (Richards, 2007). Likewise, computer-based activities enhance interaction and collaboration and provide unique opportunities for the development of the learners' spoken and written language capabilities (Andrew, 2007).

A variety of technology-enhanced gadgets can create an interactive learning environment to develop learners' autonomy and meaningful learning, which provides a huge amount of exposure to language (Acevedo, 2016). The spreading innovations in ICTs such as personal

computers, Internet, mobile phones, and many other ICT tools, have caused a ‘paradigm shift’ in teaching and learning of all subjects; and the traditional model of teaching and learning has been replaced by transformed pedagogy (Juceviciene, 2008; Somekh, 2007). A paradigm shift in education is a change in the concept and procedures of teaching and learning.

For example, the activity of encouraging learners for creative learning instead of rote learning is a good example of transformed pedagogy. Likewise, different types of paradigm shifts such as

- (i) a shift from behaviorism/habit formation-based teaching to rationalism/cognitive-based teaching,
- (ii) a shift from 105 teacher-centered approach to learner-centered approach, and
- (iii) a shift from psychometric-structuralist testing to psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic testing, are being practiced in the field of education. (Li et al., 2012). Consequently, various language learning online/offline software, language learning platforms; and the methodological innovations like computer-assisted language learning (CALL) have made language learning easier and more effective (Dina & Ciornai, 2013).
- (iv) All these advancements that improve the quality of education make wide exploitation of ICTs. English is taught and learned as a foreign language in India. It is one of the core subjects both in the college level curriculum (up to bachelor level) and school level curriculum; and as equal weightage as other compulsory subjects has been given to English (CDC, 2007).

However, the analysis of the results shows that the quality of English education is relatively less satisfactory; and teaching-learning of English is one of the more difficult jobs in both secondary school education and higher education in India (Bista, 2011; Budhathoki et al., 2014; Mathema & Bista, 2006). Budhathoki et al. (2014, p. 17) point out that students are very weak especially in English, Maths and Science and that the overall fail percentage in English in SLC (school leaving certificate) is increasing (it was respectively 26.28, 32.23 and 35.21 percent in the academic years 2009, 2010, and 2011).

Therefore, it is essential to find out the ways to enhance the educational quality of such subjects in both school and higher education in India. As several research studies (Acevedo, 2016; Davis, 2007; Dina & Ciornai, 2013; Somekh, 2007) have concluded that ICTs are useful educational tools, and they contribute a lot in ELTAL; the government of India has considered the need for ICT integration for the improvement of quality of education of all subjects recently. However, the integration of ICTs in education in the developing countries is rather slow; and particularly, ICT integration in higher education in India in teaching and learning of different subjects including English is at its initial stage. Therefore, it is essential to explore the opportunities and challenges in ICT integration in teaching and learning of English, based on the context of higher education in India because the knowledge gained from research studies is very important for tailoring the teaching-learning activities. Moreover, though multimedia and/or ICTs have been perceived as effective tools, ICT integration has ‘a long way to go and attain to maturity’ (Liu, 2012, p. 2334). Therefore, research and investigation on integration

and use of ICTs in education and in ELT are becoming worthwhile day-by-day in order to achieve the full advantages of such technologies.

The findings in this study show that the teachers and the students took some advantages with the integration of ICTs in their ELTAL process in spite of different challenges they encountered. Based on the experiences shared, some of the important benefits of ICTs integration for the teachers have been discussed below:

Preparation: One of the main advantages of ICTs for the teachers is that the tools can be useful for them for their preparation of the classroom presentation. They can use different web browsers for the teaching materials they need such as reference books, articles, videos, audios, conversation models, grammar references and so on. They can download those learning resources and save in their computer file for their future use. Similarly, the Internet is helpful for finding out several recent research studies on their subject matter to update themselves for current trends and methods.

Presentation: The teachers can exploit ICTs for their presentation of their lessons in the classroom and delivering the contents. The tools such as laptops, projectors, and several websites can be used by the teachers for making their presentation attractive and effective to facilitate students' learning.

Motivation: The teachers can attract the students' attention towards their presentation through the use of ICTs. The combination of sound, text, image, color, and motion through a multimedia projector can help motivate the students and to increase the students' concentration towards the lesson. Moreover, the use of technology increased the students' engaged learning involving both visual and auditory sensory organs.

Interaction: ICTs can help create a student-centered learning environment where lots of opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous communication take place. The tools such as email, Facebook, Messenger, Skype, and Viber all make interaction between the teacher and students, and among the students more frequent. Sharing their ideas and information is possible whenever and wherever they stay.

Providing the students with learning resources and feedback: With the integration of ICTs, the teachers can provide the students with lots of learning materials to increase the students' amount of exposure to the English language. Using their learning management system (LMS) or email the teachers can send the students the learning resources that are more content-specific and useful for them in the form of reading texts, videos, audios, hyperlinks, or websites. Likewise, ICTs are helpful for the teachers for providing the students with written comments and feedback to the whole class, group-wise, or individually. Pun (2013) discusses several advantages of multimedia technology in English language teaching and learning as such that they provide opportunities for ELTAL, and they enhance interaction among the teachers and students.

Likewise, they develop students' communicative competence, they motivate students to learn, and that they widen the students' knowledge about the English language. Similar to Pun (2013), 110 the students were found to take some advantages through the integration of ICTs in ELTAL process in this study too.

Based on the FGDs conducted, some of the important benefits to the students found in this study have been discussed in the following points:

Amount of learning resources: One of the important benefits of the integration of ICTs for the students is that they can use these tools for accessing information and learning resources. Among many others, LMS (i. e., CIS and MOODLE) is very useful with which the students can find coursespecific resources. Besides, they can use web browsers and websites through which they can search and download learning materials such as e-books, e-journals, e-articles, e-newspaper, videos, audios, slides, and more for practicing their listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar-related skills. They can also use different mobile apps designed for learning the English language.

Interaction: ICTs can enable the students for easier and faster communication with their friends and teachers. They can easily interact about their problems or queries through the tools such as email, SMS, Skype and so on. Both synchronous and asynchronous communication through ICTs help them exchange their ideas and opinions.

Collaboration: Collaboration with their friends is another important benefit of integrating ICTs for the students. They can work together in peer or in groups to solve problems or given tasks. Through ICTs it is easier for the students to be involved in talking and discussing, sharing, evaluating, and constructing their knowledge. ICTs help them to create such an environment for collaborative activities. In such activities, the students can feel more relaxed and comfortable to share, discuss, and debate than in teacher dominated classroom. The tools such as email, Facebook, blogs, Skype, google docs are more useful for the students while carrying out collaborative activities.

Exposure to English language skills: ICTs help the students to find several English language skills specific online or offline learning resources. The students can be involved in practicing listening and speaking skills through the resources such as audios, videos, conversations songs, Skype, Viber, or online talking. Likewise, they can improve their reading and writing skills through several reading materials such as e-books, e-journals, or e-papers. They can also use several web-browsers and online or offline mobile apps for practicing the skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar.

Developing learning autonomy: Another important benefit of using ICTs is that these tools help in accessing various learning resources, which encourage reading and analyzing the contents. Likewise, ICTs help to share the information and learning materials with their friends

and to give comments on them. This environment created by ICT integration is helpful for developing students' habit of independent and autonomous learning, and to develop their learning autonomy.

Difficulties in ICT Integration: The factors impeding the integration of ICTs have been categorized in various ways by different researchers. Balanskat et al. (2006) classify the barriers of ICT integration into micro-level (related to the teacher's attitudes and approaches to ICT), meso-level (related to institutional context), and macro-level (related to wider educational framework). Likewise, according to Ertmer (1999), the barriers of ICT integration can be of first-order type (external factors) and second-order type (internal factors).

Based on the findings in this study, the challenges that the teachers and the students encountered in their integration 45 of ICTs in ELTAI have been classified into five categories as: (i) infrastructures, (ii) technological skills, (iii) pedagogical skills, (iv) textbook/curriculum, and (v) attitudes.

Infrastructures: Infrastructure development is the basic prerequisite for ICT integrated teaching and learning. However, as Traxler and Kukulska-Hulme (2005) discuss the challenges of technology integration in the developing countries, the findings in this study too reveal that the infrastructural development and management was one of the main challenges for ICT-based teaching and learning. All the teachers and students shared their experiences that slow internet and fluctuations in the Internet speed were common problems for them. Likewise, irregular electric power supply was another impeding factor that created obstacles in their teaching and learning process. Next, most of the students reported that they were not satisfied with the size of the computer lab and the number of computers in the lab and in the e-library. They had also their complaints about the maintenance of the equipment such as the keyboard, mouse, UPS backup in the lab, and e-library.

Technological Skills: Lack of adequate technological knowledge with the students and the teachers was another challenge in their integration of ICTs in ELTAI. Many of the students in the starting of the session did not have basic technological knowledge required for the ICT-based education system. Likewise, they did not have good ideas of English language learning specific software and websites to practice English language skills. The teachers also did not have adequate knowledge of newly developed language learning software and applications for engaging the students in collaborative activities for learning English. Some of the teachers were not so confident in using the LMS they had in the college.

Pedagogical skills: The teachers had not got any opportunities to take part in the training or workshops and they were less confident about using ICTs in ELTAI process. They did not have a good pedagogical skill of utilizing ICTs blending face-to-face and ICT-based teaching to engage the students both inside and outside the classroom. They did not have adequate ideas about various software and English language learning websites useful for improving the students' English language skills and knowledge construction. Many of the students were at

the basic level of ICT use in English language learning. They had little idea about utilizing ICTs for collaborative activities and improving English language skills. As Van Dijk (2005), and Mishra and Koehler (2006) discussed, lack of adequate technological and pedagogical skills was one of the important factors affecting proper utilization of ICTs in ELTAL in this study as well.

Textbook/curriculum: The teachers shared their experiences that the textbook and curriculum had not been revised and updated to meet the need of society. Likewise, the textbook did not incorporate the contents or exercises that encouraged the students using ICTs for construction of their knowledge. This finding goes in the line with Ozdemir (2017). According to the teachers, the textbooks prescribed were unnecessarily long; and due to inadequate time to involve the students in discussion, and in interactive and collaborative activities as needed. Moreover, the evaluation system in the curriculum had given no value for the technological knowledge and skills in examinations. Using ICTs in learning English was completely an optional matter of an individual student.

Language Learning through Social Media Platforms: Learning a language involves social aspects which influences the way in which individual learns a language. Staying connected with different peoples across the globe provides the opportunity to learn the language more easily and even informally. Today, youngsters are obsessed with the use of ICT in the form of social media platforms like What's app and Facebook. There are different words that are creeping into the English language every day. For example ASAP, OMG, Obvs, Unfriend, etc. These connections can make them updated about the trends and styles of languages that are in vogue. They not only learn new vocabulary words every day but also able to use these words in our day to day conversation. These global connections and updates are possible only through ICT.

Flexibility: With the help of technology, the teaching-learning became flexible. Today the learners can learn at their own pace and at their own place as well. In the boundaries of the classroom also it provides the flexibility to switch over to a variety of activities related to language learning. Video conferencing, audio conferencing, What's app group and the Facebook group can be used to involve the students in group discussions in a language classroom. There are institutions which provide online courses for language learning. Digital Tools: Traditional Teaching Aids requires a lot of energy and time to prepare which is normally used for a single period plan. Unlike these, the digital tools are innovative, creative and time-saving. There are plenty of digital tools which can make the teaching-learning process a fun. They are available in various themes and colors which creates the interest among the young learners. They are easy to use and organize. Powerpoint presentations and YouTube videos can be used in the classroom to make it alive. Google calendar is one of the digital tools with which one can organize events, schedules, and activities and it can be shared with the students too.

Blogs and Wikis: The Blog is a discussion or informal website published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete, often informal diary-style text entries (posts). It is a regularly

updated website, typically one run by an individual or small group that is written in an informal or conversational style. When the language learners have the opportunity to blog, they can share their perspective. It also gives them the opportunity to play with words and sentence structure. On the other hand, Wikipedia is a free encyclopedia, written collaboratively by the people who use it. It is the special type of website designed to make collaboration easy, called a Wiki. The Wikipedia supports language learning and is intended to collect information, methods, and tools on language learning. It uses several sites as an aspiration to collect and disseminate the best language learning content, into an easy to use references.

Conclusion

Language plays a crucial role in human life. One cannot presume this world without language. It is an undeniable fact that language is a means of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way. History manifested how nations of the world strived to preserve their language and culture. But today we can observe how English is subjugating almost all the languages of the world. English has become a link language connecting the people across the globe. It is also known as a library language. It is portrayed as a window to the world. It is learnt in many countries including India, not as a foreign language rather as a second language. It is the highest learnt language all over the globe. In India, it has got hold of an eminent position in almost every higher education institution, including colleges and universities and these institutions employ English as a medium of instructions in their academics. On one hand, English has taken the dominating position across the countries, on the other hand, technology also revealed its hegemony across the globe. The advancement of computer technology made remarkable reach in almost every sphere of human life. It is playing a vital role in our day to day life. It is used in almost every field i.e., science, health, sports, transportation, entertainment, industries, etc. Soon it has been introduced in educational institutions and many teachers incorporate this trend into their classroom and find it very helpful in their teaching experience. Technology has been integrated with the classroom teaching to make teaching-learning interesting, creative and result oriented. Use of technology can be extremely effective in enhancing the English language skills as well.

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