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Utilization of ICT in Language Class Rooms to Promote Employable Skills

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Abstract

Effective communicators are successful in every walk of life. Teachers of English continuously strive for the excellence of students' communication skills and the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) solves half of their problems. ICT in the language class room can be utilized to explore, investigate, to respond, interpret reflect and evaluate, to communicate and collaborate, to inspire, engage and entertain the students and sustain their interest in learning the language. ICT can be exploited to promote a range of innovative and engaging classroom practices that can assist the English teachers in transacting the text inside the class room.

Keywords

Information and Communication Technology (ICT); Teacher; Learner; and Technology.

Introduction

The shrinking of the world into a global village and with the boom of the multinational companies in India, the crying need of the people is to speak and write English fluently. In India, English is being taught as a second language because of the demand by the parents who think that this will increase employment opportunities and social standing of their children. Majority of the students especially the rural based students find English language like a monster or a devil in disguise. They start to feel somewhat uneasy when they hear something spoken in English and the fear makes them difficult to listen and understand the language, The language teachers face insurmountable difficulties and plenty of challenges to handle the language classes. The shift to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) necessitates a shift in the role of a teacher from that of an instructor, source of expertise and dispenser of information, in the traditional classroom to that of a facilitator or guide in the ICT enabled modern classrooms facilitating the learner's access to information and enabling the development of skills in the learners. The competency in acquiring communicative skills will no doubt provide more scope for those who are seeking employment.

Objectives

This paper seeks to

- Examine the potentiality of ICT to become a facilitator in the language class both for instruction and assessment
- Assess the preparedness of the students and teachers to use ICT in learning communication skills
- Find out the choices and challenges that the teachers have while using ICT in the language class for instruction
- Suggest some ways to maximize the use of ICT in the language classroom for instruction learning and assessment

With the present infrastructure, class size, availability of teachers, quality of teachers, training of teachers, it is difficult to achieve the objectives in a curriculum. Further, most of the teachers use only Lecture Method which does not have potentiality to achieving majority of these objectives. The objectives are multi-dimensional in nature, so for their achievement multiple methods should be used in integrated fashion. It is a well-known fact that not a single teacher is capable of giving up-to-date and complete information in his own subject. ICT can fill this gap because it can provide access to different sources of information. At present there is a shortage of qualified and competent teachers in teaching English.

ICT enabled Instruction/Computer-Assisted Instruction/Computer-Aided Learning/Computer Based Instruction can happen in the tutorial mode, drill and practice mode, simulation mode, discovery mode and games. In the tutorial mode, information is presented in small units followed by a question. The students' response is analyzed by the computed and immediate feedback is provided. In the drill and practice mode, the learner is provided with a number of graded examples on the concepts and principles learnt earlier. There is a facility for reinforcement of all the correct responses and correction of errors. In the simulation mode, the learner is presented with a scaled down simulate situation resembling the real situations. On the discovery mode, the inductive approach to teaching and learning is followed. In the gaming mode, the learner is engaged in playing opposite to the computer and another learner.

Computers have also brought about radical changes in the means and modes of assessment by making the requisite software and hardware available for both formative and summative evaluation. Though the use of computers for testing and evaluation is less in comparison to its use for instructional purposes, it has been a great help in ensuring reduction in the time, money and efforts spent for assessment. Technology can be used for assessment purposes at multiple stages, from the management of the assessment

information to a fully automated assessment system. Mishra beautifully enlists the assessment functions that computers can perform.

- Processing of text, data and figures
- Managing assessment-storing results, storing learner profiles, analyzing assessment result, presenting results
- Delivering assessment-printing a test, downloading a test
- Marking assessment using an optical mark or character reader
- Creating assessment sheets
- Submitting assessments-learners reaching teachers for evalution)
- Providing feedback-storing feedback comments and printing it for a particular error
- Reporting assessment results –individual profile for each learner

Use of ICT as a facilitator in the Language Classroom

ICT can be mainly employed for both instruction and assessment in the classroom. Of all the subjects, English has been proved to the most suitable for the use of ICT. An English teacher has the privilege of using ICT for supplementing the class with interesting interactive exercises, audio-visual materials to arouse and sustain the interest of the learners, motivate the reluctant learners to explore the mode of learning through multi-media which promises to be both useful and enjoyable.

The instructional CDS typically break skills into small sub skills, such as those that might be identified in a learning hierarchy, through which students work. Questions and prompts actively engage learners in formulating responses and give them immediate knowledge of whether they are correct, providing interactive individualized practice activities. These CD-ROMS can quickly assess the accuracy of the students' response to practice activities and change the sequence and difficulty of the activities to correspond with the learners' current level of understanding. In this manner, practice can be tailored to individual learners, depending upon how well they respond at a

certain level of difficulty. Students can spend more time on a particular topic or skill, or they can return to an earlier sequence of instruction to review or relearn prerequisite knowledge. Students who need an alternative supplementary means of attaining classroom objectives can use instructional simulations and games, either cooperatively or independently. Lessons may begin with whole class instruction and then, depending on students' interests and abilities provide instructional simulations and games to give students hands on experiences that may enrich the skills taught during full class instruction.

Data Analysis

Appropriate statistical tools have been used. The information collected through the schedule are carefully reviewed and consolidated in a master table. It is tabulated and analyzed with references to objective of the study.

Sampling Techniques Employed

The following table deals with the analysis of the data collected from 112 respondents. They are rural women undergraduates of udumalpet Taluk, Tiruppur District. The data collected are classified, tabulated and analysed.in order to fulfill the above-mentioned objectives. The results presented in the following table were estimated from the primary data collected from the respondents.

Analysis of Teacher-Learner-Technology

Description	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Total
Teacher as a moderator	17	76.8	6.3	100
Teacher should update	37.5	45.5	17	100

Content & context specific	4.5	64.3	31.3	100
Inspire and empower	35.7	51.8	12.5	100
Variety of tasks learning activities,evaluvation	45	31.8	23.2	100
Interactive teaching	54.7	31.3	15	100
Innovative techniques to be used	24.1	50.9	18.8	100
To use ICT	30.4	31.3	25.9	100
Technology enhanced self Learning	12.2	67.9	13.4	100
Encouragement to challenge Existing Limit	42.9	38.4	18.8	100
Feedback	52.9	38.4	10.7	100

- 76.8 percent agree that a teacher should act as a facilitator in the teaching learning environment. She has to guide the learners in the difficult area and should act as a moderator.
- 37.5 percent of the respondents strongly agree that a teacher should update her knowledge in the emerging field and should abreast with the innovative techniques in the teaching. 45.5

percent agree that a teacher is a also a learner and she can motivate the learners on the right path.

- 64.3 percent of the respondents agree that a teacher should be conscious of the content she is teaching and she should be context-specific.
- 51.8 percent support that the teacher is expected to inspire and empower the learner.
- 45 percent strongly support that a variety of tasks, learning activities, evaluation techniques must be adopted by the teacher to reach the expected target. 31.8 percent view that a teacher should enhance her teaching by introducing activities that would sustain the interest of the students throughout the learning process.
- 54.7 percent of the respondents feel that communicative skills can be strengthened through interaction method.
- 50.9 percent of the respondents feel that innovative techniques to be used in the class room.
- 30.4 strongly agree the use of ICT in the learning process.
- 67.9 percent of respondents agree that technology enhanced self learning must be introduced in the learning process.
- 42.9 percent of respondents agree that encouragement should be given to challenge the existing limit and to reach higher goals.
- 52.9 percent of respondents agree that feed back is an effective mechanism to go through remedial measures.

Suggestions

For effective use of ICT in teaching and assessment the following ideas are to be ensured:

- The teacher and technology have specified roles in the learning process; when technology deals with clear and crisp areas, the teacher could deal with 'fuzzy' areas, the areas where affective skills are required to be covered.
- Technology per se cannot do anything, it has to be appropriately used by the users to make teaching-learning effective in a given environment. Technology has to be used to complement and enhance whatever the teacher does, not dominate over the teachers. It can be a facilitator, not a dictator.
- There should be sufficient scope in the curriculum to make use of ICT for the purposes of instruction and assessment.
- The teachers and the students must be computer literates and know how to make use of computers for educational purposes.
- Cheaper varieties of technology are to be made available to the schools where students cannot afford to pay more so that they are able to make use of this for language learning.
- Teachers should be recommended for in-service professional developmental programmes where they can be trained in the design and development of digital materials both for instruction and assessment.
- The digital contents of high quality are to be prepared or chosen on the basis of through market survey and in consultation with schools which have successfully made use of them.
- Sufficient number of computers should be there to facilitate both individualized and collaborative learning.
- There should be change in the attitudes of the teachers, learners and management to do things in an innovative way with the help of ICT.

Conclusion

ICT enabled assessment for promoting communication and assessment skills is a recent yet promising phenomenon but in the Indian

context, particularly in the rural context, it is fraught with many problems which will take many years to overcome. Besides infrastructure facilities, proper use of ICT for assessment, teaching and learning will strengthen the employable skills. The challenges for teachers and students in the proper implementation of ICT are more than the choices. Hence, it is high time that new tools and techniques are to be invented to make ICT user-friendly, electricity-free and cheaper so that all educational institutions will be in a position to adopt them. Much of the future will be undoubtedly decided by the response of the teacher and taught to communication technology. If we embrace technology and exploit its capability to the full, it can only broaden and fulfill the professional aspirations of the job-seekers.

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