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Integrating Technology in Teaching and Learning English Language

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There is much ado about the use of ICT in teaching English language. Certainly, there is a dramatic transition in the teaching methodology over the years, but the question remains as to what is appropriate or proven most effective. While we cannot contest the quality of the yesteryear conventional learning of English Language from excerpts of Literature prescribed as syllabus; compiled in the anthologies of prose and poetry, complete with exercises in grammar, we must accept that the same study material does not engage and appeal to the young learners today. The teacher has to study the pulse of his students and explore the trends and methods available, and make a smart choice to capture the interest of the learner. English language is very challenging to teach and to learn, given its contemporary evolution, as it is clearly shifting from the flamboyance and structuralistpattern of the British English to the more communicative and functional dimension of the language.While there is endlessresearch and study as to the latest trends in language teaching and the use of technology, we have not been able to arrive at the hegemony of a method. The language theory is all about the learner's needs and competencies based on the immediacy of their requirements. It must be admitted that the language component presented through technology breaks the monotony of lectures and makes classes more interactive. Our paper will examine the learner specific methods, in the light of the objectives and target audience, while focusing on the fact that moderation and a holistic approach is required while transacting different technology based modern approaches, since we cannot overrule the merit of the old school, and the human intelligence in the acquisition and imparting of language.

One is reminded of John Dewy's quip, if we teach today as we taught yesterday we rob our children of tomorrow.

The teachers are a witness to the fact that the textbook and the use of chalk and the blackboard is no longer holding the attention of the students where learning English language is concerned. The changing times and trends have affected the educational institutions as well, and the language classrooms are a case in point. The language itself has undergone a sea change from the yesteryear's impeccable and flamboyant style of the British to the more simplistic and operative.

There is much ado about the use of ICT in teaching English language. Certainly there is a dramatic transition in the teaching methodology over the years, but the question remains as to what is appropriate or proven most effective. While we cannot contest the quality of the yesteryear conventional learning of English Language from excerpts of Literature prescribed as syllabus; compiled in the anthologies of prose and poetry, complete with exercises in grammar, we must accept that the same study material does not engage and appeal to the young learners today. The teacher has to study the pulse of his students and explore the trends and methods available, and make a smart choice to capture the interest of the learner.   English language is very challenging to teach and to learn, given its contemporary evolution, as it is clearly shifting from the grandiose and structuralist pattern of the British English to the more communicative and functional dimension of the language. While there is endless research and study as to the latest trends in language teaching and the use of technology, we have not been able to arrive at the hegemony of a method.

The Indian education system is resistant to change, and there is an inertia in adapting to new concepts, and more so where English language is concerned.

The universities continue to prescribe text books with a small inclusion of listening and comprehension based activities on cd roms, which necessitates a language lab and an LCD . The audio visual medium certainly helps in breaking the monotony of the lectures. This was made mandatory by some universities and soon the concept of a language lab caught on. The lab soon made the ambience learner friendly and engaged the attention of the learners. This kind of activity also helps in promoting reading skills as well. Reading is the most important skill in English language. A good reading session should be very comprehensive, with clarity , voice modulation , balanced tone, pausing at the appropriate punctuation etc . All these factors stimulate the student to think creatively. This has also helped in giving them a fillip as they break their inhibition to read aloud in a class .

Using Internet for education has huge potential but the student has to be guided in using the search engines and the different websites surfing for the required information. This involves a learner autonomy and with it comes a responsibility for their learning process which will certainly enhance their competence, creativity and performance. Internet is the most exciting and unlimited source of learning be it for English language or on any subject. Sourcing information from different websites and links will invariably augment the language of the learner .It is up to the student to focus on what he wants, as the internet opens up a huge reservoir of word power in addition to the information he is seeking .

Power Point Presentation is a useful tool that is now being used in English classrooms effectively. PPT can be used to teach new ideas and concepts to students. It also helps students in enhancing their speaking and listening skills. Assignments and projects can be given in the form of PPTs to stimulate the interest of the students.

There are several organizations claiming to have soft solutions for an English Language Lab, a network teaching software designed to improve teaching environment in the computer labs. This Lab enables a teacher to remotely control, monitor, broadcast, and assist students in teacher PC directly. With powerful functions and friendly user interface, it not only facilitates the teaching process but also brings fun and efficiency to learning. It is now being used in Schools, Colleges and Universities. Language Lab provides features to promote listening , understanding , recording , Dictionary Tools, Word Pronunciation, and software to teach soft skills like Resume Preparation, Interview Skills, Public Speech, Debate, Group Discussion, Letter Writing, Telephonic Skills etc. The software to improve grammar makes the otherwise uninteresting language activities more appealing. .

An English language teacher is now at the crossroads wondering how to handle the huge influx of new approaches and methodologies to impart the language with its distinctly new flavor, an impatient and techno savvy young student, a digital divide in the place of printed matter, and the onus on the teacher as to what he deems most suitable for the learner. There is a transition but nothing ensuring infallible learning. But it must be admitted that we have to enter into the new zone and integrate technology to motivate the students.

The role of a teacher is to facilitate and guide the students to explore the vast expanse of knowledge and information available and make them understand the scope and power of the language and the acumen required in wielding the language with sense and sensibility. They need to understand that English is not a language that they can acquire in a hurry, delinking it from its literature and grammar.

While there is an increasing demand for communication and soft skills, the corporate offices turn to the educational institutions to see if they could just feed in the required skills to the students, little realizing that it cannot be served like fast food. a little bit of grammar , vocabulary and functional English and the confidence to articulate. The language has to be acquired with a passion and zeal and a lot of effort. To wield the language with confidence we have to examine the language of at least contemporary literature, follow the language in the print and electronic media to be familiar with the current usage, and of course that brings us back to the use of technology which is a part and parcel of our life. The intelligent use with a little bit of guidance will certainly take an enthusiastic language learner a long way. What is learnt with pleasure is learnt full measure, and more so with the present generation, they need to be motivated and the LSRW skills will increase their confidence levels and also sustain their interest in language acquisition. A holistic approach is required while transacting different technology based modern approaches, since we cannot overrule the merit of the old school, and the human intelligence in learning and imparting of language.

"Technology cannot replace teachers but teachers who understand technology will

replace those who do not".