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Shridhar Bhat

Assistant Professor of English

Dr. G. Shankar Government Women's First Grade College & PG Study Centre

Udupi, Karnataka, India

sridhargbhat@gmail.com

The Advent of ICT: The Future of Teaching English as a Second Language

Abstract: In recent times, the world has witnessed an unprecedented growth of technology and its penetration into every aspect of human life. As a result of rapid technological growth, scientific advancement and the development of communication networks, the world is shrinking into a global village. The advent of ICT has given education a new role and shape as a result of which the role of the ELT teacher has also undergone some degree of transformation. The current paper examines whether the teachers of English language are preparing themselves for the new role as facilitators which demands incorporating technology in teaching and if not, how they perceive the use of technology in teaching in the emerging educational scenario. Hence, in order to find out the extent of the use of web resources in the teaching-learning process of English language in the selected colleges of Udupi District of Karnataka State, this study was undertaken. The data was collected through a questionnaire. The researcher visited each of the concerned colleges to study the present status of the use of the use of technology and how it affects the teaching-learning process.

Keywords: ICT, ESL, Social Media, Technology Integration

1. Introduction

Technological and scientific advancement in modern times has resulted in widespread use of digital communication and social media which has resulted in quick and easy access to

information anywhere at any time, and thus exploring different sources of knowledge has been facilitated by technology. The World Wide Web connects the whole world through the Internet, providing access to any information on any topic at the fingertip of the user. Smartphones which are feature-rich can run several apps and through social media applications facilitate sharing of information and knowledge and ensure widespread reach, saving a lot of time.

A few years ago, only the textual mode of transmission of information was popular among teachers and students in colleges. But ICT has enabled the transmission of information not only in textual form but also through audio, video, or any other media. Thus technology has opened new avenues like e-learning, online courses etc. ICT brings a plethora of digital learning material both for the teachers and students. Technology should be integrated into the curriculum in order for learning to be successful (Graham Stanley, 2010). It provides the opportunity for the learners to break the monotony of classroom learning and learn at his own pace even beyond the boundaries of the classroom by using online learning opportunities.

The real value of ICT tools lies in their capacity to motivate the learners into learning new things and hold their attention for a longer period of time. ICT also ensures learner autonomy and encourages self-learning without confinement to the boundaries of the classroom and prescribed curriculum. As far as learning a foreign language like English is concerned, it is necessary that the learners should have adequate exposure to the target language. Web resources become significant in this regard. They provide opportunities to expose the learner to a large variety of authentic learning material. Hence the learners can practice the four basic skills of language namely listening, speaking, reading and writing online without any inhibition and anxiety as they enjoy freedom of learning at their own pace and convenience.

However, many educational institutions are not yet equipped with the modern architecture for ICT integration in the teaching-learning process. Each classroom needs a computer, projector, multimedia speakers, internet etc. Since the installation of ICT-related equipment requires huge spending, some institutions do not show much interest due to paucity of funds. The size of the classes, uninterrupted power supply and high-speed internet facility, availability of trained and technology-friendly teachers, willingness of teachers to use ICT in teaching, technical help by trained technicians are some of the important considerations in this regard. Most of the teachers in colleges are comfortable with Lecture Method of teaching which makes most of the learners just passive participants in the process. Since language is a skill-based subject, learner needs to acquire the skills by practicing the use of language in real-life situations. ICT can fill this gap since it provides access to various authentic resources for language learning. Since classroom teaching using the lecture method has limitations in this regard as it cannot cater to the needs of diversified learners with different linguistic background and extent of motivation, ICT can be a boon for learners if they are properly guided by the teachers with regard to the use of various English language-learning Applications such as applications such as Rosetta Stone, Babbel, Busuu, Memrise, Duolingo etc. Learners can be taught how to use online dictionaries and encyclopedia as well. Online evaluation tools can help learners to test their own understanding of grammar and vocabulary items.

2. Review of Literature

In institutions which have a robust ICT infrastructure, most of the teachers of English language are inclined towards the use of ICT tools to ensure optimum curriculum transaction. Ahmadi (2012) observes that ICT-based teaching practices have become popular among teachers in recent times as they have the potential to create a conducive environment for active learner engagement in the teaching-learning process.

ICT provides platform for teacher-pupil and peer discussion, exploration of new ideas, analysis and reflection while providing constructive feedback to the learners. Hennessy (2005) observed that ICTs could serve as a catalyst in stimulating both teachers and pupils to explore new and interesting ways to learn. He observed that ICT enables the learners to become autonomous while teachers too are motivated to encourage and support learners to learn independently and creatively using online resources.

The Internet provides access to various forums such as social media sites and blogs which provide online interaction facility for the users. Learners can exchange their views on any aspect of English language with peers and different language experts online which helps the learners to update their knowledge. The learners can even interact with native English speakers and experts of other countries and upgrade their own language skills by acquiring new vocabulary and correct pronunciation. Thus in the hands of a skilled teacher, ICT can work wonders in the classroom and ensure qualitative improvement of the teaching-learning process. A talented teacher can find a variety of occasions to integrate technology into teaching in order to make learning enjoyable and productive.

It has emerged from recent studies that the successful integration of ICT depends largely on the attitudes of the teachers concerned, who eventually determine how they are used in the teaching-learning process. Kersaint, Horton,Stohl, and Garofalo (2003) found that teachers possessing the right attitudes toward technology integration feel more comfortable with its use and usually incorporate it into their teaching.

Digital technology also facilitates the development of effective communication skills. Eaton (2010) noted that technology-aided communication is a valuable feature for developing communication skills. ICT ensures more equal participation than face to-face interaction. In traditional classroom lecture method of teaching, only a few learners tend to dominate the class, but ICT integration results in more collaborative experience for learners. Zhao (2011)

supported this view by stating that ICT provides exposure to authentic learning materials in the target language which benefits the learner by enriching his learning experiences. He also observed that pronunciation which is a fundamental aspect of language learning is best learnt accurately with the help of web dictionaries. Using the modern speech recognition technology, the learner can receive feedback on his pronunciation instantly.

3. Rationale of the study

- Teachers of English language need to integrate ICT in teaching-learning process by preparing digital lessons and making presentations.
- Learners of English language must be trained to use technology to improve their language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- In the absence of the proper use of technology, both teachers and students tend to lose the benefits of technology in the modern scenario.
- The above-mentioned points prompted the researcher to study the extent of the actual use of technology in the teaching-learning process of English language in the select colleges of Udupi District.

4. Objectives of the Study

- To study the ICT infrastructure and the resources available in the colleges under study.
- To study the extent to which ICT tools and web resources are used in the teaching-learning process of English language.
- To study the attitude of teachers towards integration of ICT in the teaching-learning process of English language in the colleges under study.

5. Population and Sample

- The Population of the present study is the colleges situated in Udupi District and the teachers of English languages in colleges.

- The Sample of the present study included sixteen colleges located in Udupi District and 24 teachers teaching English in those colleges. The colleges were selected based on the availability of ICT facilities for integrating technology in the teaching-learning process of English language and the teachers were selected based on their readiness to participate in the study.

6. Tools and Techniques of Data collection

The researcher has studied recent publications by other researchers in the field of ELT and ICT. A Questionnaire was designed and administered to ELT teachers in the colleges under study and data was collected and analyzed with the help of content analysis.

7. Findings of the Study

Objective-I: To study the ICT infrastructure and the resources available in the colleges under study

- All the colleges under study were scrutinized for the availability of basic ICT infrastructure facilities required for ICT integration in the teaching-learning process of English language.
- 62.5% of the colleges under study have Computers, laptops, projectors and other equipment for accessing internet in required quantity. These colleges were found to have well-equipped classrooms with projectors.
- In 37.5 % of the colleges, ICT infrastructure was limited to only a few computers and equipment for accessing internet. Projectors were found only in a few classrooms in these colleges.
- None of the colleges have advanced teaching tools like Interactive Smartboards.

Objective-II: To study the extent to which ICT tools and web resources are used in the teaching- learning process of English language.

- 43.75 % of the colleges were found to use ICT tools and web resources for English language teaching.
- In 7 out of 16 colleges, more than 72% of the teachers of English language use ICT in teaching- learning process while in 9 colleges only 40% of the teachers use ICT in the teaching-learning process.
- Most of the teachers of English language were generally found to use ICT for the following common purposes:
 - For maintaining student records and for preparing lecture notes, question papers etc.
 - For downloading information from the Internet on various topics of interest.
 - For making PowerPoint presentations and preparing study materials for students.
- Only 45% of the teachers were found to use web resources such as web dictionaries, web encyclopedia, YouTube videos, E-learning platforms, video-conferencing tools etc. for improving English language skills of the learners.
- Interestingly, 16% of the teachers were found to use popular Android learning Apps such as LearnEnglish Grammar, Rosetta Stone, Babbel, Busuu, Memrise, Duolingo etc.

Objective-III: To study the attitude of teachers towards integration of ICT in the teaching-learning process of English language in the colleges under study.

- In all the colleges under study, more than 87% of the teachers think that ICT has positive impact on the teaching-learning process of English language in the following ways:
 - ❖ Involves better sensory inputs
 - ❖ Motivates the students to learn independently
 - ❖ Caters to the requirements of learners with different learning styles

- ❖ Removes fear and anxiety in relation to foreign language learning as learners can practice language skills online personally at their own pace.
- Only 16.6% of the teachers prefer traditional teaching methods such as Grammar translation method, Direct method etc. as they feel that ICT tools result in distraction rather than comprehension.
- However, 87.5% of the teachers agree that proper training in the use of ICT tools and web resources can ensure their professional growth and make them future-ready. Only 12.5% of the teachers opine that ICT training is no guarantee of professional development.
- Interestingly, 100% of the teachers agree that ICT contributes to the development of 'communicative competence' among the learners of English language and makes them better equipped with language skills required for employment in the digital era.
- In all the colleges under study, the majority of the teachers said that their institution requires more advanced ICT tools and resources to cater to the needs of the future generation of students who belong to the digital age.
- In 75% of the colleges, over 80% of the teachers of English language have attended webinars, workshops and Faculty Development programmes on integration of ICT into classroom teaching whereas in 25% of colleges only 50% of the teachers of English language have attended such programmes.
- As far as the motivational level of teachers is concerned, in 68.7 % of colleges, 58.3% of the ELT teachers reported that they are highly motivated to use ICT tools and web resources in the teaching-learning process of English language. In 16.6 % of the colleges, 25% of the teachers are not motivated to use ICT in classroom teaching as they are not confident in handling such tools.

- More than 54% of the teachers who are using ICT in their teaching, reported that they encourage students to use web resources for learning English and also, they give them certain online assignments to practice language skills.

8. Suggestions

1. The higher education institutions should give top priority to equip each classroom with the necessary ICT equipment.
2. The teachers of English language should be trained and encouraged to use ICT compulsorily in the teaching-learning process. They can be trained to develop and maintain Learning Management System(LMS) for their respective courses.
3. The teachers of English language should upgrade their digital literacy and use ICT for curriculum transaction.
4. Training programmes for teachers need to be conducted massively and at regular intervals to keep the teachers up-to-date technologically.
5. The teachers of English language should focus on preparation of the teaching-learning materials in digital form and make them easily available to the learners online to ensure access anytime, anywhere.
6. The teachers of English language should train the learners in the use of web resources. Awareness regarding the use of Android Apps for learning and practicing language skills is necessary for learners.
7. The learners should be encouraged to use of web resources for writing and submitting assignments. Online testing tools such as EasyTestMaker can be used for online tests.

8. The teachers of English language should be encouraged to attend workshops and seminars on ICT integration in the teaching-learning process to improve their awareness and skills.

9. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited only to 16 colleges situated in Udupi District of Karnataka State and 24 teachers of English language serving in those institutions. Hence the findings of the study cannot be treated as universal phenomenon regarding the use of ICT in the whole District or State or Country. Situations may vary depending upon the ICT resourcefulness of the institutions and teachers in other institutions. The outcome of the study only shows the prevailing ICT infrastructure and the opinion of the teachers of English language in the colleges under study, which is indicative of the general trend regarding ICT integration in colleges.

10. Conclusion

In the technology-driven world today, it is necessary to improve the standard of English language education in colleges. The advent of ICT and its integration into the process of teaching-learning English language has revolutionized the way learners acquire linguistic skills. The present study examines the potential use of ICT tools and web resources for positive learning outcomes in the process of learning English language in colleges. The biggest challenge faced by educationists in general and teachers of English language in particular, is how to transform the curriculum transaction processes so that students become active participants in the learning process and develop the skills of using digital technology for self-learning and skill development. ICT has the potential to bring about this transformation of the teaching-learning process with its interesting features and resources. It can lead future citizens of the country towards the formation of digital society. However, it is essential to upgrade the skills of the teachers to face the challenges of the digital era and to enable them to prepare future citizens who are going to be techno-savvy. However, as Taiwo

(2009) observes, the extent of technology use depends on the way teachers view the role of technology in the classroom, and what they feel technology can do in the teaching-learning process.

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