

Internet as a Tool for Teaching Literature

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ABSTRACT

Communication means the imparting or exchanging of information and it is a basic tool for survival. In the contemporary world a computer network, the Internet, is an outstanding tool or facility for electronic communication.

Internet as a learning tool is quite helpful to students of any discipline. The art of using internet has to be learned to get accessibility to its ocean of knowledge for producing work for a global audience. The immediacy, speed, and interactivity of the Internet seem to be a great motivational factor for literature students also. Internet engages one in more active learning. Students can interact with literature ‘experts’ across the world. Internet supports various synchronous discussion methods like Video-conferencing and NetMeeting and resources to practice reading skills. It links information from various locations and sources and allows students to interact and learn continually. Students can get information by themselves and learn at her/his own pace and interest. Though Internet is a resourceful bank it cannot establish contextual connectivity and create situations as per the comprehending capacities of the students. Internet is just another effective tool which helps students to master information literacy skills and strategies to harness the potential of the new era of information technology.

Key words: Communication, Internet, Literature, Information technology, Videoconference, Net meeting.

Communication means the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. It is the capability of living beings to exchange messages with other living beings. Communicative abilities are necessary for everyday life. Without these abilities a living being is isolated from other people. Communication is therefore a basic tool to survive. In the contemporary world a computer network, and especially the Internet, is an outstanding tool or facility for electronic communication between any two or more devices.

With Computer Aided Language (CAL) Laboratories becoming a part of the Language learning environment, it would be better for the teachers/learners to familiarize themselves with certain common terms used so that teaching/learning of English language and literature will become easier:

Hypertext is a text providing a network of links to other texts ‘outside, beyond and above itself’, making possible a dynamic organization of information through links and connections. It involves multi-sequential and multi-linear writing.

Blog is a process of posting views and opinions where all can access them.

E-Book being the shortened form for Electronic Book is a conventional book available in the digital media.

E-Mail is mail sent/received using electronic media and Internet.

Power Point Presentation is a presentation technique to attract the audio-visual attention of the audience.

Of many functions performed by Internet, Internet as a learning tool is quite helpful to students of literature or any other discipline. Internet allows them to acquire clear understanding and frame objectives for accomplishing a particular task. Using internet is an art in its own and has to be learned to get accessibility to its ocean of knowledge. So students should be allowed and encouraged to use internet as learning in the classroom.

Internet helps literature students to know about what information they are getting in the class and it allows them to communicate with each other about ideas, thoughts or any assignment, even if they are sitting at their home. Students can also get in touch with the teacher through internet, and discuss their problems over internet and get clarifications immediately. The students can also produce work which will receive a global audience. The

immediacy, speed, and interactivity of the Internet seem to be a great motivational factor for literature students.

Internet as learning tool for literature, is very interesting and worth exploring. A student or a whole class benefits from the experience and knowledge that is gained with this endeavor. When the use of Internet as learning tool for literature is initiated in a small way in some schools and colleges, students are able to involve in viewing other schools web sites or privately owned sites and started sending feedback via email for getting up-to-date information. Students got adapted to this new interest for learning literature and there is definitely an increased motivation. Such simulation of interest is very heartening. It is obvious; however, that both students and teacher face practical problems in using the Internet regularly as a tool for learning literature. This can be got over in one or two months if worked with dedication and every hurdle becomes an opportunity.

One of the main positive changes is that students will get engaged and involved in more active learning, which may require the subject teacher to get used to their pedagogy. There are many opportunities for increased interaction and communication between their peers within their own classroom and further in their field. Opportunities also arise for students to question literature ‘experts’ across the world about any specific query. Active learning through internet may also occur within specific interactive web sites and resources. Internet learning will bring about considerably greater learning success.

There are other many helpful opportunities on the Internet for learning. The Internet supports various synchronous discussion methods. Video-conferencing through internet, which has been successfully used in the past at many schools, is a method where remote computers can be linked and allow participants to talk and view each other in classroom. With the help of this technology, teachers can conduct guest speaker sessions for literature students. Internet relay chat software, such as NetMeeting, allow users to form discussion groups for synchronous chats. Students can make their own private discussion group to discuss their problem related to literature with other students, in this way students can greatly improve their educational abilities. Through careful planning, these two methods of communication could in fact meet the entire requirements for listening and talking. The learning then becomes more meaningful to students as it is a ‘real’ situation and students can be engaged and involved in discussions with peers and experts from across the world.

Majority of literature students need not be taught the skills associated with reading but for those who are keen on honing their skills, the Internet does have sufficient resources that can be used successfully to practice these reading skills within the literature subject in the high schools and colleges. In fact, with careful selection, all the reading strands can be met through using Internet resources e.g. particular student's literature sites, reading and sending e-mail messages, scanning contributions to discussion groups and reading on-line newspapers (SOED ,1991) National Guidelines on English Language.

Multimedia and internet technology allows students at any education level to participate actively in the experience of learning in the area of literature. Multimedia and internet based software stimulates all of the learning methods by offering information through pictures, voice narration, written text, sound, full motion video clips and animations. The Internet technology can help literature teachers develop interactive, creative teaching tools that present information in all the ways students really learn and think. Internet technology links information from various locations and sources through "buttons" which provide access to information in all medium at one single place and allows students to interact and learn continually.

Many of Shakespeare's plays are available in videos and in shortened versions on the internet. Use of such multimedia aids before commencing the teaching of a play and periodical replays of the relevant scenes from the play will make the classes more interesting and lively. The teachers can also try to find visual aids on plays like *The Glass Menagerie*, *Winslowe Boy*, *Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons* and possibly many more. Films such as *Troy*, *Helen of Troy*, *Hercules*, *Hercules Unchained* and audio/video recordings of one act plays present the possibility of understanding the text in a totally new dimension. Films based on *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* are more informative and bring the characters live before the students by their specialized visual and sound effects. Some of the greatest novels such as *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Old Man and The Sea*, *War and Peace* and many more like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* shown as films will have a greater impact than many hours of lectures. All these videos can be downloaded from the internet.

Literature teachers should become Information-Technology-literate, engage and involve students in real problems found on the internet and they should also take on authentic questions. Preparing literature students to pursue independent research helps them in attaining

the next higher levels in their lives. “Many educational researchers view the Internet as a valuable source of information that can assist students in the construction of knowledge, increasing their capacity for social interaction and the building of democratically oriented learning communities. They see the Internet promoting inquiry and creativity.” (Leu 1998) Literature Students who have teachers fluent in Information Literacy and Information Technology have a major advantage in developing their own Information Technology and Information Literacy fluency. In Indian context, not many language teachers are exposed to this technology. Hence, some schools, colleges and universities provide training on the basics of computer and internet while some still stick to the traditional methods of teaching. It is time one restructured one’s approach to teaching English literature. Unless a teacher of English literature gets exposed to the technological advancements in teaching, he/she wouldn’t be able to discover the treasure trove of information on the subject.

Internet is the most suitable and widely used platform for the implementation of distance learning concept. The ability to provide all available information with a low cost is the primary reason for using internet as a learning tool for literature. The major advantages that arise from the use of internet as learning tool for literature are the use of multimedia technology for the presentation of the courses, the use of hypermedia and hypertext, the interactive learning abilities and the wide availability of tools for developing educational applications. Rapidly increasing use of Internet technology for learning purpose and the ability to access distant places, make it very efficient for the delivery and implementation of training literature programs. The training offered through the Internet is a method that cannot establish a supportive relationship between trainee and trainer though it has in fact a lot of advantages as a substitute for the traditional form of learning literature.

Internet as a learning tool for literature ensures savings in resources and printed material regarding the development of additional material, particularly when the required knowledge and equipment is available. Using internet as learning system for literature does not even require the presence of a teacher during the learning process. Students can get all information by themselves and this throws open an opportunity for an individual’s interaction with the subject at her/his own pace and interest.

Recent researches clearly indicate that many students use Internet for effective learning process and to get up-to-date information. While students may be technologically

advanced, they are deficient when it comes to developing efficient research skills and strategies and judging Internet information. So literature students should also be taught through conventional learning methods in addition to Internet.

Students cannot be allowed to depend totally on the Internet for their information and learning process though it is a resourceful bank because contextual connectivity and creating situations as per the comprehending capacities of the students cannot be done as a teacher does in a lively classroom. We need to emphasize and recommend that they use different sources for their research and education, thereby making them aware that the Internet is just another effective tool that can be added to their arsenal of information sources. It is clear the Internet will continue to influence the school and college curriculum. Given this reality, students will need to master information literacy skills and strategies if they are to harness the potential of this new era of information technology.

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