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CONTENTS

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION & MANAGEMENT   ii
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ENHANCING TEACHING IN RURAL INDIA BY TECHNOLOGY INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT

There is an immediate need for the use of apposite technology to enhance learning in rural classes in India. The children of the country find the classes uninteresting with banal methodology. It is the dire need of the time to motivate them by exposing them with interactive modules. This paper aims to share the technological modules developed in our Institute- Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani to cater to the demand of the rural students of nearby villages. These modules will include films used for teaching different concepts, Audio video material for enhancement of English Skills, Advertisements for nurturing creativity, etc. The study will further try to gauge the difference in learning pace by traditional method of teaching and after the intervention of technology.

KEYWORDS

Technology, teaching methodology, audio video material.

INTRODUCTION

English has become the global language in this world. In our country English is important for a number of reasons. India is a land of diversity with a rich linguistic variation not only across regions but also within regions in form of dialects. English has emerged as a common language and provides a framework to communicate across cultures. When we look at the present educational scenario in India then we find that majority of Indians in rural areas pursue the primary and secondary education from government schools. These schools are a linchpin of the Indian educational system, accounting for majority of Pre-Primary, Primary Schools and Secondary Schools. But, still nearly 42 million children in the age-group 6-14 years, do not attend school. Only 47 out of 100 children enrolled in class I reach class VIII, putting the dropout rate at 52.79 per cent. Systemic factors like lack of teachers (especially female), non-availability of quality teachers in remote, rural, hilly and tribal areas, high teacher absenteeism, large scale teacher vacancies inadequate school infrastructure, and inadequate allocation of resources on education to meet the expenditure, irregular classes and overcrowded classrooms have diminished the quality of teaching and reduced interest among the students for education . One more reason is the evasion of technology in the curriculum as a pedagogical aid through which we can bring dynamic result. Viewing the current educational scenario there is a dire need for the intervention of technology in the English language classroom. Therefore, this study discusses the technological modules developed in our Institute- Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani to cater to the demand of the rural students of nearby villages. Moreover, this study also brings forth the results from a questionnaire survey of sixty students from class 5th-8th to gauge the difference in learning pace by traditional method of teaching and after the intervention of technology.

WHY TECHNOLOGY?

Motivation or, more accurately, the lack of interest is a consistent problem for teachers now a day. It is proved by the researchers   that for learning to occur, a certain degree of motivation and interest should be in place. Otherwise, all efforts to teach students to speak, write, and read simply go down the drain. Little wood (1984, 53) explains that "motivation is the critical force which determines whether a learner embarks on a task, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres". Nevertheless, students in classrooms are often there because they have to be, not because they want to be. Technology is one tool through which we can grab the attention of the students and thus detain them in the classroom. When the students in our class seemed unmotivated, we noticed that most of the text book based activities left them flustered and bored. Although we had given them a lot of interactive classroom activities but still failed to enhance their retention power. At this juncture we realized that a mechanistic and all-too-common reductive abstraction of teaching from human experience and multidisciplinary perspectives can be overcome in part through the use of new technologies as teaching devices. In fact with the help of technology as a teaching tool, we can free students from the constraints of the linear, purely word based report. Different applications of technology can incorporate rich panoply of visual and auditory devices, as well as provide numerous pathways to make the classroom more interactive[8].

Viewing the high potentialities of technology for pedagogical purpose and we turned to technology enabled teaching as a means to motivate students and to generate interest in the classroom. The various kinds of technology applications which we have exploited for pedagogical purpose have been discussed below.

TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS: AS A CLASSROOM TOOL FOR GLOBAL EDGE

Before discussing the advantages of using technology for enhancing employability, it is important not to refer to technology as if we were dealing with a single, homogeneous tool, as if all technology were the same. Different technology based tools render different advantages for learning. There isn't one technology best suited for learning but rather an array of technological tools that can be harnessed to that end, although the tools themselves will continue to change very rapidly. More specifically, there are three important technological platforms that provide tools to enhance English Language skills at primary level: movies, audio video aids and advertisements. These applications of technology and their role in improving English Language skills have been discussed below.

FILMS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Nowadays students need to be exposed to a wide variety of resources from audio to printed material. Although this output seems to fulfill their needs and prepare them for the outside world, teachers always keep searching for more motivating sources. So, introducing movies into our classroom is a challenge most language teachers must face. In fact movies can be an interesting source for teaching English especially to rural children. While showing the movies instructor should divide the lesson into three stages.

In the initial stage teacher can introduce plot, various characters and the setting of the film. At this stage they can incorporate some prediction based activities with help of different clippings of the movie. Such type of activities will generate their interest in learning.

At the second stage we can introduce the characters and plot of the movie in a detailed manner. Here, we can offer the students problem solving activities with the help of various movie clippings. Just show the students some clipping and ask them to solve the problem. Such type of activities will kill two birds by one stone. On the one hand, it will enhance their problem solving skill on the other hand it will improve their English. Apart from this, an instructor can incorporate some more exercise such as filling blanks, multiple choice question , true or false questions at this stage.

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At the final stage when the students comprehend the plot and the various characters of the movie thoroughly we can ask them to role-play their favorite character in the movie. Similarly, an instructor can organize group debates based on the moral of the plot. As far as writing is concerned ,an instructor can give the students a written homework assignment and ask students to describe their favorite character.

Such types of movie based exercises bring creativity, variety and dynamics in the classroom; which is essential especially to learn a second language.

AUDIO VIDEO MATERIAL FOR ENHANCEMENT OF ENGLISH SKILLS

The new era assigns new challenges and duties on the modern teacher. The traditional methods on teaching English have been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology in the arena of teaching. Technology provides so many options which can be used not only to make the teaching interesting but also to make teaching more effective and productive in terms of students' improvement. Audio-video materials can be proved to be the best recourses which can be utilized for the enrichment of modern teaching styles. The greatest advantage of these types of materials is that it satisfies both visual and auditory senses of the students. It gives an unparalleled chance to the teacher to create a virtual world in the classroom itself.

Audio video devices enhance the interest of students, especially students of quite young age. Language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – can be developed by the appropriate use of the audio-video materials. For example, there are various techniques that can be used to improve listening with the help of audio-video materials. A teacher can use recordings of expert speakers to improve their listening. Moreover, he can also use movies or some interesting video clips in which the target language is a medium of conversation. This can give a good chance to the learners to listen to the speakers of target language along with the visual presentation of the story. They will listen to the characters with interest and this interest will generate good understanding of the target language.

Moreover, the improvement in the students' pronunciation of the target language can be brought about by the appropriate use of audio-video materials. For example, in our language lab we often use the software called Sky Pronunciation with the help of which they can easily understand the right kind of pronunciation of consonants, vowels, diphthongs and the like. The software checks the right kind of pronunciation in the usage of language by the students and correcting their pronunciation. With a sustained practice of this software they imbibe the right kind of pronunciation in their routine conversation of the target language. This technique can be far better than the teaching of all sorts of theoretical elements of phonetics. Indeed, the teaching of phonetics can be enriched with such type of audio-video materials.

Hence, it is seen that audio-video aids are a kind of panacea to almost all the problems that a teacher come across in his or her efforts of making the teaching more effective. They are very effective at all the levels of teaching irrespective of different subjects and categories, provided that a teacher knows what kind of material he is supposed to select from web and knows how to use it.

ADVERTISEMENT: A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

TV advertisements provide a host of pedagogical possibilities for any language class. One 30-second ad brings authentic linguistic and cultural content that can be integrated into various communicative activities. A commercial is not just a 30-second ad; it's a story, a scene, a cast of characters, a dialogue, an array of emotions and even a bit of humor. Such type of material can be exploited for pedagogical purpose. They will naturally react to the situation while empathizing with the characters and experiencing an emotional and often humorous side of English. These advertisements can be exploited not only to teach grammar but also figures of speeches. Students are also motivated to improve and modify the content while using the specific context as a framework for such co-creating and expanding. The reservoir of both the print and television advertisements is created and then several concepts are taught in the classroom. For example, while teaching the concept of creativity, the advertisements are shown and students have to find out why the advertisement is able to create an impact on the viewer. When they see these advertisements they also get the idea of designing the ad campaigns themselves. Similarly, advertisements can be an interesting tool to teach paralinguistic features such as pronunciation, articulation, intonation, etc. This technique borrows much from the methodology of using films in language education where listening and observing serve as foundational skills that naturally lead to discussion, critical thinking, role play, and writing activities.

LEARNERS PERCEPTION TOWARDS TECHNOLOGY

As mentioned earlier this study examines the perceptions of college students towards technology enabled learning to gauge the difference in learning pace by traditional method of teaching and after the intervention of technology. A questionnaire was administrated to sixty English language learners of nearby government and private school in Pilani. The results shows positive attitude towards English course delivered through technology. In response to the question, technology enabled learning is better in comparison to traditional teaching methods, majority (98%) of the students have given their consent. According to the rural students advertising is also one of the technology applications which help in grasping English language in an interesting way. When students were asked about the various audio - visual aids and their cooperation in understanding various concepts, almost all the students (100%) have given their approval. Only 5 % students were disagree with the statement that in technology enabled learning they cannot learn according to their own pace. However, majority of the students found technology enabled learning environment quite interesting where they can learn according to their own pace. Implications are that technology has a beneficial role to play in the curriculum and may have potential to facilitate effective language learning.

CONCLUSION

A hundred years ago, the very idea that a motion picture can be used for pedagogical purpose was treated with ridicule and scorn. But in this 21st it is heartening to see the growth in the use of technology in India and boom in the IT industry that has opened new avenues for educational sector. The impact of this boom on the educational sector has in turn revolutionized the academic culture in India. Although education is involved with a number of technological improvements, it takes very long time for all the educators to gain mastery in their applications. It is one thing to confine technology to isolated labs and quite another to make it a potent force in transforming an entire education system. In order to exploit pedagogical benefits of technology we have to articulate a coherent, technology integrated on-going program. Such program often requires sustained long term effort. Each technology has its advantages and limitations and no one technology is useful for all types of learning. While selecting the technology for pedagogical purpose, the criteria to be kept in mind are availability, accessibility, acceptability, economics and validity of the media. In fact, technology can not be developed and implemented in a vacuum. A lot of pedagogical and psychological factors work behind its successful execution. The dream of our nation to bring our students into the 21st century and face the challenges of global corporate world will change into realty only after the efficient integration of technology in the curriculum.

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