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Blended learning: A revitalize(r) for TLP of poetry

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Abstract

The concept of Blended learning may have made its' entry into the academia only a decade ago, but its' essence may be found in the old days of Vedic Era, where the teacher used to teach theory in the precincts of Gurukul, but was supposed to take students out in the lap of nature to practice with a touch of reality. The Indian concept of idealized education was punctured with a touch of the scientific temperament of Britishers at the advent of colonialization. Since then there have been number of paradigm shifts in the concept of education with the advent of internet, AV aids, smart classrooms and laptops, online courses and e-lectures. With many meandering leaps the concept of Education has reached the present stage of Blended Learning, where the technology and teacher are at the same pedestal. Nonetheless, the teaching and learning process of Poetry has also been greatly metamorphosized from the sapless methods of classroom teaching and learning including recitation, reading between the lines, brainstorming vocabulary exercises to learning and teaching through interactive methods of blended learning to make it a participatory and stimulating odyssey for both the teacher and taught.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Teaching Learning Process, Technology, Education.
Abbreviations: BL- Blended Learning, TLP- Teaching Learning Process, ELT-English Language Teaching, ICT- Information & Communications technology, KG- Kindergarten

Introduction

Education is the only tool through which the unbridled energy and potential of any nation can be tapped and put to right use. Education (both formal and informal) has been making us beings from brute since the first few dregs of life on earth. The concept of education too has been meandering and mapping the course of change it happens to face on its way towards its evolution to the present day concept of Education in the age of blended learning. The concept of Blended learning may be a debutant in the field of academia, but its' embedded essence can be churned out since the beginning of education in India. Education in India is said to have begun even before Vedic Era under Gurukul system, where instructions may have been imparted within the precincts of the gurukul only but students were made to practice the theoretically learnt art in the lap of nature, with a tinge of reality to make it empirical. Education imparted in Gurukul was more or less religious and deified in nature till the time the Britishers came to India and punctured this balloon of idolized education with temper of science, rationality and logic. The touch of science has democratized the concept of education from something which could lend salvation to something that civilizes and enlightens.

Theoretical Concepts of Blended Learning

Blended learning involves technology in the classroom. It specifies the use of online sites and applications to teach a part of syllabi, whereas the teacher gives instruction. Defined blended learning as more than just adding-in technology but providing a "thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences (96)." The major difference, according to Garrison and Kanuka, is that teachers cannot just repackage old material and put it online. Rather, teachers must consider how to deliver and receive content to make students to think more creatively and more critically. Instead of a classroom that is taught purely by a face-to-face teacher or purely in an online setting, 'blended learning' combines online content with in-person instruction and guidance. The intention is to allow students to get help from the

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expert, the teacher, while working on applying the concepts that they are learning via online apps and educational websites. Blended learning is generally acknowledged as falling somewhere between these two extremes, incorporating elements of each.

Characteristics and Benefits of Blended Learning
- Students can choose from either of the two modes of learning either from traditional face to face learning to online learning as per his/her requirements.
- Students get ample time to learn and practice, as in the traditional class room teaching the lecture of teachers was transient, whereas in blended learning they can get the lecture recorded and listen it time and again, afterwards they can meet the teacher for clarifications.
- Blended learning is a wholesome concept which caters the all-round development needs of a student.
- It widens the horizon of education as one can exploit and exhaust the online available resources.
- The presence of teacher for instruction makes it very convenient for the students to adapt and learn from it.
- It promotes multiculturalism as students can learn and interact with the students across many cultures and nation through online sources.
- Though blended learning is student oriented yet it does not negate the role of teacher as altogether. Rather it treats the teacher and taught at equal pedestal with equal share of responsibilities and duties.
- Learning and teaching becomes a fun activity; rather than a structured burdensome traditional class room learning and teaching.
- It also helps teaching go eco-friendly as much of the paper and chart waste is saved.
- It also saves much of the time and energies of the teacher, as he/she used to do a lot of verbal gymnastics to make students comprehend abstract concepts and images.

Tools of Blended Learning
There is a wide range of tools and technologies that can be used under blended learning teaching namely:
a) Technologies commonly used in the classroom are PPT (Power Point Presentation), interactive whiteboards and audience response systems;
b) Virtual communication tools that enable users to engage in discussions and activities over the internet, including audio files, discussion boards, e-lists, discussion groups, chat or conferencing, email, news groups, polling, questionnaires, web forms and videoconferencing;
c) The use of social networking sites and applications is quite rampant these days for personal life and for learning i.e. instant messaging, calls, podcasts, social-networking sites-whatsapp, Facebook pages, Instagram, video clips, virtual worlds, weblogs and wikis;
d) E-learning system that provides an array of tools to go online: conferencing systems, group collaboration software and group sites;
e) Mobile learning using mobile phones, laptops and tablet and PCs. etc.

Review of Literature
The literature on blended learning is quite diverse, but the majority of literature reviews, to date, has focused on blended learning at the college or graduate school level or has focused solely on the effect on achievement. Jane Kenney and Ellen Newcombe after conducting in a pilot study in a class came to the conclusion that there are certain challenges of using blended. They state that time was a major factor that affected the final results of the class. Another challenge was getting the students on board with the new format. The instructor felt the need to continuously remind students about due dates and where to find materials and assignments on the website. The technical difficulties too could not be ignored as some of the students found themselves incompetent to use technology tools for instructional purposes, despite the fact they had been using them proficiently for social interaction.

Astrid Haugestad's "Blended Learning in English Literature" (2015) shows that students enhance their learning and knowledge by participating in digital activities and with the right blend of methods with which students may be engaged to seek new information, take part in online speech communities and contribute to electronic bulletin boards. While teaching English in a blended classroom, one must assume that new technology has the potential to improve both teaching and learning along with digital skills. The technology also empowers the learners to be in command of what they are receiving and simultaneously have an exposure to the target language through web-based activities along with the possibilities to redo and reread comments. The repetitive nature of these discussions, in which writers quote and comment on each other´s messages, assists learners in understanding linguistic cues. The use of chat rooms and online discussions may also have a socially cohesive effect and thus open up for more students daring to discuss in open class outside the virtual world which also has a good effect on the development of the students' language.

Raj Ali Zahid Elley (2015) [2]. Is of the opinion that in a limited time span of a semester, teacher can incorporate better study materials while combining them with online videos and other AV-aids. Blended learning is beneficial for learners too, as time is given for learning at their own pace. However, this method is more challenging, different, and unbound than strict traditional methods.

In "An Experiment in Blended Learning: Bringing Poetry in America for Teachers into My Classroom" (2017), Khriseten Bellows states that while using *Poetry in America*'s online content a need for a deeper and more interactive analysis of the course material was felt. He used a gradual-release technique to bring a poem in the classroom. By blending collaborative learning, the miasma of electronics and frenzied friendships, the instructor with face-to-face learning through the texts were helping learners to articulate and empathize with another human's experience, and to have the universal appeal of the given literary work.

A study by Mohammed A. A. Farrah and Nimer A. A. Abuzahra highlights another perspective that online learning and technological resources enable learners to have a comprehensive scope for the learning process in the foreign language classroom, as they facilitate a multidisciplinary perspective on learning and open new opportunities which technology offers to education in general and to the literary criticism in (2018). The learners become more responsible and collaborative, having more social interaction that in turn becomes helpful in fostering exchange of information and ideas. The active participation in various online activities

gives them the opportunity to receive effective feedback from their peers as well as their instructor.

Objectives of the Study

I. To know the relevance of Blended Learning in revitalizing teaching of Poetry.
II. To analyze how TLP of Poetry was dealt in face to face classroom learning & through Blended Learning.

TLP (Teaching Learning Process) of Poetry

"Like a piece of ice on a hot stove the poem must ride on its own melting."

~Robert Frost

Publishing a volume of verse is like dropping a rose-petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for echo"

~Don Marquis

Poetry is the most elusive and an evanescent literary genre. It has been capturing and graphing the life and breath of mankind since the day emotions and language have started throbbing on this planet Earth. To approach poetry for masses have always been an arduous odyssey; and to teach poetry is to tread a path which always remains untrodden. Poetry is part of the syllabi from KG to degree classes. As far as the teaching of poetry is concerned, it is ridden with many foibles and follies. Teachers of poetry in India treat teaching of poetry no different from teaching of prose or fiction. Teaching of poetry can be equated with the analogy of mine hunting; as a teacher has landed on the gold mine and he/she is to hunt the mine of poetry to the core with paraphrasing, explanation, vocabulary exercises, allusions, biography of the poet, and almost clinical and cold blooded dissection of words and phrases to send the patient beyond resuscitation. This way poetry teaching becomes a dull, drab and monotonous exercise, which causes students to treat poetry as something tedious rather than sipping on the sap and spruce of it. Poetry teaching should kindle the latent emotions of students and making them alive to the experience of poem as a whole. After reading a poem, they should be able to hum it like a song.

With the advent of ICT, ELT and blended learning and the over-hauling of the traditional classroom teaching laced with the hue of this newness has revitalized and replenished the TLP of poetry. This has given a new lease of life to poetry learning and teaching.

Though there are numerous methods of teaching poetry; yet there are certain steps which are common to almost all the methods i.e. preparation, presentation of the poem, comprehension questions, appreciation questions, and assignment.

Preparation

Preparation of the teaching of poem includes some of the pre-requisites which have to be fulfilled before the official teaching of the poem. These requites are like assumptions of a theory. These are as follows:

a) **Material Aids:** The teaching aids in the traditional methods included chalk and duster. Whereas in the age of blended learning various online tools can be used to give totally a new colour and flesh to poetry teaching. The aids used under blended learning are: PPT, Smart boards, mobiles, tabloids, online sites, https://www.blackboard.com/index. html and links etc.

b) **Previous Knowledge Testing:** The first thing it is paramount for a teacher to know the emotional and psychological level of the pupil. After this the teacher will be able to link the new knowledge with the previous knowledge, hence the platform for the imbibing of new knowledge will be formed for pupil. In the earlier days of traditional classroom teaching previous knowledge testing was done by asking certain questions. But in the age of blended learning previous knowledge testing can be done by showing a small video clip, a small advertisement or playing an audio tape indirectly related to the poem. A PPT can be made or certain questions can be asked through websites like https://www.menti.com/ to check the knowledge of students.

c) **Introduction:** Before the final teaching of the poem a good introduction is always necessary. This introduction will act to arouse and stimulate the interest of the students in the poem. "Introductory talk in mother tongue is highly effective to arouse pupil's curiosity and interest." (Menon & Patel). But whichever language is used for introduction, it should in no way, spoil the environment necessary for the enjoyment of the poem. A parallel poem or video clip can help teacher introducing the poem.

Presentation of the poem

"*A poem is a complete whole...a good poem should be taught as a whole.*"

~ Ryburn.

Each poem has to be taught in complete without tampering the harmony, if the poem is long it should be taught in a manner not to spoil its beauty as a whole. Presentation stage involves the following steps:

a) **Highlighting ideas contained:** The main gist of the poem should be presented to the pupils through the presentation of PPT or small video relating to the theme of the poem can be presented. This should not be revealing the whole poem. This will build a stage for the pupils to understand and expect what is to follow in this poem.

b) **Model recitation by the teacher:** In the traditional classroom set up a teacher used to read and recite the poem to pupils. This used to be the only perfect model for the pupils to follow. The recitation model is fleeting in nature and students are also too shy to ask teacher to repeat more than twice. Nowadays, with the tools of blended learning model recitation can be presented through YouTube links which shall stay with the students for long time and they can use it anytime and anywhere. Such links will provide students with recitation model of the poem many a time in the voice of the original poet himself/herself with exact regional accent, tone, intonation etc. This audio will be permanence in nature and student can practice in leisure too till the time he/she is not able to master nuances of the recitation.

c) **Meaning and Pronunciation drill of difficult words and phrases:** As the teacher has presented the students with model recitation online link, student will be able to grasp the poem up to a greater extent. Even though there are still some words, phrases abstract ideas which a child doesn't understand. A teacher can use online

mobile dictionaries, pronunciation apps, Google latest pronunciation feature and pictures to concretize the abstract ideas. But meaning should never be severed from the poem as whole.

d) Silent & loud reading and recitation by the pupil: Students should be made to read and recite the poem silently taking the help of online model. So that they may be able to understand the subtleties of the poem and meaning of the poem. Then a loud recitation will help student master the recitation on the basis of model.

e) Removal of language difficulties: There are many sites for the students to look for meanings and to get clarification for the language difficulties. Some sites are as https://www.sparknotes.com/, https://www.cliffsnotes.com/ and https://www.shmoop.com/poetry/.

f) Final reading of the poem and choral recitation: Final choral the poem recitation of the poem after the playing of model of recitation online will let students shun off their coyness to open up too in choral recitation. This group recitation will help them give a vent to their pent up feelings; a cathartic relief.

Comprehension & appreciation questions: Comprehension questions can be asked by the teacher to gauge whether the students have understood the poem or not. Comprehension questions or recapitulation of sections can be checked online through https://www.menti.com/ website, objective questions and may through drawing a puzzle online. Such questions or games need to be quite less in numbers and not to be breaking the continuity of the poem in any way. Same can be applied to appreciation questions as well which are asked to pupil in order to know whether the pupil are clear about the beauty of thought, images, emotions, style and language.

Assignment: Assignment in poetry teaching is not much importance compared to other literary genres. But fun type of assignments can be given either to make of PPT of ideas contained in the poem and they may be made asked to make a short video basing on the contours of poem. They may be asked to find out a song or poem from their mother tongue to draw a comparison.

Conclusion
TLP of Poetry has taken new paradigm shifts in the age of Blended Learning. The latest methods and tools of teaching and learning of poetry has revitalized and replenished the otherwise sapless and drab methods of traditional classroom teaching. Tools like PPT, Smart boards, mobiles, tabloids, online sites, YouTube, social networking, https://www.blackboard.com/index.html, https://www.menti.com/, https://www.sparknotes.com/, https://www.cliffsnotes.com/ and https://www.shmoop.com/poetry/. These methods have made learning and teaching activity a fun activity, accessible anywhere and anytime almost. In the earlier teaching was sole governed and ordained by teacher, BL has made it student oriented but not altogether negating the importance of teacher. The teaching and learning process of Poetry has also been greatly changed from the sapless methods of classroom teaching and learning including recitation, reading between the lines, brainstorming vocabulary exercises to learning and teaching through

interactive methods of blended learning to make it a participatory and stimulating odyssey for both the teacher and taught.

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