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The importance of ICT in English language teaching

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Abstract

Today, almost a full decade into the 21st century, we live amidst unprecedented revolution in the advancement of ICT, however, surrounded by widespread poverty, and social and economic inequalities are the norm. Considered as powerful tool to promote social and economic development, education has become a primary focus of the recently forged information communication technology for development community, especially in the least developed countries. ICT gives students and teachers new tools with which to learn and teach'. Shavinina (2001) states that the importance of ICT is quite clear from the educational perspective. Teaching with the chalk board, textbooks, radio/television and film have been used for educational purpose over the years, none has quite impact on the educational process like the computer and Internet, while television and film has impact on the audiovisual facilities of the users'. He refers that ICT has the capacity to provide higher interactive potential for users to develop their individual, intellectual and creative ability. The main purpose of ICT is to develop human mental resources, which allow people apply the existing knowledge and produce new knowledge. According to National curriculum for education (2009) 'Information and communication technology prepares pupils to participate in a rapidly changing world in which work and other activities are increasingly transformed by access to varied and developing technology. Pupils use ICT tools to find, explore, analysis, exchange and present information responsibly creatively and discrimination. They learn how to employ ICT and enable to access ideas and experiences from a wide range of people, communities and cultures'. Increased capability in the use of ICT help to promote initiative and independent learning with pupils and being able to make informed judgments about, when and where to use ICT and its effect and its implications for home and work both now and in the future.

Keywords: ICT, human mental resources, technology, information, communication, educational purpose

Introduction

ICT covers any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receiving information electronically in a digital form. For example, personal computers, digital television, e-mail, robots. So ICT is concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission or receipt of digital data. Importantly, it is also concerned with the way these different uses can work with each other.

- **Information**

Information means the processed data in a meaningful and purposeful form according to Shore in Hartoyo (2012:2)

- **Communication**

According to Potts, communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. Brown (2011) stated communication is transfer of information from one person to another, whether or not it elicits confidence. But the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver.

- **Technology**

Technology derived from the word 'techno' which means technique, art or skill, and 'logos' which means science. Therefore, technology can be defined as a scientific knowledge of art or skill. Based on the definitions of the three components, ICT as a whole can be described as the utility of technology to support the effort of conveying information and communication particularly in the area of education.

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The technique includes digital technologies mostly of electronic information – processing technologies, such as computers, internet, mobile phones, networks, broadband, and so on.

The term ICT stands for information and communication technology. The term “information and communication technologies” (ICT) refers to forms of technology that are used to transmit, process, store, create, display, share or exchange information by electronic means. This broad definition of ICT includes such technologies as radio, television, video, DVD, telephone (both fixed line and mobile phones), satellite systems, and computer and network hardware and software, as well as the equipment and services associated with these technologies, such as videoconferencing, e-mail and blogs ^[1].

In a document of UNESCO shared online, the ICT has been defined with broader perspective advocating its scope, importance and nature of use, especially highlighting in the field of education: “Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information. Communication and the information are at the very heart of the educational process, consequently ICT use in education has a long history. ICT has played an educational role in formal and non-formal settings, in programs provided by governmental agencies, public and private educational institutions, for profit corporations and non-profit groups, and secular and religious communities” ^[2].

Nowadays the use of ICT in teaching and learning process becomes very important. The teacher is expected to be both traditional and modern in his/her teaching-learning process. The teacher has to be prepared to have the capacity of including ICT in the teaching process. In the 21st century technologies are interactive but still low in the language classroom. Recently, internet has gained and still gaining an immense popularity in second/foreign language teaching and more teachers and learners are embracing it. So, there is no doubt that ICT has impacted the quantity and quality of teaching and learning in traditional and distance education institutions. Therefore, ICT can enhance teaching and learning through its dynamic and interactive content and can provide real opportunities for individualized instruction. Today ICT is being used as a tool of improving the quality of life. Its use is increasing in such a way in recent years. Different language institutions in all over the globe have already realized the importance of ICT in teaching-learning process. However, ICT plays the lion role in communicating, establishing and managing information. ICT has proved effective in delivering learning to all over the world and to those people who are unable to move from their places and cannot move their limb and hardly utter words. It becomes possible for them to enhance education due to ICT.

There are many different ICT tools that can be used in teaching and learning. These tools can be applied in different education fields.

Radio and television are the useful tools of language learning. Both the instruments offer cheap access to rich programs. The immediacy of current affair programs ensures that learners’ exposure to the language is up-to-date and embedded in the real world of native speakers. Through radio it is possible for the teachers to make the students to listen the lectures by eminent and outstanding speakers. Tv

is the other important technological medium used by the language teachers as it appeals through eyes and ears. Tv provides a full audio visual simulation, dynamic and attains a higher degree of realism. Tv gives linguistic expression along with the facial expression ^[3].

Language lab is one of the modern technological teaching aids. Language lab has multi facets like students can listen to the audios and can understand the different accent used, the students are able to speak and even, they can record their voices. The students’ pronunciation level could be improvised by listening to the standardized materials. Language lab is an exclusively result oriented and it enriches the English language learning process. In the recent trends, not only the audios but videos, flash based games, internet are also included in the lab materials. Language lab creates an easy atmosphere than a traditional classroom ^[7]. The projector, a conventional method of teaching, is highly beneficial and an alternative to chalk and talk. The OHP consumes time by preparing the materials in advance, but this sort of multimedia ensures the high- quality instruction. It is an important visual aid to display the context to the large class. OHP’s allows the teachers to use images, diagrams and it reduces the work of the teacher by drawing it on the black board. By using OHP’s more complicated sources can be brought into any classrooms and it is easy to use, versatile and it is easy for the students to take notes from it.

Information and communication technology in ELT can cover all the four skills of English language (Grammar – Writing – Reading –speaking). ICT plays a lion role in teaching and learning of English. The modern way of teaching-learning process depends on information and communication technology (ICT). So, it becomes the need of the hour to improve the quality of education

ICT provides positive vibrations on students’ attitude towards learning a language. Students can have an excellent chance to pick out the elements through which they can meet their learning strategies, which were failed to satisfy by the conventional methods. The availability of sources like images, animations, audio and video clips is very simulating because they support the learners in presenting and practicing a language in a different way. Not only for the students but also the teachers depend more on these tools to produce, prepare, store and retrieve the materials of learning at ease. ICT provides authenticity by which the learner could interact with others all over the world.

This literature review explored the use of ICT tools in teaching and learning of English. Since conventional approaches and the methodologies are interlinked with the novel technologies to teach English language, it seems impractical to keep them part. With the help of these ICT tools, which are available freely on the internet, can make the second language teaching a fruitful one. It becomes beneficial for teaching a foreign language in the hands of creative and knowledgeable language teachers. Now ELT has come into the period of evaluation where new inventions are entering into our day to- day activities. The elements, which are aforementioned are making impacts in the pathway of learning particularly in the English language teaching. Thus, it is shown that ELT has evolved to a greater extent due to the influx of technologies.

Whether the ICT intervention is situated and adapted to the local context: use local language, reflects local culture and its resources, allows students to express local culture and

further facilitate them to connect with the concepts constructing their own meaning and knowledge. I believe that there is no scarcity of ICT innovations in the country, what really counts as innovation is what works for the targeted audience, shows impact at scale, and has potential for systemic and sustainable transformation. Some of these innovations are situated in its design, others, in implementation strategies like accessing infrastructure, nature of collaboration, teacher professional development and situating intervention within the systemic fabric. Otherwise from blackboard to smart board, from print to digital content, if the ICT tool or intervention cannot transform the teaching and learning practices or where the teacher or ICT is still a sage on the stage, then it is a waste of resources and efforts at all ends.

Public private partnerships are crucial to make meaningful ICT integration in education for the government schools. However, private partnerships interests and offerings in government schools need to be assessed in terms of indicators discussed above under Learning Design. Civil societies play an important role in bringing all stakeholders together and implement an ICT intervention collectively on the ground. But care should be taken that interventions do not stay as projects which come and go with financial support. One of the ways out would be to seek academic collaboration for interventions within In-service and pre-service teacher professional development for systemic and sustainable engagements.

English language learning and teaching methodologies undergone many changes over the last four decades: moving from a traditional grammar-translation method to more student centered methods such as Total Physical Response, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) which are more popular among language teachers [4]. As the recent innovations, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MAAL), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) and E-learning have been increasingly used in English language classroom.

Technology has created opportunities and challenges to the teachers and learners to a great extent. A recent surge in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is having an impact on how English and other languages are taught and learned. The value of ICTs for language learning is widely accepted, albeit in some cases with caution. In the context of developing countries, ICTs are often seen as an empowering tool which provides people with access to opportunities and choices that were hitherto not available, however e-devices for English language teaching and learning are still an emerging field in developing countries.

Teachers in the 21st century must have to integrate technologies to teach languages effectively in the classroom. In technology integrated instruction, teachers and students make use of e-devices. E-devices are those devices which accomplish their purpose electronically. ICT can be seen as empowering tools which provide people with access to opportunities and choices for grammar exercises and activities. Technology is a way in which people use the ideas of science to make their task easier, faster and available. Nowadays, some modern electronic devices such as computer, television, overhead projector, mobile phone, multimedia and web based applications have vital roles in language teaching because they help to teach language more effectively and appropriately. It is claimed that most of the

teachers in urban areas have been using various technologies in the classroom. We can see the growing tendency of using ICT in language teaching and learning with the help of e-devices. It can be taken as a positive signal towards e-learning. However, there exist many problems in doing so. The problems are related to our attitude in the use, challenges we have to face while going through them in the classes and the strategies to be chosen for their effective uses.

Literacy in ICT is fundamental to life in our modern technological society. To equip students to be literate life-long learners and global citizens of the 21st century, we must successfully integrate ICT into both the English curriculum and English pedagogical practice. ICT is a valuable tool to enhance teaching and learning. For teachers, ICT is a professional resource: a mode of classroom delivery, a source of valid and valuable text types. For students, it provides opportunities to communicate more effectively and to develop literacy skills including skills in critical literacy. It is a valuable tool for, researching, composing and responding, viewing and representing in English.

Some commonly used ICT tools associated with searching and managing knowledge include Communication and Collaboration Systems such as group E-mail, teleconference, video conference, chat, IMO, forum, Listserv, groupware calendar, log, shared information spaces workflow management system, group decision support system. Similarly, Documents management systems, Content management systems, internet, Search engine, computer and google manager. Similarly, the teacher can integrate mobile phone, email, social networking sites, messenger, mobile apps, online dictionaries, radio, television, cable, tabs, CDs, DVDs and other highly accessible data based sub-systems in language teaching and learning [5].

Conclusion

Nowadays, we use e-devices as a gateway in learning and teaching language in ELT classrooms. Despite many more advantages of implementing ICT into ELT in the context like ours, we have some challenge too. Shrestha has mentioned some pitfalls that can be existed in an ICT integrated classroom. We may have difficulties in infrastructure development. Similarly, ICTs may not be in the access of all the teachers and learners. They are quite costly. We may face problem of transportation and electricity. The teachers can have the problem of providing training to the students. Similarly, there can be the problems in time management and material development. Similarly, some other problems are related to practicality, lack of authentic materials, local English materials and cultural appropriateness. In the same way, there can be the problem of finding out expert teachers to handle their teaching with ICT.

Despite the challenges discussed above, Ur²⁶ states that learning language with e-devices at least addresses the issues of content, cognition, communication, and the relationship between culture and language. Besides, the use of ICT in learning language in daily life seems effective to develop intercultural communication skills. Similarly, the students get opportunities to study content through different perspectives, access and subject-specific target language terminology. They can get opportunities to improve overall

target language competence and develop oral communication and socialization skills. In the same way, the students will be motivated to learn language with ICT

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