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Editor: Saikat Banerjee

Editor: Dr. Saikat Banerjee
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
St. Theresa International College, Thailand.



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ICT & Multimedia: Effective Enhancers in English Language Learning

Dr. Payal Khurana

Assistant Professor

The North Cap University

Gurugram-122017

Email: payalksoni@gmail.com

Abstract: Language is one of the most powerful tools for communication. English language being a global language, occupies a special place in the world. To match up the pace with their counterparts, it's very important for students learning English as a second language, to gain proficiency in both reading and writing so as to create a niche for themselves in this competitive world. In today's technology driven world, where students are all the time hooked to their electronic gadgets like smart phones, smart watches, tablets, note pads etc., it has become necessary to teach them using means which they are comfortable with. In fact, learning English language has become very easy by using multimedia and computer based learning. It has many benefits as compared to the traditional classroom setting of learning a language which had many shortcomings. Using multimedia and ICT is a more pragmatic and empirical approach towards learning.

By using computer based teaching, students get a hands-on-experience on exploring and learning the nuances of the language and have instant access to the results and his performance. It serves in collaborative and cooperative learning. Usage of multimedia and ICT is ideal for incorporating skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Keywords: global language, multimedia, pragmatic, ICT.

Introduction

Humans are not born with an instinct to learn any specific language like Hindi, Marathi, English, French, Portuguese, German, Spanish etc. We learn a language which we are exposed to since the day we are born. We learn languages because we want to be understood by the society and also in turn we want others to understand us. Learning English as a second language in India is an important skill set. It increases job prospects and acceptability in the society. In fact, it is important to become a global citizen.



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It can't be learnt by memorizing a few rules; it requires a good command on basic speech sounds, grammatical patterns and essential vocabulary.

Discussion

With the advancement of technology, computers have gained entry in every field. The current generation depends and takes interest in technology aided material. Using computers is a boon for students learning English as a second language. Setting up a language lab and using ICT in Teaching English language in classrooms plays an important role in enhancing language proficiency of students. It has many assured benefits to the students and teachers alike since it provides a blend of technology and classroom setting to bring the best out of a student. It provides a connection between the outside world and academics.

It has also been proven that when we see visuals it creates a great impact on the minds of the students and they remember it for a long time.

High quality visual content can have a major impact on your conversion funnel. From studying brain scans to tracking eye movements, researchers have discovered that visual content is simply processed differently than text. Visuals communicate more information, more effectively....Another study, by 3M, puts this observation in more measurable terms, finding that 90% of the information transmitted to the brain is visual. Further, visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text. (Kirschner)

For enhancing English communication skills we have to focus on all the four areas i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Computer integrated classrooms and labs provide an enriching experience to both teacher and students.

Proficiency in a language is built over time, through a process of cognitive learning and interactive practice. Computers provide a platform to students where comprehensive and digital content catering to the listening and speaking skills is put to use in a stimulating environment.



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Usage of multimedia only acts as an important aid because human touch, knowledge and experience are important to convey the desired and effective grasping of the language.

Multimedia and computers used in learning English language help in correct pronunciation of words. Students can learn vowel and consonant sounds by listening and repeating the same. It further helps in overcoming Mother tongue influence which is a common issue with students in India as they come from diverse regions. Learning thus is enhanced through day to day scenarios and makes the classroom a fun-filled environment conducive for learning and generating interest in learning effectively.

The students have option of accessing content at home on computers and revision helps in enriching vocabulary through self-study. “ICT-rich environments afford opportunities for authentic, diverse, mature practices to a greater extent than in non-ICT classrooms” (Lund 277). It acts as a ready-reckoner for all queries in the process of language learning.

Use of multimedia and computers offers a greater freedom for teachers as well to do things differently and use innovative methods of teaching. Power point presentations, videos on everyday scenarios etc. used in classrooms are effective in holding the attention of the students and involve students in discussions thus providing them with an opportunity to brush up their speaking skills and promote collaborative learning. Using multimedia, students can gain access to grammatical explanations. Even the shy learners are actively involved in this teaching-learning process. Nowadays, teaching-learning material is provided free of cost and can be easily accessed in classrooms and language labs. There are many free and paid software which can be purchased for better learning of the language.

Using computer software in labs aids the English language teacher in meticulous planning and control of the class since it helps the teacher to monitor all the students together from the teacher’s console, block the student’s monitor and take control of the keyword. Give instructions to all the students’ or set of students at a time. Conduct on-line examinations and generate instant result and feedback. The teacher can transfer video and audio files together to the whole class or individually, depending on their level of difficulty.



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The students' also have an advantage that they can listen to the recordings and record their voice and check and compare their recorded voice with the original voice. This helps them in modulating their voice and repetition helps in learning stress pauses, falling tone, rhythm and overcoming MTI. A variety of language items such as grammar, comprehension and writing tasks can be done in more effective manner than conventional chalk and talk method. Learning strategies like interpretation, using signposts, filling forms through listening can be used for developing listening skills. Skimming, scanning, summarizing is used for developing reading skills. Exercises using different sentence structures and linking sentences are provided for developing writing skills.

Teaching and learning phonetics is the basic requirement in English language acquisition. The use of multimedia provides a rich and interactive interface in the learning process of phonetics. Each and every phonemic sound is provided with an interactive voice to recognize the sounds and letters of the phonemic alphabets. The students can listen to vowel and consonant sounds and can test themselves to recognize individual sounds and words and transcribe and match words with their vowel components. They can compare their recorded sound wave with the original sound wave.

Apart from teaching learning process, ICT also has a deep impact on Curriculum and evaluation and assessment tools. "Certain skills can be specifically enhanced using the new technologies. Study skills and problem-solving, as well as negotiating skills, are advanced by communication and group learning and by the interplay within an interactive learning environment" (Akinwamide 3). A shift can be seen from closed and rigid curriculum to more open, interactive and comprehensive curriculum. Instead of only rote-learning and reproducing answers during exams, focus shifts on the skills needed to learn English language. The syllabus can be altered according to the learner's need and level, which further motivates the learner and enhances the English language acquisition process.

It also has a great impact on evaluation process. The students are themselves accountable for their own learning and assessment since they are graded on the spot and feedback is generated by the system instantly. This strengthens the learning process greatly. Thus ICT makes the learning more structured and student-centric.



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It also provides teachers with a wide range of resources and this can further strengthen their knowledgebase as well. “Technology provides ways for great teachers to refresh their own scholarship and pedagogy and bridges the gap between how our students experience their college curriculum and how they learn everything else” (Kirschner 23). Teachers can set specific criteria and levels according to the need of the students. The use of multimedia like short movies, music, songs can be used as an effective tool in English language learning, even more than the course books to strengthen topics like grammar and comprehension. It also strengthens the listening process of the students.

Conclusion

ICT and multimedia lets the students stay in touch with the language even if they are among native speakers. Since most of the exercises are time bound, students develop skill in completing their work within the given time thus enhancing their efficiency and thinking skills. This further helps in gaining fluency and command on the language.

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