

ICT IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

Ruby Tyagi¹ & T. Beena²

¹Research Scholar, Amity Institute of Education, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Behavioural & Allied Sciences, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT

Information and communication technology (ICT) has noticeably impacted the teaching learning process today. ICT has become an integral part of education catering to the diverse need of education fulfilling its objective of credibility and quality maintenance. ICT today, is the need of the hour and no aspect of life is left untouched by it. ICT in language education is the prime focus in this paper as all the subjects are in the realm of ICT these days. Use of ICT in language teaching learning process is the trend in the schools and one cannot deny its importance in teaching-learning of language. Different software are readily available to the teachers and learners to develop and enhance language skills. English language education through ICT and its prospects and challenges will be the prime focus in this paper. ICT in language education is a modern way of learning a language and is way easier than learning language through conventional chalk and talk method. ICT has provided a platform to make language learning especially the second language acquisition in Indian context much simpler through tools like YouTube, Blogs, Skype, Language games, Software like Duolingo, Wordsworth etc. Learning a second or foreign language through ICT is the latest trend and an important use of ICT in language, but this too is faced by many challenges which will be discussed further.

KEYWORDS: ICT Language, Software, Teaching-Learning

INTRODUCTION

“With the help of technology, teachers will be leaders in the transformation of education around the world” – Craig R.Barrett

Language is the essence of human life as it reflects the personality of the person acting as a mirror. The world is rapidly changing and hence the language learning must also undergo a change. This change is evident with the advent of ICT in teaching-learning process. Language learning today is completely reformed and learners are benefitting with this. Role of ICT in language learning has become inevitable in the 21st Century. It is an era of technology and it is used in all walks of life. The use of ICT provides a chance to teachers as well as students in increasing the quality of education and meeting the requirements set by the coeval knowledge society. ICT has become essential tool for educational change and reform. Use of ICT in language learning has certain prospects and challenges as well which should be catered into. Teachers using ICT as teaching language i.e English language faces many challenges which pose a question amidst the usage of technology in teaching-learning process, which will be discussed further in the paper.

Language is the heart of Education. It is a medium through which knowledge is constructed. Language is a basically speech and is widely used as a medium of effective communication. The importance of language in the life of any human being needs no emphasis and explanation. Language plays a very important role in the all-round development and empowerment of a teacher. Language is the heart of education and also the heart of teacher and taught. Every Language involves four basic skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. When children first start formal schooling, speech is the major asset they bring with them to the classroom no matter what their mother tongue is. Oral communicative competence implies: an ability to speak in target language fluently. It includes both intelligibility (which includes correct pronunciation, word and sentence, stress and intonation patterns for conveying correct meaning) and appropriateness (choice of words, levels of formality) and also of expression demanded by the situation. Oral communication competence also includes fluency, accuracy and interactional skills.

Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition happens when a child or adult has already become competent at the first language or his/her mother tongue and then attempts to learn other. First, some aspects of language learning, particularly syntax, are more difficult outside due to critical period. Second, older children and adults often have less time and motivation to learn a second language. Third, there will of course be similarities and differences between the first (L1) language and second (L2) languages. The contrastive hypothesis says that the learner will experience difficulty when L1 and L2 differ. Learning second language is a complex task for the learners, especially learning a foreign language or English, as second language has its own structure different from regional or mother tongue.

The complexity of second language learning is indicated by the complexity theories that attempt to explain the process. As Spolsky (1988) points out, a theory of second language learning must take into account the following notions:

- There is no simple and single criterion according to which a second language learner can be said to know a language.
- Second language learning is a social act that takes place within a social context. The social context provides a set of conditions that influence the second language learning process. The social context includes components such as the socio-linguistic circumstances, the type of interaction that learners have with other languages, the function that English and the learner's native language (s) play in the community and general attitudes toward bilingualism and multiculturalism in the community.

Concept, Meaning and Importance of ICT

ICT stands for Information and Communication Technology and is often confused with IT. People often think that ICT and IT are one and same whereas fact is that these two are entirely different concepts. IT is one aspect lying under the umbrella of ICT. ICT is a broad concept comprising of all the technologies that help people to interact and communicate with each other and interact with information. ICT is the aid today availed by teachers and learners to grab the meaning and concepts of diverse subjects of study. ICT in language helps the learners in becoming the global citizens and connect to the world around.

Information and communication technology (ICT) may be defined as “a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store and manage information” (Victoria, L.T, 2003).

In UNESCO document 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 used in education has a long history. ICT has played an educational role in formal and nonformal settings, in programs provided by governmental agencies, public and private educational institutions, for profit corporations and non-profit groups, and secular and religious communities” (unesco.org).

ICT is the main building block of today’s society and is fabricating lives these days with its tools to make learning effective and interesting. The need arises of its viable and suitable usage in field of education, especially learning a language as it also has its cons which can’t be overlooked completely.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (Call)

Beatty defines, CALL as “Any process in which a learner uses a computer and as a result improves his or her language and it covers the wide range of current practice in the field.” This tool of ICT is commonly used in teaching of language these days. In this, students are given tasks by the teacher through a computer- based software and programme. This is the basic use of computer in learning a language and also enhances the self -learning. With the changing times, this has become the most important pedagogical practice adopted by the English teachers in schools. Language learning modules are provided to the students which enhance the learning of foreign language in much easier way.

ICT Based Language Learning

An open access resources, virtual classrooms, online resources, online courses, and social network based on ICT are increasingly used these days in the field of Language education to enhance communication skills of learners and develop digital skills. ICT in language education is an inseparable part today and is successfully used to develop language skills at every level - Primary, Secondary, Higher Education. Usage of smart boards, software, mobile apps, social media like Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc are the latest trending tools that are used to develop language skills in learners. According to UNESCO (2004), ICT enables the access to store vast of knowledge beyond the school that includes the multimedia tools (Anderson, 2005). As stated by Bingimlas (2009), traditional educational environment is insufficient to make learners to be productive in today’s workplace.

Prospects of ICT in Language Learning

There is no doubt that ICT has unwavering impact upon the teaching-learning process. Teachers today, in schools are using ICT tools like language developing software, language games, Applications, Blogs, E-mails etc to teach English to learners. On the other hand, as compared to conventional methods of teaching English, ICT tools offers better understanding of language and learners find it catchy to learn a foreign language. With regard to convenience, these tools offer convenience as well. Today teachers teach a topic: Prose, Poetry, Grammar and composition using PowerPoint Presentations and learning is more effective with less time devoted to one topic as earlier. Assessment tools available makes the assessment and evaluation much simpler for teachers and saves time and energy. The advantages of using ICT in language teaching-learning are as follows:

- Provides for sharing of ideas and thoughts with peers in no time
- Individualised guidance is possible through ICT
- Accurate models of language are available through ICT tools
- Drill and practice can be done effectively practicing a language
- Assessing and evaluation is simple and quick
- Students are attracted towards ICT
- ICT is the trend and learners are attracted towards it
- Learners are exposed to wider usage of language and contexts
- Enable teachers to enhance their skills constantly
- Develops digital skills in teachers as well as learners
- Access to developments in language

Challenges Faced

While so many benefits attributed with the use of ICT in language learning in India, there are some challenges too that are posed in the path of adoption. The few challenges to highlight are as follows:

- Dearth of competent teachers- Not equipped with digital skills
- Attitude towards use of ICT- non acceptance of change
- Unawareness of benefits of ICT- not aware of ICT and tools
- Administrative Barriers- Non availability of ICT in Schools
- Geographical Barriers- Geographical location not suitable for ICT use

CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude on the note that ICT today is the buzz word and is the need of the hour. If used effectively, it can work wonders in language education and make learners global citizens. We, as educators, must adhere to digital world and must provide it to our students so that they can learn a language for life and can use it to make their lives successful. Communication skills through ICT can be effectively enhanced. Using social media as a tool in language teaching & learning can be a successful venture only if teachers take the responsibility with full zest and make it a success. ICT is an aid provided to teacher today and it depends upon on how teacher effectively use these tools. Computer Based Assessment Tools, Tasks & assignments, lesson planning, presentations with pictures, films & videos, e-mails to assign tasks and share content, language games for each skill, language software, multimedia packages, blogs, V-logs are the future of world and learners must be prepared for the same.

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