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REVIEW ARTICLE

ENRICHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMBIANCE USING LITERATURE-BASED ACTIVITIES IN E-CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Acquiring English language is effective with careful observation and imitation of effective users of the language. Classic English literature can be used in the class for students to improve their language skills. Literature is surely not an end in itself but the means of beginning a creative process in the minds and emotions of the students and assist them in grasping the language with ease and effortlessly. Information and Communications Technology – ICT plays a major role in facilitating enormous material in different formats and thus has initiated new possibilities into the English classroom. Students are facilitated to listen, speak, read and write good English with the helping hand of various ICT tools in e-class. This paper proposes the integration of literature and ICT as an essential aid for the effective teaching learning of English language. E-class enables learners to navigate interactive, self-learning material with the helping hand of the Internet at their own pace and path. Learners are provided with suitable literature with choice, control and interaction using various ICT tools to understand various elements of language and to practice/use the same. Use of e-class with resources and interactive tools make the learning more interesting, enthusiastic and effective.

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INTRODUCTION

E-class elevates the language learning ambiance by facilitating visual and auditory activities. This multi model learning will be more effective by using appropriate classic literature in various language activities. The key element for language learning in e-class is the synchronized activation of the auditory, phonological and visual systems in the brain, especially important for listening and reading development. These distinct systems work together with grammatical and conceptual processors to decode sensory input into meaningful language. E-class enables students to receive individualized instruction from teacher with extended applications in reinforcing classroom activities. Digitalized Language class facilitates various scholarly activities to improve learning environment, to provide pedagogical innovations and to enable experimentation for the best-suited methods and materials. ICT has initiated new possibilities into the English classroom by facilitating large amount of materials in different forms. Use of e-class with resources and interactive tools – e-books, e-dictionaries, e-encyclopedia, web 2.0 components, internet, blogs, socializing portals, webcasting, and audio-video make the learning more interesting, enthusiastic and effective.

Krashen claims that using computers for Free Voluntary Surfing will encourage students to wander through the Internet and read what interests them. Computer aided language learning provides new opportunities for learners to engage in active communication that facilitates the development of second language competence. Computer aided language learning and Internet-based instruction contribute to EFL students' cross cultural competence (Kim, 2005). Computer Aided Language Learning will enable learners to pool their knowledge in effective ways and enhance peer correction and language repair work. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), there are three main categories of strategy use, depending on the kind and level of processing involved: metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. Within the metacognitive category are those strategies which involve "knowing about learning and controlling learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning activity". Cognitive strategies are more directly related to individual learning tasks than metacognitive strategies and involve the transformation of the material to be learned. The third type of learning strategy identified in the cognitive psychology literature shows the influence of social and affective processes on learning: social strategies involve interaction with another person while affective strategies are concerned with the management of one's feelings about learning and language

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use. These strategies are considered while planning various activities in e-class using the classics of English literature for improving the language skills. To begin with, the students should be able to comprehend fully what has been taught to him/her and then should be able to reproduce it, not only in exam but in day to day life also. If the students fail to do so, he is neither empowered nor has his proficiency level improved. The activities shared in this paper have successfully worked with the student community. Michael Levy writes in *Computer-Aided Language Learning* that he is motivated by a desire to better understand the relationship between theory and application; following his ideals, the relationship between theory and application is well-balanced while planning various activities in e-class.

English language teaching among MA English program students using literature and ICT tools is reviewed in this paper. Classes of the post graduate students are receptive and responsive in using technology. This receptivity of the students helps the teacher to go beyond horizons in experimenting innovative practices in the classroom. Listening to the native speakers – conversations, reports, dialogues, poetry, songs, literary texts, e-books, prepared PPT's etc. were provided as reference materials. A few activities were conducted with these materials for improving the quality of the ambiance conducive for language learning. The following activities elevate the teaching learning ambiance in e-class.

Reading Together– Activity 1: The comprehension hypothesis by Krashen claims that language acquisition does not occur when learners focus on form. It happens only when they engage with the messages they are conveying and understanding. The hypothesis states that the process of comprehension and acquisition are closely related. The best way to enhance reading skills and to empower the students in the subject knowledge is to have the practice of 'reading together'. This can be done through pdf or word or power point file projected on the screen and read collectively. It can also be done by refereeing to web sites in the classroom or even by using CDs, e-encyclopedia, e-dictionaries, and e-thesaurus, etc. The learning of literature becomes very lively and interesting if all the students are learning the same thing at the same time. This not only develops reading skills, but it also gives a very good understanding of the subject. It also helps in developing cognitive reading skills. The interpretation of a literary text is a key component in the study of literature. The collective reading also provides some space for individual interpretation. The competitive atmosphere in the class encourages the learners to read with enthusiasm. Pre, while and post reading activities encourage the learners more involved and give spontaneous feedback to the teacher on the activities. Real life materials from authentic sources of information are also used during the activities to impart the skill. Comprehension of the read material and pace of reading are the two important focal points during the sessions. Computer-mediated texts enhance readers' options for acquiring word meanings during independent reading. Reinking illustrated that computer-mediated texts provide readers with several options for assistance during independent reading. One of the several options available to the reader is the capability to request context-specific meanings of difficult words in a text. Reading comprehension increases in these studies when readers selected among the options for assistance with ICT tools. Potter & Small reported that the use of computers for reading instruction has helped students and has been very efficient in

the use of resources. The class becomes live as all the students are gaining similar information at the same time. Similarly, live internet connection while teaching literature also has an added advantage. Thus, collective reading of websites, online references, e-encyclopedia, PowerPoint and Word files that are relevant to the particular class can be taken from the resources -www.google.com, www.bing.com, www.reference.com, www.contemporarywriters.com, www.gutenberg.org, Microsoft Encarta, Encarta dictionary and thesaurus etc.

Listening / Speaking using Multimedia- Activity 2: A PowerPoint presentation of important scenes in the movie / play that are relevant to the day's class can be presented in the class using LCD projector with some activities using the information in the PPT. Instead of watching a whole play at once, we can cut the play into bits and pieces. A number of activities can be phased in under the six categories illustrated by Simmon in e-class to improve students' listening skills. We also used video libraries from web resources. Web resources mentioned below are full of rich resources for videos useful in teaching English Language and Literature. The subconscious learning of accent, intonation, rhythm of several expressions will give an unbelievable result. Besides improving listening to the native/effective speaker, students also will be equipped to participate in speaking activities based on the material they watched/listened. Number of language activities like role play, interviews can be practiced in the class for improving the language proficiency of the learners. Several resources like www.youtube.com, <http://video.google.com>, www.keepvid.com, www.yappr.com, Audio books and soft ware like Jet Audio, Camtasia Studio can be used in PowerPoint presentation with audio and video clips. These will encourage the learners by improving their content and interest besides various practicalities that are crucial for effective communication. The following techniques are taken to train listening skills among the students using various material and activities effectively in the e-class:

- Developing cognitive strategies – listening for the main idea, listening for details, and prediction
- Developing listening by integrating with the other language skills – listening and speaking, listening and pronunciation, and listening and vocabulary
- Listening for academic purposes and for fun – seminars, workshops, symposia etc.

"Oral interaction is also made possible by audio conferencing tools, and although these require technical support, the findings of studies reporting on the use of such tools to improve oral ability are quite encouraging." A few basic strategies like Asking and Answering Questions, Imitation and Repetition, Substitution, Question-Answer Dialogues, Day-to-Day Expressions, Eliciting, Guess and Speak, Directed Dialogues, Descriptions, Role-Play etc. can be used to improve speaking skills in the e-class.

Writing Skills with Communicative Approach - Activity 3: ICT tools can be a great help during teaching writing skill, as the discrete nature of linguistic signs can be appreciated consciously with these tools. Several classic writings and effective documents like e-books, e-news papers can be provided in the class to set good examples before students. Forums, discussions, mails and other community based websites are to be used for sharing their ideas and written scripts. The feed back of their writings will boost up the

learners' interest to improve their writing skills. Writing skill is independent and can be taught as an end in itself, but classes on improving writing skill have the potential to help, consolidate and improve learners' speaking and reading skills. Writing can be viewed and taught as a developmental process like reading. Raimes classifies approaches to teaching writing into five types: controlled to free, free writing, paragraph pattern, grammar-syntax organization, communicative, and process approaches. In controlled to free approach, students are first given sentence exercises, then paragraphs to copy or manipulate grammatically, like changing questions to statements, present to past, or plural to singular, and changing words or clauses or combine sentences. In free writing approach, students are asked to write freely on any topic without worrying about grammar and spelling for five or ten minutes. Teachers generally read them and perhaps comment on the ideas the writer expressed. In paragraph pattern approach, students copy paragraphs, analyze the form of model paragraphs, and imitate model passages. They put scrambled sentences into paragraph order, they identify general specific statements, they choose or invent an appropriate topic sentence and they insert or delete sentences.

In online environments, communicative approach to writing can be effectively used where students are asked to assume the role of a writer who is writing for an audience to read. Whatever a student writes some thing, it is modified in some way by other students for better communicative effect. In the process approach to writing, students move away from concentration on the written product to an emphasis on the process of writing. Thus, the response to their writings motivated students to write and upload to the social networking sites. Then they invite their friends and relatives to read and respond to their thoughts. The entire exercise becomes interesting. The teacher can facilitate e-dictionaries, e-thesaurus and e-grammar books as the supporting materials for improving their scripts. Students themselves will use many self learning techniques with the aim of accurate and effective expression through appropriate words and sentences. With the helping hand of MS office tools, they also improve the mechanics of writing. A blog is created for the class students to share their writings and to comment on others scripts. This will be a platform to improve their writing capabilities. Applying criticism on the blogs of the writers and reviewing comments of readers and peers will motivate the students for bettering themselves.

Inference : E-resources and the internet are very handy in the class room, as language and literature teacher feels confident in using the right material in the right time. As teacher's memory is not over-burdened with facts and figures, s/he is mentally free to give more time for discussion and explanation. As a result, the students are also empowered to understand language and literature in a better way than they used to do in the traditional lecture method.

Traditional lecture method is not out of date but the outreach in that method is limited to a few students. Projecting multimedia material using LCD aids to their better sensory perception teaching with the help of ICT tools helps address various needs of the learners. E-class room plays major role in providing the suitable materials and in applying appropriate methods by mediating the teacher and students in language learning. The class has no boundaries of place and time. Learner can interact with the information to sharpen his/her language/ communicative abilities according to his/her convenient place and time. The incentives of the updated version of the class are – autonomy, spirit of learning and using the language, acquiring the ability at one's own pace and method and the spontaneous feedback during the activities makes the learning faster. As always, there are limitations in executing these activities. The activities that worked successfully experimented with MA English students may not work with an equal success rate in another environment. Their results may vary but one should not stop experimenting. In fact, e-class with literature as the "supremely civilizing pursuit" has brought a phenomenal change in the relationship between the teacher and students. The role of the teacher, the nature and context of learning, as well as the function and relative importance of course content have all been challenged and redefined with the integration of ICT tools and English language learning. E-class can improve students' overall knowledge of English besides interacting with native speakers' culture and literature as "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the almost possible degree(Ezra Pound)."

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