

Innovative Techniques, Methods & Trends in English Language Teaching

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Abstract: *Change is the law of nature. 'There is nothing permanent except change' says Heraclites, the pre Aristotelian Greek philosopher. A trend is the general tendency or direction towards change. With a number of educational options available before the present generation learners, the newer trends seem to have emerged in the field of education that have entirely changed the facet of traditional system of education. Recent trends, methodologies and developments portray the vital role of education sector in general with its internalization of the education process, stress on quality above quantity, increase in the adoption of technologies, necessity for professional talent etc. The theories and methods are constantly evolving in the field of ELT also. This Research paper presents the famous trends in the ELT that have been used practically in recent times in the entire world with specific reference to the trends prevalent during the previous decades.*

Keywords: *Trends, Methods, peer practice, new devices, ICT, pedagogy, learning process, CALL, CLIC, Cooperative learning, Neuro-linguistics.*

I. Introduction

In the last two decades, so many books have been published in English about English language in general and English Language Teaching in particular. These books view the subject differently by presenting a plethora of voices trying to liberalize themselves from the clutches of traditional methods of teaching. The innovation that the researcher talks in the paper pertains both to methodology and materials used in language teaching. Moreover, this article brings out the subtle distinction between the scholarly perception of language as treated in research and pedagogy. The argument advances as the paper proceeds with trends of education with specific reference to the Indian scenario, methodologies adopted, the bygone methods, the peer practice, the present trend, new teaching design, new devices, the need for change, the ICT and English language and also the CALL.

General Trend

English language teaching has undergone tremendous changes over the years, especially the last ten years. Students are burdened with studying, learning and grasping the materials, and of course, lectures with the collection of relevant information from prescribed texts. Many career alternatives once regarded insignificant are gaining importance at present such as communication skills, soft skills, technical skills, interpersonal skills, ICT literacy etc. The need for chiseled graduates to merge successfully in the tough competition of survival in the global market is in great demand nowadays. For this, a change in the trend especially the teaching learning process of English language has to undergo a transition for the betterment. Seasons change, fashion changes, attitudes of human beings change but it is disheartening to note that in the last century English curriculum has hardly undergone any change.

The Indian Scenario

There had been much of changes in the attitude of people as to what they perceive to be a language. When the Indians were tutored by British masters, they were exposed to native language in every sense of the word. The methodologies adopted were also akin to that of what was practiced in English speaking countries. After their retirement, the glory, richness, depth and vastness of the language started fading in India little by little and it has come to a stage wherein educationalists and language experts thrive hard to choose the best out of the innumerable existing methodologies. The prevailing trends of teaching English, especially in India, lacked both in quantity and quality or may fail to obtain a universal appeal. Rigid curriculums and huge syllabi continue to threaten students who speak regional dialect but love to excel in English.

Methodologies Adapted During The Previous Years:

Communication is the groundwork based on which any idea can progress and develop into a full fledged

one. Without that, sustenance in any field is impossible. Some of the (recent) trends in the ELT are quite apparent while the others are still to make their presence felt. Some are yet to come into existence and therefore subject to evolution and change. During the last decade, various crucial factors have combined to affect the current ideologies of teaching of English such as the ineffective methodologies, unsuitable materials, integration of contextualized teaching, over emphasis on multi language skills etc.

Teachers who practiced Grammar Translation method during the previous decade solely relied on black board as the apt tool to impart communication skills and the nuances of English language. Later on, over head projectors, acted as another medium for the teacher dominated class room. Such teachers believed in the dictum of drill and practice. As such, audio tapes acted as medium of Audio-lingual method. In the later years of 1970's, audio lingual method fell into disregard. During 1980's and 1990's, there was a sweeping change over the existing trends then, and more emphasis was laid on authentic and meaningful contextualized discourse.

Theories Of The Past Decade

A few theories and trends that shaped the ELT during the past decade include Gardener's Theory of Multiple Intelligence (1993). The same was applied to language teaching as well. This has paved a way to focus the innate skills, preferences and abilities of students. TG grammar of Noam Chomsky gave an in-depth analysis of language learning vs. language acquisition. His observation of B.F. Skinner's Theory of Learning brought a revolution in the ideology of language learning as well as language acquisition. Moreover, Krashen's theory of Second Language Acquisition added spice to flavor. The Total Physical Response Theory of V. Asher focused on a successful adult second language learning as a parallel process to a child's first language acquisition. Furthermore, the general educational trends like Whole Language Approach, Cooperative Learning and Neuro Linguistic Programming have influenced language teaching and learning considerably. With the advent of e-communication, it has been made possible for the English language teachers to enrich their profession. Apart from this, the Special Interest Group (SIG), support group discussion and chat room have also enriched their profession.

Modern Trends Of Teaching English

Deena Boraie highlights that there are eight trends in teaching of English as discussed further. "Change is the Goal of Teaching English" says Boraie "In my opinion there are two key changes in the purpose of teaching English. Firstly, as Penny Ur (2009) noted, the goal is to produce fully competent English knowing bilinguals rather than imitation of native speakers. The purpose is not to aspire to become native speakers of English because we are already native speakers of our own but to focus on English as a means of communication. Secondly, English is not viewed as an end in itself but as a means to learn content such as science and mathematics".

Content And Language Integrate Learning (CLIC):

The CLIC is an approach where the English teacher uses cross curricular content and so the students learn both the content and English.

8. EARLY START OF TEACHING ENGLISH:

Many countries have started teaching English in earlier grades at school. For example, since 2011, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam have introduced English from Grade-IV. Also in 2011, Japan introduced English in the primary stage and in 2012, Dubai introduced English in the KG stage instead of Grade-I.

9. CHANGE IN THE APPROACH TO TEACHING CULTURE:

Both the local or native and international culture dominates in English language classes. There is less focus on teaching the culture of native speakers of English unless there is a specific purpose for doing so.

10. CHANGING THE VIEW OF AN ENGLISH TEACHER:

It is increasingly being recognized that the quality or effectiveness of teachers is determined by their linguistic, teaching and intercultural competence rather than their being native speakers of English.

11. CHANGE IN TEACHING CONTENT AND TEST DESIGN:

Teachers use a range of local texts or English translations of literature in the classroom. The use of language as well as the use of a variety of accents in listening activities or tests is encouraged in the English language classroom.

12. E-LEARNING:

With the proliferation of tablets and smart phones, it is believed that textbooks will disappear in a few years. Furthermore, the access to knowledge in terms of flexibility and mobility has changed drastically.

13. STRATEGIC TEACHING AND LEARNING:

Teaching in English language classes focuses on fostering the students' thinking as well as language content, outcomes and learning activities. There are significant and complex student- teacher interactions inside and outside the classroom. The gamification of learning is emerging as a way to make language learning more engaging and relevant to the younger generation.

14. TEACHERS AS LIFELONG LEARNERS:

In a knowledge based society and to remain competitive and employable, teachers are expected to engage in a continuous professional development or the professional learning activities from the beginning to the end of their careers. As with any other profession, teachers are also expected to assume a greater responsibility for their own professional learning, continually developing their knowledge and skills.

Apart from the abovementioned items, Andrian under Hill lists out the following as the recent trend which are very much prevalent in English language teaching. They are

1. Networking, interest and support groups.
2. Learner centeredness and learners needs.
3. Reflective practice and teacher learning.
4. Portfolio development for teachers.
5. Syllabus design /materials development.
6. Criticism of published materials.
7. English as an International language.
8. Corpora.

15. THE PRESENT TREND:

All over the world, the student centered English language teachers seem to have realized that gone are the days when teachers reigned their class with all monopoly where the students remained as passive. There is rethinking regarding the growing interest of implementing the basic educational goals. Having realized the need of the hour; the English teachers convene different types of conferences and seminars to create a platform and to get to know the upcoming ideologies in the ELT and also to upgrade themselves professionally. Larsen Freeman (2007) asserts that it is the fifth skill of language that enables the efficiency to use grammatical structures with accuracy. Academic qualification alone may not help teachers to grow professionally, on the other hand, they need to be equipped themselves with the current practices. The teaching materials that are being used in our country are almost made available all over the world. There had been too many methodologies of teaching English language. One method is embraced as a development of the other. Still, no method has been a panacea for the solution of the ELT problems. At present, the era of method is over and the ELT as of the current scenario is in „post method thinking“.

16. ENGLISH TEACHING AND THE ICT:

The third dimension of globalization which is inseparable from English teaching is an advancement of Information and Communication Technology [ICT]. The field of the ELT has been deeply pervaded by the ICT. The easy access to technology has made information possible for enhancement of learning programs and about 80% of it is in English (MC – Crum. R. et al., 1986). At the outset, the English teachers regarded internet as one of the alternative media to teach language (Warschauer, 1995). The followings are some of the ICT enabled teaching activities.

17. COMPUTER MEDIATED ENGLISH:

English, has been undoubtedly the lingua franca of the internet. The Computer Mediated English uses the language as per convenience and not by convention. For instance, using a single letter or number for a word. For instance „c,“ for „see“, „u“ for „you“ and „2“ for „two“; the use of acronyms like TTYL (talk to you later) WUATB (wish you all the best) ; using asterisks“ *” for emphasis and emoticons for smile, for frown etc. Realizing its significance as a source of communication, the linguistic elements and discourse of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) need a serious concern.

18. COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING [CALL] :

Computer Assisted Language Learning is yet another manifestation of Computer Mediated Language Learning. The first phase of the CALL was conceived in 1950 and was implemented in 1960s and 1970s. In this method, the computer gives a stimulus to the learner by being not a mere tool but also a tutor.

19. WEB BASED LEARNING:

A web based learning also called technology based learning/distance learning/on line education/e learning is one of the fastest developing areas. It provides opportunities to create well–designed, learner–centered, affordable, interactive, officiate, flexible e-learning environment (khan, 2005). There are thousands of English web based classes that offer trainings for a variety of basic language skills such as Learning, Speaking, Reading and Writing and are made interactive in a variety of ways. Some of the common technologies available for promotion of education are as follows:

19.1. E-mail:

The students can correspond with native speakers of the target language using e mail by creating a personal email account (g-mail, yahoo, hotmail, etc) which is free. The students can mail their home work to the teachers concerned and get it corrected in turn. The teacher can also provide revisions, feedback, suggestions for the betterment of every work and send them back.

19.2. Blogs :

A blog is a personal or professional journal frequently updated for public consumption. The blogs enable uploading and linking the files which is very much suited to serve as on line personal journals for students. Pinkman (2005) indicates blogging becomes communicative and interactive when participants assume multiple roles in the writing process, as readers/reviewers who respond to other writers' posts, and as writers-readers who, returning to their own posts, react to criticism of their own posts. The readers in turn can comment on what they read, although blogs can be placed in secured environments as well.

19.3. Skype :

Every internet service has audio functions, and technological instruments like laptops with cameras. The students could communicate with their teachers and friends who are far away. Likewise, they could very well communicate with the speakers of native language and get their pronunciation checked so as to improve their speaking.

19.4. Mobile Phone:

Learners can search for new words using dictionary option in the mobile phones and enrich their vocabulary. They may verify the spelling, pronunciation and usage of the specific word they searched for. Moreover, they can use Short Message Service (SMS) to send queries to their instructors and get their doubts cleared.

19.5. Ipods:

Ipods, one of the multimedia devices, enhance the users to generate, deliver, exchange texts, image, audio and video scripts as per the requirement. The teachers send text messages and the students can read and answer to them. In addition to this, the students can record and listen to their speeches, poems, news, short stories etc. Thus, ipods give a chance to the learners of English to improve their listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and also writing.

20. THE NEW AGE DEVICES:

This year, the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) which was held at Las Vegas, gave a glimpse of ground breaking devices purely meant for students. These „showpieces“ ranged from 3D printers to smart watches. The youth's requirements are matched by a new age device, be it studies or social media, travel or portability. The media streaming devices like the Google chrome cast and the Rokku make group studies become interactive and presentations surprisingly fulfilled one. One has to stream the media on to a smart TV using a dongle. Another blessing is the e-reader for the on-the-move generation. The all new- kindle paper white is a boon. Students can just tuck in the e-reader for easy reference. The portable document scanner like the Doxie Flip Cordless Flatbed Photo and notebook scanner are used to get the notes sorted. Other devices like copy and Olympus which have come with voice recorders can be utilized to record all the English lectures and be played as and when time permits. The laptop cooler like Thermapak's Heat shift could be used to cool the laptops after long hours of use especially during the CALL sessions for those who want to share data, notes, they would very well invest on a Maxell Air Stash Wireless Flash Drive (The Hindu, The Education Plus, 7th July, 2014)

21. LANGUAGE TEACHING DESIGN:

Geetha Nagaraj says „A vital development in the area of language teaching design is the Council of Europe's- A Common Frame Work of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching Assessment, now mostly known as CEF/CEFR is a document consisting of nine chapters and four appendices and is available on the Council of Europe website: www.coe.int. The CEFR aims to provide a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum... what learners have to learn... skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively....“

Morrow (2004) identifies four core areas in the CEF (Council of Europe's Common Frame Work of Reference for Languages)

22. THE LEARNER:

The CEF analyses the factors that go to make up individual differences.

23. THE LANGUAGE:

A clear description of the content in terms of linguistic competency, sociolinguistic competency and pragmatic competency constitutes a language.

24.LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE:

Using descriptor scales, learners' proficiency is measured. Descriptors consist of a series of „can do“ statements which received a great deal of attention.

25. TEACHING AND LEARNING:

The learner's involvement and teacher's empowerment are stressed during the teaching and learning processes.

26. THE TRANSITION OF FOCUS ON THE LEARNER:

The conventional method of teaching wherein the teacher enjoys the monopoly of teaching sometimes even obliterates the pressure of the learners. It is Dewey (1938) who originated the term „learner centeredness“ which has gained popularity in the ELT. The Humanistic Approach which was developed during the second half of the Communicative Language Teaching, developed in the 1960s and 1970s was an outcome of the desire to make language teaching more flexible and more responsive to students (Tudor 1996, 7).

27.THE ROLE OF A MODERN TEACHER:

Dornyei and Murphey (203, 109) have defined the term „role“ as a technical term which originally comes from sociology and refers to the shared expectation of how an individual should behave. Several methodologists like Little Wood [1981], Richards and Rodgers [1986], Tudor [1993], Harmer [2001] have evolved different roles for a language teacher.

Richards and Rodgers conceive a teacher's role as a part of „design“, component of a method. Little Wood conceptualizes the role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning, an overseer, a classroom manager, a consultant or adviser and at times a co-communicator with the learners. To Harmer, a teacher plays the role of a controller, organizer, assessor, promoter, participant, resource, tutor and observer. Tudor also perceives the role of a teacher in the learner centered classroom.

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), the current paradigm is basically an off shoot of Communicative Language Teaching. Nuan (2004,12) points out „experiential learning or learning by doing“ as the main conceptual basis for the TBLT. The TBLT breaks down the barriers of the traditional classroom, because in the TBLT, the role of the learner is significantly altered. The teacher becomes a true facilitator of learning for the language learners, purely by means of dialogic communication (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher's role is not shunned altogether but is restricted; the teacher is expected to be a guide by the side.

II. Conclusion:

The traditional method lays more emphasis on a teacher himself and is teacher centered. Repetitive practice, mechanical drills and memorization are the hallmarks of the traditional methods. Wilkins (1976,2) calls a synthetic in which different parts of the language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up. The autocratic or the authoritative role of the teacher which pertains to the long cherished traditional notion that pedagogic principles depend on how articulately a teacher teaches. It is imperative to understand the current trends and evaluative methods of the ELT. The theories and methods are constantly evolving in the ELT. The teachers of the ELT are aware of the best practices in teaching and learning English and how they can be made beneficial to the students. It is possible for every child to learn English in the most enjoyable manner if it is supplied with the right kind of materials and pedagogy produced by one's own native wisdom. A beautiful combination of art and science, with a fine tune of as many tools as possible to the repertoire can help an ELT to excel in his/her field.

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