

THE USE OF ICT IN ESL CLASSROOMS IN MANIPUR

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Abstract: The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has increased manifold in the present times. The role and use of ICT as a tool for English Language Teaching (ELT) is increasingly explored by educators as they assist in creating collaborative and independent learning environment. ICT plays a pertinent role in enhancing motivation, creativity and critical thinking of the learners. In the study, the attitudes of the students and teachers of the secondary schools of Manipur, a state in northeast India towards using ICT in teaching and learning English language are investigated. The paper aims to make the teachers and learners aware of the use of ICT in English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. Through the questionnaires administered to both teachers and learners, the importance and challenges in the pedagogy of ELT using ICT is identified and discussed. The findings of the survey indicate that most of the teachers and learners held positive approach towards integrating ICT in teaching and learning English language.

Keywords: ELT, ESL, ICT, Learning, Pedagogy, Teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

In the present day, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionized every aspects of human life. In the field of education, many schools and universities use technological tools to reinforce and enhance the learning ability of the students (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). ICT refers to the use of any communication application or device such as mobile phones, computer, satellite system, radio, television etc (Saxena et al., 2010). The process of language learning requires the learners to be actively engaged. Continuous interaction and exposure to the target language is required for an effective language learning process. The language needs to be used in the natural context in a natural learning environment. It is believed that integrating ICT in language learning will enhance the learning process. The paper aims to empower the learner and teacher with incorporating ICT in English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom.

ICT IN ESL CLASSROOMS

Research indicates that using ICT in language classrooms assist in improving the student's motivation, enthusiasm and also helps them to sustain for a longer period on the assigned task (Parchler, 1999). Relatedly, Raval (2014) asserts that ICT if used in language learning can enhance the motivation, engagement and commitment of the students. Furthermore, the integration of ICT in English Language Teaching (ELT) can help teachers to incorporate the teaching of all the four language skills into the classroom. Researches show that the integration of ICT in teaching assists teachers to focus on enhancing the learning ability of the learners (Davies et al., 1997). Bransford et al. (1994) asserted that ICT can augment problem solving capacity, critical thinking, the

level of conceptualization, and information handling skills of the learners. Researches by Alfawaz et al. (2018) revealed that ICT enhances the process of teaching and provides various benefits like teaching materials and aids, activities for students and improves class management. Furthermore, Ammanni et al. (2016) examined the increase scope of using ICT in ELT by providing quality learning materials and enhancing learner autonomy. According to Jayanthi & Kumar (2016), the use of multimedia technologies such as CDROMS, videodiscs, DVD and power point projectors can assist in teaching various aspects of the teaching of English language such as plays, poems or prose, vocabulary, writing skills and grammar.

The use of ICT mediated activities in ESL classrooms is more motivating, exciting, and enjoyable than traditional methods. Lunyal (2012) quoting Egbert, Chao & Hanson-Smith is of the view that if Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is used appropriately in the classroom, it can assist in creating a conducive language learning environment. In the present context, the world is reeling under an unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. In such a scenario, ICT applications like CALL software, Office software applications, CD-ROMS, the internet and different computer and mobile applications have become a blessing. Towards the end of March 2020, the world stood still in complete and partial lockdowns. Under this bleak situation, the education system also suffered a serious setback. At these times, the use of ICT seems to be the only answer to continue the teaching-learning process. Virtual learning through various mediums like the internet, television, audio books, audio-visual aids, E-books, mobile phones, Webinar, Web Conferences, Interactive whiteboard, mobile apps, Web 2.0 applications (social networking sites) have become the new

normal in the present context. However, this study was conducted before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

In Manipur, a state in the north eastern part of India, English is taught as a compulsory subject from classes I to XII. It is observed that though English is taught as a compulsory subject, the learners are still not confident to use the English language with ease and confidence. The reason might be that the teaching methods are still dominated by the behaviouristic approach. The instructors follow the lecture method and always teacher-fronted. The cognitive perspective of the learners is neglected as the teaching of English language is treated as a subject rather than a skill.

In second language acquisition, for effective language learning, developing listening and speaking skills is most important. However, in this region, except for few private schools, mostly all the schools focus on developing reading and writing skills. So, it is not possible to conduct oral activity with paper or chalk and board. The teachers have to be made aware of the umpteen advantages of the use of ICT and how it can help learners to use English language in real life situations effectively. The use of language activities through ICT and softwares provide a space for the learners to engage in hands-on activities, interact with the materials and get instant feedback compared with the paper version of the same activities. This changes the learning attitudes of the learners. It is pertinent to look at how the use of ICT can be helpful in making learning more fun and productive. Therefore, the use of ICT in English language teaching could be the answer to all the problems mentioned above.

Having deliberated on the significance of using ICT in ELT, the

objective of the study is constructed to make the teachers and learners aware of the use of ICT in ESL classrooms. Through the questionnaires administered to both teachers and learners, the importance and challenges in the pedagogy of ELT using ICT is identified and discussed. To realize the objective of the study, the attitudes of the students and teachers of the secondary schools of Manipur towards using ICT in teaching and learning English language were investigated in this study. The students and teachers of the secondary schools of Manipur were administered with two sets of questionnaires containing 10 and 20 questions respectively. The questions were intended to bring forth responses from the students and teachers regarding their attitudes, opinions and views towards using ICT in the English language classroom. The findings of the study are based on the descriptions and analysis of the data collected. The questionnaires were responded by 20 teachers and 246 students. All teacher participants teach English language in the secondary schools of Manipur. The student participants were from classes IX and X in the secondary schools of Manipur. The questionnaires comprise both open ended and closed ended questions. The data collected was analysed to examine the attitude of the teachers and students towards using ICT in ESL classrooms.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From the analysis of the questionnaires, it is observed that the participants of the study seem to have accepted the rationale for incorporating ICT in ELT and how the use of ICT can enhance the language learning process. Most of the participants are of the opinion that ICT

plays an important role to accentuate pedagogy of ELT.

The following are the findings of the study:

1. Majority of the students and teachers are aware that ICT can be effectively used in English language teaching and learning.
2. Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that ICT can assist in enhancing creativity, cognitive skills and also motivation. They are of the view that ICT make English language learning fun and exciting.
3. Most of the respondents have never used ICT in language teaching and learning.
4. Some of them have used ICT in language learning and teaching. They feel that ICT plays an important role in improving the language skills of the learners.
5. Majority of the teachers are of the opinion that ICT helps in improving the listening skills of the learners. Contrary to this, the student participants felt that ICT assisted them to develop their writing skills.
6. All the respondents know basic computer applications.
7. Most of the participants use ICT daily for some reason or the other.
8. Majority of them use computers for various purposes weekly for six-seven hours.
9. All the students enjoy their computer lab sessions.
10. ICT tools like internet, Microsoft word, Search engines, Microsoft excel, Microsoft Power Point, WhatsApp, YouTube and Facebook are familiar to most of the respondents.
11. Many of the students do not spend an hour to practice English language on their computers.
12. It is observed that teachers encouraged students to use computers to do their assignments and projects. However, they do not

urge their students to use computers to practice English language.

13. Many of the teachers have not attended seminars or conferences on using ICT for ELT.
14. All the teachers express their views that they would like to use ICT to teach English language.
15. All the students feel that their language learning process will improve if ICT is used regularly.
16. All the respondents are of the opinion that the lack of infrastructure, knowledge in ICT and lack of training poses a major hindrance in using ICT in ELT.
17. All the teachers think that ICT plays a significant role in language learning and will offer students more motivation, enhance learner achievement and develop cognitive skills.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The following implications are highlighted according to the findings of the study:

1. The inclusion of ICT into ELT curriculum and a planned training of the teachers to integrate ICT into curriculum require a well defined plan.
2. School management should procure modern computers equipped with the latest language learning programmes.
3. Generally the teacher spends around 5-6 contact hours per week for the English language class in the school. So, by using ICT like Google Classroom, Google Meet, YouTube, Podcasts, Vodcasts, Google Drive, Wikis, Blogs, WhatsApp, Webquest, Delicious, etc., the teachers can connect with the learners anytime.
4. The teacher can engage the learners with E-creation tools to enable learners to be creative. They can be used to create, discover and explore while teaching and learning.

- Examples are podcasting, moviemakers, audio makers, presentations software, exercise creating tools, web publishing.
5. Online teaching and learning can be grouped into two categories, synchronous and asynchronous learning. Synchronous learning allows real time interaction like meeting students in Google Meet, Zoom, etc., instant messaging and telephone conversations. In asynchronous learning, real time interaction is not required. The contents are made available to the students through email, text messages, PowerPoint presentations, discussion boards, etc. The learners can access the study materials in their convenient time. The teachers can create the materials according to the needs of the students and should use both synchronous and asynchronous learning.
 6. The ICT tools selected must be relevant and age appropriate, appealing and culturally appropriate to the learners. LSRW facilitative e-tools can be used to boost the language skills. Some tools to improve reading/ writing skills are: wikis, blogs, online boards, e-books, etc. They can be used for collaborative teaching and learning. Examples are Penzu, blogger and wikispaces.
 - a. <https://webwhiteboard.com/>
 - b. writeboard.com
 - c. <https://www.blogger.com/>
 - d. <https://penzu.com>
 - e. docs. google.com
 - f. <https://www.wikispaces.com/content/classroom>
 7. Teachers can design and create online grammar activities through eslcafe.com, quia.com, etc.
 8. Students can create their own blogs where they can write on topics of their interest and share with their peers. Through wikis and blogs, they can develop their writing and speaking skills.
 9. To develop grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing and reading skills, the students can use websites like www.vocabulary.com, [www.oxfordgrammarchecker](http://www.oxfordgrammarchecker.com), www.eslcafe.com).
 10. To enhance speaking skills, students can record their presentation/ speech in their mobile phones and the teachers can assessed them. For improving their pronunciation, they can also use softwares like *English Pronunciation in Use*.

The listening/ speaking skills can be enhanced through ICT tools like:

The integration of ICT in ELT is the most challenging task. Various concerns like teacher competencies, institutional readiness, long term financing, connectivity issues and sustainability need to be addressed. The use of ICT in ELT is endless and if it is successfully integrated in the curriculum, it can open a new outlook of learning English language. It can greatly augment motivation, creativity and cognitive skills of the learners and also it can enable them towards enhancing their language skills. The findings of the survey indicate that most of the teachers and students held positive approach towards incorporating ICT in ESL classrooms. The learners are often intimidated by the traditional method of teaching and the outdated syllabus. Learners showed

motivation and eagerness to learn English language in a different way by integrating ICT into the curriculum. These findings suggest that it is time to integrate ICT in ESL classrooms in the secondary schools of Manipur. The need of the hour today is blended learning. Even after overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic, hopefully very soon, then also, one needs to look at the umpteen advantages and significance of using ICT in ELT.

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