

## Integrating ICT into teaching and learning process to develop proficiency in English in north eastern region of India

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### Abstract

This paper examines the impact of using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning of English language in the North Eastern Region of India. ICT has opened up new avenues in the pedagogy of English Language Teaching (ELT). The role of teacher, the nature and context of learning as well as the function and relative importance of course content have all been challenged and redefined. The schools in these regions are by and large using traditional language teaching methods. The paper aims to make the teachers and learners aware of the use of ICT in teaching and learning English language. Through the questionnaires administered to both teachers and learners, the importance and challenges in the pedagogy of ELT using ICT will be identified and discussed.

**Keywords:** english language teaching, ICT, learning, teaching

### Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been used in all walks of life including English language Teaching. ICT refers to a range of information and communication technology which includes computer work stations, new multimedia technologies, software and CDROM, internet, mobile phone, television, radio, language laboratory, film and other technologies. Language is a social phenomenon. People use language in different situations. Though learning occurs through life in a social context, it is a highly individualized process. The learner has to be actively engaged in the process of language learning. Learning a language requires exposure and interaction. We need to listen to the language in natural contexts and interact with somebody in that language. Incorporating ICT into learning a language will enhance the learning process. It has been observed that the schools in the north eastern region of India (taking schools from Meghalaya, Nagaland and Manipur for the study) make negligible use of new technologies. The paper focuses to empower the teacher and learner with integrating ICT in English language teaching and learning.

Integrating ICT into teaching facilitates teachers to bring all four language skills into the classroom. Text, images, audio and video can be used on the interactive whiteboard in the classroom. Researches (Davies, 1997 *et al*)<sup>[4]</sup> suggest that ICT, if used regularly, becomes part of teaching and enables teachers to:

- Focus the attention of pupils on patterns in language and apply them in context
- Bring pupils into contact with the lives and culture of people in other parts
- Meet the differing and special needs of pupils
- Help pupils work collaboratively and co-operatively
- Promote learning and teaching across the curriculum

- Monitor progress more effectively
- Develop cross-curricular work
- Motivate pupils

Integrating ICT and using technology-mediated activities into teaching learning English language are more enjoyable and exciting than traditional methods. Lunyal (2012)<sup>[11]</sup> quoting Egbert, Chao & Hanson-Smith asserts that appropriate use of computer assisted language learning in the classroom can help to create “optimal conditions for language learning environments”.

### Statement of the problem

There have been two important streams of theory of learning. The behaviouristic model laid emphasis on the programmed learning where learners are exposed to carefully graded materials, related drills and authentic input. Later in the last century, cognitive psychology gained ground and provided insights into how knowledge is stored and retrieved by the brain. It was also acknowledged that the learner was far from an empty vessel, but that individual learners brought with them their own set of previous knowledge and experience and that the active participation of the learner and engagement with the new knowledge were important. Cognitive psychologists believe that we have in our heads schemata or frameworks within which we store existing knowledge, relate new knowledge with existing knowledge, and develop links between related sets of knowledge that enable us to retrieve items appropriately, when required. In the wake of these findings, language teaching moved towards an information processing view of language learning in which students engaged actively with the language within meaningful settings, processing and re-processing new linguistic items by themselves and then in conjunction with previously learned items, in familiar and new contexts.

In the states of the North Eastern Region (NER) of India, English is taught as a compulsory subject from class I to XII. There is too much emphasis on teaching grammar and students hardly get an opportunity to get actively engaged in the process of language learning. Many researches observe that the English language learners in the region are poor in all the language skills. This is due to the fact that teaching-learning is still dominated by the behaviouristic approach, teachers follow the lecture method of teaching, teaching-learning is always teacher fronted, the cognitive perspective has taken a back seat, English is taught as a subject rather than a skill, the main aim of teaching English is to make learners somehow get good marks and pass the examination. The problem gets compounded due to absence, inadequacy, or irrelevance of teaching-learning materials to facilitate language proficiency. It is a well-known fact that in second language acquisition/ learning, development of listening and speaking skills is most important. But what we find in this region is that, except for a few private schools, almost all schools focus on developing writing and reading skills. There is hardly any scope for making students engaged in activities which may develop their listening and speaking skills. This may be due to the reason that it is almost impossible to conduct oral activity with chalk and board or on paper. The teachers have to be made aware of the importance and usefulness of ICT. As opposed to paper versions of the same language activities, the ICT and softwares provide learners opportunities to interact with the materials, engage in hands-on activities, and get instant feedback. This radically changes the learning experience for the student. It is important to look very closely at exactly what is happening in computer software before either dismissing it out of hand or taking it on board in a big way. The use of ICT in English language teaching could be the answer to all the problems mentioned above.

### Methodology

The attitudes of the students and teachers of the secondary schools of Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland towards using ICT in teaching and learning English language were investigated in this study. Two sets of questionnaires containing 14 and 24 questions respectively were administered to the students and teachers of the secondary schools of Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland. These questions were designed to elicit responses from the English language teachers and students regarding their views, opinions and attitudes towards using ICT in the English language classroom. The findings of the study are based on the interpretations and description of the data collected.

Eight government and private secondary schools were selected and a total of 24 teachers and 140 students responded to the questionnaires. All the 24 teachers were from the eight selected schools teaching English language. Among the students, 60 were from government and 80 were from private secondary schools. There are both Yes/ No questions, close-ended and open-ended questions. Most of the questions are followed by a set of alternative answers with a box next to each of them. The data collected was analysed to see the attitude of the teachers and students towards integrating ICT in teaching and learning English language.

### Findings of the study

The participants of the study seem to have accepted the rationale for integrating ICT in teaching and learning English language. The majority of the participants consider computer as an important tool to accentuate pedagogy of ELT.

The following are the findings of the study:

1. Majority of the students and teachers are conscious of the fact that computers can be used in English language teaching and learning.
2. Most of the students and teachers support the idea that computers can enhance English language learning.
3. Many of them have never used computers in language teaching and learning.
4. Those who have used computers in language teaching avers that the use of computer technology in teaching different language skills help improve students' language skills.
5. Most of them think that computers are helpful for developing listening and writing skills.
6. Most of the teachers stress that listening skill requires more use of computer while most of the students feel that computers will help them develop their writing skills.
7. One important findings of the study is that almost all the respondents know basic computer applications.
8. The participants use computer almost daily for various reasons. They spend 5-7 hours weekly on computers.
9. Almost all the students aver that they enjoy the computer lab sessions.
10. Students feel that they would like to use computers with their teachers rather than work on their own in their free time.
11. Majority of the teachers and students are familiar with many computer applications such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Power Point, Internet, Search Engines, Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp.
12. Most of the students do not spend even an hour in a week to practice English on their computers.
13. Teachers usually encourage their students to use computers to type their assignments, find information on the internet. But they do not urge their students to use computers for language learning.
14. Teachers have heard about using ICT in language learning whereas most of the students have no idea about using ICT in language learning.
15. Most of the teachers have never attended seminars or training programmes on using ICT in language learning.
16. All the teachers are of the opinion that they would like to use language learning materials and resources integrating ICT to teach English language.
17. All the students feel that they would improve their language skills if they work with ICT in language learning.
18. Most of the teachers and students report that lack of knowledge in computer technology and lack of training to use computers in teaching are the most significant barrier in using ICT in English language learning.
19. The teachers think that using ICT during a lesson will offer learners more motivation, develop thinking skills and enhance learner achievement.

### Conclusion and suggestions

According to the results of the study, the following implications are highlighted:

1. A long term plan is required to include ICT into English language teaching curriculum and to train English language teachers to integrate ICT into curriculum.
2. The management of the school should procure modern computers with appropriate language learning programme.
3. The teacher has only around 5-6 contact hours per week in the school for the English class. Using ICT in the class such as Google Drive, Delicious, Webquest, YouTube, Podcasts, Blogs, Wikis, etc., the teacher can connect with the learners anytime.
4. The tools selected must be age appropriate, culturally appropriate and interesting to the learners.
5. Teachers should use web materials such as podcast resources to develop students' listening skill.
6. Teachers can ask their students to use writing tools such as writeboard.com or docs. google.com.
7. Teachers can create online grammar activities through quia.com, eslcafe.com and other such exercises.
8. Students can create their own Podcast materials which can be uploaded on their blogs.
9. Students can create their own blogs where they write on a topic and share it with their peers to comment on. Through blogs and Wikis they will be able to develop their speaking skills.
10. Students should use selective websites to develop their grammar, reading skills, vocabulary and writing skills (e.g. [www.vocabulary.com](http://www.vocabulary.com), [www.oxfordgrammarchecker](http://www.oxfordgrammarchecker), [www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)).
11. For effective speaking skills, students can record their speech/ presentation in their mobile phones for the teacher to listen to in private and then give feedback.
12. Students should use the software *English Pronunciation in Use* to improve their pronunciation.

Integrating ICT into the teaching learning of ELT is the most challenging task. It addresses issues such as institutional readiness, teacher competencies, long term financing and sustainability. If ICT is successfully integrated in the curriculum it can open new vistas of learning English language. It can motivate and engage students in thinking and working creatively towards enhancing their language skills. 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. The learners are usually intimidated by the outdated syllabus and the Grammar-Translation method of teaching English. Learners showed motivation to learn English in a different way by integrating ICT into the syllabus. These findings suggest that it is time to integrate ICT in teaching and learning English language in the secondary schools of North Eastern Region of India.

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