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Role of Computers and a Welcome Change in Teaching Strategies

We notice the rapid growth in educational technology these days. This helps language teachers to have access to a variety of technological assistance in achieving their educational goals. Use of computers in ELT is one such aspect of modern educational technology that brings about a change in the educational and social roles of the teacher and learner.

The knowledge and skill with which a resourceful teachers use tools such as multimedia add another dimension: role of a technician and a professional. In the past Indian teachers in general were more conservation, shunning new strategies, and they tended such strategies that gave them a sense of security. This limited the overall effectiveness of the teaching programme. Hence, an effective blend of traditional and innovative instructional strategies is a welcome change.

Focus on Fluency and Productivity in Writing

Taking our steps further to adopt new strategies, authors of this article made an attempt to teach story writing by using the process *genre* approach, a recent trend in teaching writing.

The learners were made to perform the communicative task of constructing a story, using an outline. A short story is well established genre with distinctive and thematic features. The story-writing task was chosen as it was one of the tasks the learners are asked to perform in their examination. Moreover, it provides ample scope for enhancing the learners' written communication skills.

Limitations of the Oral Medium

Certain limitations were felt in bringing about the desired effect while working only the conventional tools. The teacher could only provide a topic of specific situation through verbal medium. The learners had to imagine the situation with the help of hints provided to them. They would be deprived of the power of visual imagery turning intuitions into mental pictures.

Winter scenery was displayed on the screen showing snow on the roofs, tree tops, and everywhere. And students are enabled to visualize how winter will be, for example in the

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Himalayan regions. In the next scene, the spring season was displayed with budding flowers, greenery and sunshine. It was also visualized with the help of multimedia.

Help from Multimedia for Writing

Helping the students learn the process of writing involved activities such as composing, revising and editing. But these steps are laborious and time-consuming in the traditional classroom. Also another important aspect of teaching-writing process, namely, immediate feedback could not be provided. Above all, the interest and motivation of the learners could not be sustained for a longer period.

All these shortcomings may be overcome if the teacher has access to multimedia. Hence an attempt was made to suggest how, with the help of multimedia software, story writing can be taught in a more motivating and rewarding manner.

Story-writing with the Help of Multimedia

Hints from the short story **'The Gift of the Magi'** by O'Henry were given and students were asked to develop it into a story.

This type of help through the verbal medium alone could not bring about the desired result as stated earlier. So, the same story was presented with the help of multimedia. Multimedia may be effectively exploited by a resourceful teacher to help the learners, experience the subtle emotions and abstract concepts with which the story is packed. The deeper the learners' experience of these emotions, the more refined will be their expression. When experience and expression go hand the communication will be effective.

Several Strategies were Noticed!

At the idea generating level the learners tended to use "Knowledge Telling" strategy while writing. They asked the question what next and formed their narrative in a linear order. Then they analyzed the question, "What happened next" and narrated the events in a story in sequential order.

The process of "knowledge transforming" is activated in a classroom when multimedia is used by providing aural and visual cues with which the learner may form a mental picture of the entire story.

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Use of Computer

These processes can be taught easier by making the learners use a computer to write. Writing on a computer has become a combination of adding, deleting, cutting, pasting and correcting. It helps the student to check spelling, grammar, layout, and style.

Thus, the use of computer may have some positive effect on teaching and learning writing in the classroom by changing the very nature of writing. The challenge for teachers is to make judicious use of the machine. The machine is always under the control of the teacher. Hence the need of the hour is to find out new ways of working that makes use of the advantage of the different abilities of man utilizing machines and multimedia.

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