Pedagogical Shift Towards Technology Infused English Classrooms

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Radical Change in Pedagogy and Possible Consequences

The teaching of English demands radical change in the pedagogy. In this age of Information Technology and computers, teaching of English can not be carried out effectively in the traditional fashion. The whole process of teaching and learning English needs the immediate intervention of technology.

The teachers of English face unprecedented pressure to get technology especially ICT, get networked, enhance the language skills and to get online. It is possible that while implementing technology, we may forget what it is all for. It is important to ascertain that the minimum technology and professional development requirement are reasonably put in place.

The use of technology in teaching of English benefits in the following way.

- Accelerates and enriches the basic skills.
- Relates the academic exercises to the real time job requirements.
- Increases the economic viability of prospective workers.

- Strengthens teaching
- Connects the Institute to the world.

Minimum Code English Classroom

The two basic issues pertaining to the use of technology in English classroom need to be given due contemplation. The issues are:

1. What are the minimum classroom requirements for an ICT infused English classroom?
2. What would we teachers of English be requiring in our English classrooms in the years to come?

The answer to the first question could be termed as 'minimum code English classroom' wherein the following would be minimum technology based essentials.

- Fast internet access
- Two internet connected computers
- Multimedia machine
- A telephone connection
- A Fax machine
- Flat screen TV monitor with VCR
- Video/still digital camera
- Visual presenter
- Interactive Board

We will look at the answer to the second question a little later.

Pedagogical Issues

Suppose the aforesaid minimum code English classroom is in place, there are some fundamental principles of teaching and learning with or without ICT. As a teacher of English we should continue emphasizing the following:

- Motivational introductions
- Discussing the desired outcomes with the learners
- Giving more time to learners for activities
- Providing plenty of opportunity to practice new skills, to create new knowledge and gain feedback
- Authentic real world contexts for the learners
- Summative assessment, closely tied to the desired learning outcomes
- Assessment and reporting signaling next stage of learning

The use of technology simply makes the aforesaid principles of teaching/ learning easier and fun to achieve. Moreover besides recognizing the key skills of speaking and listening we must emphasize reading and writing in the English classrooms. The technology expands our options to teach. We are not going to stop teaching Shakespeare or literature in general-aim is to do it in a better way.

Possible Scenarios

Some critics can term this use of technology as techno-utopia. However, with right investment in hardware and software and of course in teacher professional development, better and effective teaching of English is quite possible.

Example One: Teaching '*The Crucible'*

While teaching Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, the teacher feels that the learners need considerable contextual background information about the theme in which Arthur Miller was writing and the socio-cultural setting in the New England of 1960s. The class can be divided into small groups, each allocated a research topic and given a period to find answers to the questions. The students in groups use a variety of websites which the teacher has identified for them. In the next period, groups report back the findings of their research using the large screen TV to display the web pages. Hence, instead of dry oral delivery, groups can illustrate their report with examples and pictures. Hence even the teaching of literature becomes participatory and more interesting. This way all aspects of English can be taught using technology.

Example Two: Drawing Pictures

If the teacher finds it difficult to draw pictures, e.g. organs of speech, use internet resources to find the right pictures. Few such links are:

- The internet picture dictionary
- Little explorers picture dictionary
- Google image search
- Microsoft free clip art library
- Wikipedia
- Streaming video (Streaming video is a sequence of "moving images" that are sent in compressed form over the Internet and displayed by the viewer as they arrive). Streaming media is streaming video with sound. With streaming video or streaming media, a Web user does not have to wait to download a large file before seeing the video or hearing the sound. Instead, the media is sent in a continuous stream and is played as it arrives. The user needs a *player*, which is a special program that decompresses and sends video data to the display and audio data to speakers. A player can be either an integral part of a browser or downloaded from the software maker's Web site.

Example Three: Frequent Summation

The salient points of a lesson and key words can be emphasized. The visual thesaurus shows words in relation to other vocabulary. The spell-check in Microsoft word has an option that provides the reading grade level for text passages. Teachers can use this when deciding what text to present.

Example Four: Variety in Presentation

Web based resources allow teachers to gather video clips, pictures, maps, audio clips etc. a digital camera can be used to augment information. *Breaking News English* website www.breakingnewsenglish.com presents information in text and spoken audio files.

Example Five: ELLLO

For teaching listening skill, audio and video lessons can be downloaded free from the website of English Listening Language Lab online (ELLLO). The site address is www.elllo.org.

Example Six: Teaching Shakespeare

In order to select passages from the plays of Shakespeare, search engine *Shakespeare Searched* on the website http://tinyurl.com/16mqs can be surfed.

Emerging Technologies

The table below indicates how some emerging technologies can be used in the teaching of English.

Technology	Uses
Word processing/Desk Top publishing	Making letters, making words, making signs, writing own illustrated books.
Internet for information	Information relating to themes, getting suitable images to illustrate work, information about writers, search for song lyrics, search for any topic.
Discussion groups	Engaging in discussion about particular reading, e-reading groups.
Web page Construction	Personal web page design, personal web page on institute site, on-line magazine production.
CD ROM information	Researching topics, researching writers.
Interactive book reading	Shared reading of interactive books for pleasure.
Drawing	Drawing letters of the alphabet, illustrating

	writing for effect.
Digital image manipulation	Cutting, pasting and manipulating digital pictures to illustrate own writing, altering structures and features for effect –i.e. making a color photo into a grey one to illustrate a sad poem.
Sound recording	Recording spoken stories, adding sound to published works, interviewing characters from a novel.
Graphic organizing	The life cycle of an insect, using a graphic organizer to show student's own family tree, using Mind Man to show the relationship between characters in a novel.
Games	Word building and spelling Games, using spelling programs for drill and practice to broaden spelling.
Talking Books	Sharing 'talking-books', producing own 'talking-book', using PowerPoint type software
Chat lines	Probably best accessed on intra - net rather than externally - but many students spend a great deal of time 'chatting' to people all around the world. This could open up interview possibilities. i.e. interviewing a student in Delhi via a chat line about education there.
E-mail	E-mail friends, E-mail for information, E-mail dialogue between teacher and student, E-mail authors.

Making the Most of the Computers Available

The table given below presents various scenarios in which most of the teachers of English find themselves. Let us see how best the resources available with us can be used.

No computers	One computer in the class	Two or more computers in the class
o Use other forms of technology such as video cameras, still cameras, OHPs, sound recording, game machines, etc. o As digital technology	o Keep a record chart of computer use - recording the type of use (game, word processing, CD, e-mail...	o Organize group activities around the computer. For example, if you have your students creating picture books - one group could create an electronic

becomes standard, the skills and knowledge will overlap considerably o Encourage home computer use for publishing or research to move students into areas other than games. If students have to get information, make computer accessed information one of the options.	o Use the computer to promote collaboration - writing, research, games etc o Have a computer specific task in all activities o Encourage use of the full range of computer facilities - show that you use the computer for productive reasons - such as work required sheets, getting information and making signs	picture book using power point. o In contract work, make one or some of the activities ones which can only be completed using the computer o Assign specific activities to each computer. One could be for internet, one for word-processing, one for multi-media, one for games. Use should be charted.

Classroom Practices

Technology enhances many classroom practices for English learners. Four of the best such practices are as following:
1. **Providing background information**: Multimedia internet sites can be used to provide context.
2. **Increase interaction**: Students can be paired with native English speakers for e-mail exchange, using safe e-mil or chat room programmes. E.g. *ePals*.
3. **Making learning authentic**: Students can pursue their own interests on the internet. Popular video clips and graphics can increase comprehension. Articles can be made accessible using text-to-speech utilities and sites such as *PROMT-online*.
4. **Creating a positive learning environment**: The non-judgmental nature of the computer allows most students to make errors with out embarrassment and can provide immediate feedback and correction e.g. writing in Microsoft Word with the spell-check turned on, using an English language tutorial such as the BBC.

Issues involved in using Computer Technology in your Classroom

- **Developing a whole school approach**: This involves considering how students will be taught basic skills; what kinds of priority will be given to students in accessing computers; security and privacy implications of the use of computer technology; intranet development and use.
- **The teaching strategies needed to accommodate the computers**: As students' access to information improves so that they can go beyond what the teacher or school provide, and can locate information much closer to its source, the

relationship between teacher and student inevitably changes. Some students may have a much stronger practical knowledge base and operational understanding of computer technology than their teacher does. Recognizing this, we need to work out how to acknowledge and use their skills and bring our own teaching expertise and critical awareness to bear in choosing appropriate ways of working with computers. Questions arise such as: Can we use peer-tutoring to help students develop basic skills? How are computers best used within a writing program? What is the most time-effective way to use computers for research?

- **Where to place the computers in the school/classroom**: Where do they need to go to become a natural part of learning programs, and not an add-on? How can we ensure the most effective access to computer technology by the greatest number of students?
- **The technical assistance needed**: What happens in the event of a breakdown? Who will help you to trouble-shoot? What kinds of routines might help to minimize technical difficulties and keep the learning program going smoothly when they inevitably occur?
- **Classroom dynamics**: How do we ensure that students use the computers in a collaborative way? What balance of computer and other activities is appropriate at any one time to keep the class communicating and functioning well?
- **Skills, attitudes and knowledge of computers and computing**: How do we help students to develop the specific skills needed in English, such as effective use of spell-checking programs and critical viewing skills?
- **Moral, ethical and equity questions**: When the Internet opens up information resources far beyond the schools' own, how do we ensure that students are protected from exploitation but not limited? What kinds of ethical questions do we need to investigate with students?

Case Study

Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidayalaya, Khanpur Kalan (Sonipat), is a women's university, established by the government of Haryana in November 2006. There are approximately 3000 girl students enrolled in the different courses run by the university. The good thing is that proficiency in English language has been made compulsory for all of them.

Teaching of English is divided in two parts. On the one hand, in order to cater for their aesthetic sensibilities, conventional items like prose, poetry, fiction etc are taught in a classroom. On the other hand, to hone their communication abilities, training is imparted through learning resource centre.

In order to analyze the success of a language resource centre, we collected the data of 30students. These 30 students were selected at random and they were observed over a period of 15 hours. The comparison was made between the stage when they just started using the language resource centre and the stage they reached at they end of the 15th hour.

The procedure adopted for collecting such data is as following:

1. Listening for specific information test was administered.
2. Students were asked to listen and were made to respond to the questions given.
3. A list of words spoken in Received Pronunciation was transmitted for listeners.
4. Then they were asked to repeat the pronunciation.
5. Whatever was spoken by the learners, it was recorded and listened by the teacher.
6. The tests were repeated once again, the responses were once again recorded and corrected.
7. This way all the responses were compared over a period of time.
8. It was found that there was a marked change in the pronunciation, stress and intonation.

Based on the above test, it can be concluded that even the slow learners perform very well when they are exposed to technology through learning resource centre. Because in a learning resource centre the individual space allotted to each student gives enough opportunity to a learner to feel confident to make mistakes with out being ridiculed by others.

Conclusion

The minimum code classroom described in this paper provides limitless opportunities for more interesting and motivational approaches from teachers and enriched learning for students. However, there are certain professional issues which can be raised by a teacher.

- I need a new English unit for my B.A. (Ist Year) class. Where do I look?
- I am so tired of the way I approach the teaching of *The Lucy Poems*. Where can I find a different approach?
- I would like to read a little more about the theory of my subject. Where should I start?
- I would like to know what other teachers think about the latest assessment proposals.
- I want to learn more about using information technology in my classroom.
- I would like to attend professional conference. Which one?
- I am right into this web based stuff. Where can I go further?

The professional development of teachers is the key component in such pedagogical shift. It goes without saying that technology is not substitute for a teacher; it is like a complimentary teaching aid only. Professional development should be given equal emphasis as we give to hardware and software; otherwise the said pedagogical shifts would not occur in most English classrooms and will end up with a range of underutilized hardware depreciating in classroom corners.

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