TECHNOLOGY AS AN ELEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING IN AN ELT CLASSROOM IN NAGALAND

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Abstract: *The use of technology in an educational institution has become a standard of imparting education in many parts of the world. India being one of the many countries to have transitioned to the "new normal" of learning and imparting knowledge has witnessed innumerable innovative projects that include digital technologies. The COVID 19 outbreak has driven many schools and colleges to impart education using technology as a tool for delivering lectures. The sudden flip in imparting education through online mode where technology acts as a channel has brought major challenges to the educators as well as the students. The state of Nagaland with limited resources and less-developed infrastructure such as irregular supply of electricity and poor network coverage behaves as a barrier to using technology as a tool for imparting education. This only compelled the educators and the students with limited knowledge to technology to face some major challenges and master in utilizing digital technology. The paradigm shift from pedagogical practices and learning practices to online mode learning developed a need for technology. This study will aim to emphasize on the importance of application of learning technologies and tools precisely in a language classroom and analyze the effectiveness of learning and teaching English in an ELT classroom using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and blended learning.*

1.1 Introduction

Despite the fact that in a contemporary society where the use of digital technologies is ever-growing, the education sector in Nagaland still use the traditional approach to impart education; a face-to-face mode of teaching and learning in a classroom setting. Considering that education and technology is not easily sustainable in Nagaland; bearing innumerable barriers from less-developed infrastructures such as lack of regular supply of electricity and poor network coverage to no access of internet connectivity in some parts of Nagaland, thereby having no access to technology and the inability to incorporate technology. The teachers have been faced with manifold major challenges during the outbreak of COVID 19. The unpredictable time when the education system transitioned to online mode of education in parts of the world, the state of Nagaland witnessed the situation compelling to rely solely on technology. Teachers mastered their skills with technology proficiency by getting general support from their peers and students. A teachers' stance on technology, however, especially if it aligns with his or her teaching goals, can be a strong predictor of technology integration (Inan & Lowther, 2010; Zhao & Cziko, 2001).

The need of technology for imparting knowledge demands for a professional development. To explore subject related blogs and articles can be the primary step to enhance and polish one's knowledge and by implementing the acquired sources and generate new ideas and approaches objectively to participate in digital activities for student-learning goals.

In terms of language learning, particularly in ELT classes, it is believed that skills should be integrated and the core version why technology integration is considered as a necessity under the general context of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Information and Communication

Technology (ICT) is the availability of authentic materials for studying, worksheets, experiential learning, enhancement of students' achievements, greater interaction, individualization, independence from a single source of information and most importantly, global understanding.

Modern digital technology has the ability to facilitate person-to-person interaction with learners interacting via telecommunications and computer networks both with other learners of the same language and with native speaking peers in other parts of the world. From the perspective of an educator by profession who utilizes technology daily, technology integration can be defined as the utilization, combination, mix, and supplementation of technology tools with instruction to aid and improve effective learning in the classroom.

1.2 Use of Technology as a tool in ELT classrooms

In a language learning classroom technology should be used as a tool to enhance learning. Warschauer and Meskill (2000) assert that almost every type of language teaching has had its own technologies to support it. The grammar-translation method relied on one of the most ubiquitous technologies in education, the blackboard. The blackboard was later supplemented by the overhead projector. With the improvisation of technology and the invention of Internet, the tools and virtual resources like wikis, blogs, podcasts, websites, video links, third screen devices, have been developed to enhance the learning process.

According to Jonassen et al. (1999), teachers need to seek ways of using technology as a learning tool for their students even if they do not master the technology and cannot act as an expert. When teachers assign a project to the students, technology is viewed and considered as an instructional guide, simultaneously, the students develop the skills of critical reading, creative thinking and improve research skills. The use of multimedia tools also influences the teaching and learning process of the English language. According to Pandey, "multimedia is a combination of text, audio, still images, animation, video or interactivity content forms. It is usually recorded and played, displayed or accessed by information content processing devices such as computerized and electronic media devices but also be part of a live performance (multimedia)." In comparison to traditional teaching where the material and tool used is limited to text books, reference books and blackboard; multimedia tools contribute an adequate guide for refining English language skills. Multimedia tools such as texts, pictures, graphics, audios and videos help enhance the process of English language learning gain better perception considering that the use of audio-visual aids, particularly, films; it performs as a tool of implementing language skills at a greater level and proves that retention and recall of information is significantly improved when two senses are engaged in acquiring a language. The use of multimedia attracts the matter that multimedia becomes the replacement for teachers which remains counterfactual or a debatable topic. Such tendency emphasized on the dominant role of technology over teachers. Teachers should be well-equipped on the technology literacy so as to operate and use technology as an aid for effective teaching.

1.3 Types of technology used in ELT classrooms and its role

"The selection of appropriate technology in class is essential for ensuring effective learning. When used as learning tools, technology provides tremendous opportunities to enhance classroom instruction" (Raihan & Lock, 2012). The inclusion of technology in a language (English) learning secure a positive impact since it promotes the core objective of language learning precisely, communication skills. With the invention of Internet and the innovative ideas being imparted, teachers can choose the most appropriate method in creating an effective learning process. Technologies such as multimedia presentation, internet, screening and films promote the effectual proficiency in language learning.

1.3.1 Multimedia presentation

The two technologies which are commonly used in a smart class or advanced technological classrooms are; the multimedia projector or overhead projector and presentation software like PowerPoint

presentation. This visual aid enhances and emphasizes the message or the lecture that is aimed to be delivered. The use and practice of PowerPoint presentation in a classroom cultivates and draws attention of the students and achieves effective learning.

1.3.2 Internet

With the ever-widening use of Internet and easily accessible resources for information, India is familiar with Internet and its uses. Most digital natives depend on the Internet and search engines such as Google, Chrome, and Bing for easy and quick access to queries. Owing to the cost effective and affordable education, the Internet provides quality education from blogs, web tutorials and YouTube EDU; consisting of remarkable range of high definition quality videos that helps in engaging the learning community. Followed by the auction of 4G spectrum accelerated the use of Internet among the students and the cost efficient data packs mainly targeted for students' educational purpose navigates an effective learning situation.

1.3.3 Films and audios/soundtracks

In a language learning classroom setting, the time for screening is equally important as delivering a lecture. Films in the target language precisely English provides authentic vocabularies and expose a natural form of the language, likewise it gives a full exposure to cultural education which enhances the language comprehension in depth. Films serve as a tool for effective learning if the right approach is applied; such as, using subtitles as a tool for reading and comprehending skills though not much on the optimal and visual context. Therefore the importance of repetition is relevant here; to watch the same film without subtitles can be considered as a self assessment and notice the level of understanding. Furthermore, the practice of taking notes on new vocabularies will help the learner build more words. Cultural media is considered as the platform for acquiring colloquial words which links to cultural experiences of each generation.

1.4 Role of blended learning and its effectiveness

Blended learning is a teaching practice that combines or blends classroom and online learning. The instruction of a lesson takes place with both the teacher interaction (face-to-face) and also the use of digitalize technologies. According to Wikipedia, "Blended learning is an approach to education that combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. It requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, with some elements of student control over time, place, path, or place." With the emergence of technology and the importance of implementing technology in a learning process, language learning process is observed to be most effective when practiced beyond the classrooms and with the help of technology, there is a possibility to acquire proficient learning skills. For the reason that blended learning allows interaction among the learners and the teacher, the ability to articulate their views and thoughts are well developed.

The role of teachers in blended learning environment shifts from knowledge provider to being a mentor and a guide. The misconception of replacement or that of teacher being a passive role and less important occurs in this area. Rather on the contrary, in blended learning, teachers are considered as the influencer or motivate the learners for effective learning. Since the objective of blended learning approach is student-centric, most of the learning and the role of instruction are done through technology. Blended learning offers ample interactive sessions such as; tech-based learning, customized pacing, time flexibility, responsibility for their own learning and promotes student interaction and community building, as a result keeping the students consistently engaged and motivated. And that said, teachers' role as a mentor personalizes the learning experience and builds on the human elements of encouragement, compassion, and caring guidance that only teachers have the ability to give.

Blended learning has the potential in effective learning and skill development. It prepares the learners to be able to tackle down issues, offers a larger sense of responsibility, better decision making and

self-learning; blended learning gives students the ability to work in their best learning modality, at their own pace and to collaborate with other students to maximize learning.

1.5 Limitations faced by teachers and students with the use of technologies

Despite the progress and the use of technology in an ELT classroom that accentuates the objectives, there are definite disadvantages faced by both the teachers and the learners. Use of technology has always been an arguable topic and in a state like Nagaland, the use of technology is limited to a great extent.

Lack of proper training on the use of technology tools in a digitalized world can trigger a major problem, it can act as a barrier; a blocking factor in achieving possible effective learning of the language (English). The attitude and motivation of the teachers plays a vital role and causes a similar concern; a Luddite who is opposed to technology or technological devices by reason of his/her view that such devices threaten existing jobs, interfere with personal privacy or become fully technology dependent. Such attitude of an educator is to be taken into a concerned matter so as to provide alternative ways for imparting effective teaching. Teachers who use technology should also be able to solve basic technical issues such as blocked access, troubleshoot errors, crash systems, remote internet speed and connection, loose wires, outdated plug-ins and websites. These develop a drawback to manage language learning class productively.

Limited resources bring about a downfall of executing quality education. Bearing in mind that purchasing of cutting-edge electronics for educational purpose is expensive and requires a high maintenance, similarly, technology based digital tools and applications such as Lingoda, Grammarly and Rosetta Stone are versatile applications to help learners engage beyond classroom with detailed designed course structures however, not all can avail to these considering that such applications are paid or in-app purchases. Furthermore, the state of power supply also threatens the learning process in an ongoing lecture or beyond. As a result Nagaland is faced with poor network connectivity and slow Internet service mainly for the reason of outdated router and bandwidth throttling. As Ivy (2011) states, "It is not always possible to fund language programs with such high cost, especially in the developing countries. Therefore, most of the technologies remain "distant dream" to a good number of teachers in our country". Given the current scenario on the state of education, the sudden shift from tradition class mode to online mode increased the level of difficulties in imparting and acquiring effective teaching and learning English. With the help of technology, video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Google Meet is used as a platform for delivering and receiving lectures. However, for some who are less privileged economically is unable to purchase a mobile device which acts as the sole source for receiving education. Furthermore, with poor performance of Internet speed the learners miss video lectures which ultimately create a lag of comprehending. With alternative ways in tackling the problems, teachers send recorded live videos and audio embedded PowerPoint Presentations as a source of study material. The multimedia files take longer period to download depending on the size, thereby, creating a time constraint situation and sometimes feel the sense of discouragement and unmotivated.

1.6 Suggestions

Technology has always served as an enhancement in transmitting knowledge and with the help of the technology based tools such as social networking sites, video conferencing platforms; language learning applications, quizzes and games, and blogs can be a support system in accomplishing the objective of ELT. Thus, engaging ICT tools for both the teachers and learners can intensify the effectiveness of language learning process.

The integration of technology is sometimes considered to be supranational phenomena, it is a requirement to be understood and be aware of the differences in terms of international, national, and local context. It is without a doubt that language learning should be viewed globally bearing in mind under what influences the provision and practice exist. Learners and teachers should be sensible towards such

differences.

Education technology not only provides important tools to make teaching more effective rather, it is also expectations and proper execution of acquired knowledge from the learners. The key element for the educators is the ability to facilitate learning in cyber space by being able to utilize digital repositories and web resources in preparing quality educational materials that aid learning. Teachers need to integrate materials with various mobile devices and online platforms to enhance teaching and learning.

Creating a study plan based on the learners is an effective approach to teaching. The objective is to keep the language learners engaged in and outside the classroom. In particular, using public speaking class; in addition to asking all the students in the class to provide instant feedback to each speech through multiplatform messaging app such as Whatsapp, the speech may also be recorded and uploaded onto a digital platform such as a private YouTube channel that only the teacher and the students can get access to. In which each presenter may first review and provide a self-evaluation in front of the class where the presenter can comment both on the presentation skill sets and make their own recommendations for improvement. By doing so, students not only learn efficiently and effectively but they also learn from their own mistakes thereby creating a sense of self-awareness.

The practice of reviewing a book or a text is also an important element in achieving effective language (English) learning. Readings and comprehension exercises may be assigned to the class in groups and allow time flexibility, which will result in class interaction to be more engaging and communicative since the focus will be weighed more on demonstration and communication. Thereby building a productive skill and ensure understanding. The aim is to make technology being less or not a shock but rather be used productively. Language learning should continue to emphasize on the implementation of technology based education so as to enable effective learning in a fast-paced digital driven world.

1.7 Conclusion

The misconception on how technology is misleading the present generation raises indefinite issues and debate. Albeit the differences, the contemporary society and the learners inhabit a digital world, therefore the educators need to take on measures and adopt technology with the express intention of shaping the learners' mind and to interact in their native environment.

To use technology wisely both the educators and learners need to develop digital skills. Furthermore, users should be aware of the outcome if used otherwise; technology should be used as a resource and a provider of information, the process of implementing and integrating the information and knowledge obtained should depend on human. Technology may best be defined as the "learning accelerators" which combines the most appropriate online resources and engaging in offline communities; and educators as the "facilitators" that mentors the learners' mind and supports in professional growth and cultivate motivation for effective learning. The value of peer to peer learning is still effective and with the help of web-based learning, a learner may develop skills on concerned subjects and areas, nevertheless no machine learning algorithm can teach a student how to acquire skills such as: empathy, creativity; having the ability to dream and generate new ideas or inventions, and the significant skill which remains as the pivotal factor throughout the whole transition and societal shift is the ability to adapt. "The measure of intelligence is the ability to change". (Albert Einstein)

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