

# **New Trends in Language Learning using Technology**



SINCE 1966

**New Trends in Language  
Learning using Technology**  
Knowledge  
**Vineetha S Gabriel**

English  
First Edition: March 2016

Cover: Orange, Clt

Typesetting: Navadham, Clt-2  
Printing: Repro India Ltd

ISBN: 978-81-300-1772-3  
7486(3-2016)57.I.o.a

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*Published by:*

**POORNA PUBLICATIONS, KOZHIKODE**

TBS Building, G.H. Road, Kozhikode-673001

Ph: 0495-2720085, 2720086, 2721025

Branches: **Kannur** 0497-2713713, **Kalpetta** 04936-203842

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# **New Trends in Language Learning using Technology**

**Prof. Vineetha S Gabriel**

**POORNA PUBLICATIONS, KOZHIKODE**

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# TEACHING ENGLISH TO TERTIARY LEARNERS USING TECHNOLOGY

**Ms. Bindya Premnath**

## **Introduction**

Language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied. Even the interpretation and use of words involves a process of free creation.

*Noam Chomsky.*

*Asst. Professor  
on Contract basis  
Department of English  
Malabar Christian College  
Kozhikode*

**E**nglish, the queen of all languages, in the new millennium further established itself as the ruling language in the world of science, technology and administration. In India English was introduced two centuries ago by East India Company first for trade and commerce, later the language shaped the political, administrative and educational life of the country in several far reaching ways unforeseen by the reformers themselves. At present the role and status of English in India is higher. Graddol: (1997:16) states that " technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education work and culture. The use of English language has increased rapidly after 1960. At present the role and status of English is that it is the language of social context, political, socio-cultural, business, education,

industries, media, library, communication across borders, and key subject in curriculum and language of imparting education". It is also a crucial determinant for university entrance and processing well paid jobs in the commercial sector. Since there are more and more English learners in India, the new era assigns new challenges and duties on the modern teacher. Contemporary English teaching aims at convocation of novice teachers fortified with the skills, competencies and commitment to teach English in Indian classrooms. Thus different teaching methods have been implemented to test the effectiveness of the teaching process. The tradition of English teaching has drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. Use of authentic materials in the form of films, radio, TV has been there for a long time along with it technology provided so many options to make teaching interesting and also made teaching more productive.

Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. The teaching and learning process that occurs following the completion of secondary education and provides academic credits and competencies that lead to certificates, diplomas and degrees from universities, university colleges, polytechnics, community colleges and similar institutions.

The tertiary education landscape is undergoing significant change as a result of technological innovations. We are witnessing changes in the way tertiary education is taught and in the way students learn. While the conventional setting of the lecture method will continue to form the framework of tertiary education systems, it will be enhanced by the integration of new tools and pedagogies, and it will be complemented by many more online learning opportunities and a greater variety of providers in higher education. These new technologies and approaches to education are already having a clear and positive impact on tertiary education provision. They are already starting to facilitate better quality learning and teaching for both on-campus and online provision, as educational resources from around the globe become more freely accessible and more interactive media for



learning are employed. Methods of teaching can be better tailored to individual students' needs and advances in learning analytics are enabling quicker feedback on students' performance. There is enormous potential for widening access to higher education and increasing the diversity of the student population. Online technologies provide opportunities to learn anywhere, anytime and from anyone. This flexibility is essential for non-traditional learners and will enable a change in the engagement of higher education institutions in lifelong learning and continuing professional development. This will provide an important tool to governments in ensuring a diversity of provision within higher education systems to meet the needs of all learners. It also provides a platform for reaching international markets and complements existing developments in cross-border education. Finally, new technologies can facilitate greater collaboration, both with global partners and at a more local level. Developing educational partnerships is an important element, its a strategy for cooperation with other parts of the world and also provides a mechanism for enhancing educational attainment rates in emerging economies. At the local level, technologies can underpin national efforts to drive greater collaboration between institutions, combining expertise and delivering greater critical mass. Government must strongly encourage and support a greater integration of new technologies and associated pedagogical approaches in conventional provision. Traditional providers must diversify their offering and provide more courses online, especially targeting continuing professional development and lifelong learning. They should also be encouraged and incentivised to engage with newer forms of open, online courses as these become more established. The momentum towards openness and freely accessible education resources needs to be maintained and built on.

Teaching using technology isn't just about staying current on the latest tools, it's about knowing how to successfully incorporate the best tools into your teaching when and where it makes sense. This article looks at the benefits of using technology, You'll also get an inside look at best practices for using technology to enhance teaching and learning – whether you teach in a traditional classroom or online.

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TERTIARY LEVEL**

English Language Learners are one of the fastest growing groups in colleges, universities, business and technical schools. Despite their formal education, many English Language Learners have had limited exposure to the structure and vocabulary of academic English. Even students who are highly accomplished in their particular field of study are often held back by their lack of understanding of English syntax and vocabulary.

Although most are conversant in English, and/or have passed qualifying tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), many experience difficulty when confronted with the more rigorous demands of academic reading and writing. A great many post secondary schools have instituted programs focusing on skills such as typing, vocabulary and phonics to ease the transition for these students. While helpful, they fail to provide the individualized support English Language Learners need to meet multiple course requirements. Most institutions readily acknowledge the need for additional support, but often lack the necessary staff or resources to provide it.

## **NEEDS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TERTIARY LEVEL**

### **• Vocabulary development**

The English vocabulary of most English Language Learners is not sufficiently extensive to deal with the specialized vocabulary used in textbooks, technical materials, essays or articles. Because of their limited exposure to academic English, students are often unable to fully comprehend lectures or actively participate in class discussions. Many are also hampered in their ability to express themselves in writing. Repeated exposure to academic English is thought to be one of the best ways for English Language Learners to increase their reading and writing vocabulary.

### **• Improved pronunciation**

English Language Learners often have difficulties with English pronunciation. Because languages differ in their phonetic structure, and because

English has many phonetic inconsistencies, English Language Learners frequently mispronounce words. Once they develop incorrect associations with the spoken and written forms of words, and these errors become “fossilized”, they often fail to recognize even familiar words when they hear them and are likely to misspell these words when writing.

- **Attention to phrasing and punctuation**

Phrasing is critical to comprehension. If words are grouped inappropriately, they lose their meaning. English Language Learners are frequently unaware of the rules governing English phraseology and often don't pay sufficient attention to punctuation. As a result, they may miss the logic of what they are reading. The more opportunities English Language Learners have to simultaneously hear and read text, the more sensitized they will be to the natural flow of the English language.

- **Exposure to authentic writing**

English Language Learners often lack familiarity with the stylistic conventions for writing papers and essays. Many have never learned how to compose an American-style essay or write a critique. Some international students, for example, who have been trained to be neutral in their writing and avoid stating an opinion, need to learn a very different way of expressing themselves. Exposure to a wide variety of stylistic conventions is one of the best ways to provide English Language Learners with models for their own writing.

- **Multi-sensory learning**

Too often English Language Learners operate in a closed system. They are asked to read, listen or write as solitary pursuits. Most readers learn best when all their senses are engaged. They benefit from the synergy of seeing language, hearing it, speaking it, and writing it simultaneously. Opportunities for this type of learning are limited in academic settings, especially at the post-secondary level.

- **Development of independence as a learner**

English Language Learners often spend many extra hours doing assignments. They frequently have to seek help outside the classroom from more English

proficient peers or spend hours pouring over outdated bilingual dictionaries. Reliance on outside resources limits the ability of English Language Learners to take charge of their own studying and necessitates spending valuable time on the mechanics of reading and writing that could more profitably be spent learning content.

## **TECHNOLOGY FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TERTIARY SECTOR**

Technology helps English language learners find a voice, easing the transition to a new language. English language learners benefit from the reinforcement of vocabulary and concepts through pictures, graphics and video. They also benefit from being able to use technology to express themselves. Rushin (n.d.) has experienced the use of technology in the classroom. It helps make a better teacher. When students see their teacher trying new things, they become more engaged in the process. Technology allows students to see the whole world as a resource with themselves being in charge of their destiny. It also benefits students because they have choices and opportunities to explore and share information to a greater extent than available in a traditional classroom.

The use of technology in education has closely mirrored the development of the personal computer. Computers can provide universal success by dividing lessons into segments to the extent needed to make sure that everyone can accomplish something. They deliver results accurately and quickly (Bennett, 2002). The closer the connection between the action and reward, the more valuable and more effective is the reward. With computers and technology, learning can be a 24/7 process. Teaching will not be bound by time constraints.

Since their introduction in the late seventies, personal computers have developed in speed, power and ease of use. . Falling prices have made it possible for more and more students, particularly those in post secondary education, to purchase their own computers. Today, the use of laptops is ubiquitous on most college campuses. Improved access to the Internet has put a wealth of resources just a click away and has revolutionized the way instruc-

tion is delivered. More and more courses are available on-line and the use of the Internet for teacher-student communication has become a fact of everyday life.

## **GOOGLE DRIVE**

Google Drive is a free online storage cloud that has Google's version of Word, Power point and Excel built into it. It allows students to create documents for free on their own. They can access and edit these documents on a tablet device or computer from various locations with their Google account login. They can share the documents they are working on with other students and can even work in one document at the same time to co-create pieces of work. They can also share the document with their teachers while they work or once they've finished to get instant feedback.

## **Edmodo**

Edmodo is a free social learning platform for students, teachers and parents. It looks a little bit like Face book so it is a familiar format for students to use. But before you run for the hills, it is very different to Face book in that it's completely controlled by the teacher and specifically designed for educational purposes. It has a shared timeline as a homepage where teacher and the students can interact and teacher can allow students to interact with one another, if he wish. Both teacher and students have a library where they can store documents and share them with others if they want to. The teacher can set assignments, students hand in assignments and teachers feedback on the work all within Edmodo. Two particularly useful functions are the quizzes and polls, and there's also a built-in grade book that houses the teacher-assessed grades and quiz results for each student.

## **Screen casting**

There a loads of tools out there that capture your computer or device screen and allow you to record your voice while you do so. Tool that is often used is screen casting which is free and explain everything and is quite cheap. The idea is that you can take a picture of your computer or device screen and

then set your voice against the website or pre-prepared power point. If you collate these in one place, you have a bank of instructional videos.

### **YouTube**

One way to collate the videos created by a screen cast tool is to start a YouTube channel and upload them all there. This is simply your own YouTube home page – you can style the background, upload profile information and follow other channels of interest. You can also create playlists within your channel to organise videos into topics and allow students to find them easily. If creating your own videos is not for you then you can create playlists of videos that are already out there that relate to the topics you are studying.

### **Blogging**

There are many blogging platforms around but the two that are most popular are Word press and Blogger. If you're looking for the easier of the two then Blogger from Google is the one. If you want a more sophisticated platform then Word press is probably a better choice. A basic blog allows you to have a rolling front page of updating posts and static pages accessed via tabs, often along the top of the page. It is a great record of the year for the students to look back over.

## **CONCLUSION**

Today's economy is based on a global perspective. We need to compete and collaborate with the world. Thus education must be catered along these lines. In order to get a job in today's workplace, higher thinking order skills are required. We also need to learn about different cultures and how to work on a global scale. Parents want their children to graduate with skills that prepare them to either get a job in today's marketplace or advance to higher levels of education and training. Employers hire employees who are reliable, literate, able to reason, communicate, make decisions, and learn. The Department of Education, and other federal agencies recognize the essential role of technology in 21st century education.

Technology is a versatile and valuable tool for teaching and learning and

becoming a way of life. The most important thing is that teachers need to be prepared to use these technologies effectively, efficiently and fruitfully and educational institutions must encourage the use.

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# FROM GURUKULA TO VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS AND BEYOND

**Anna Athimannil**

*4<sup>th</sup> Sem M.A.English  
K.A.H.M.Unity Women's  
College, Manjeri,  
amnaathimannil@gmail.com*

**E**ducation is an integral part of every culture. The knowledge and ideas transmitted through words help people to get the real meaning of education. We can trace back the roots of Indian education from the Vedic period in history. It has been known that ancient Gurukul system existed centuries before across India. In the Gurukul system of education students would stay with the Guru (teacher) away from their families and they all together yearned for the developments of their mind, body and soul.

This Sanskrit verse can easily give a glimpse of what a student was supposed to be in a Gurukul system,

“Kak chesta, bako dhyanam, shwan nidra, tathaiva cha,

Alphari, grih tyagi, vidyarthi panch lakshanam”

1. Perseverance of a crow
2. Concentration of a swan
3. Light sleeper like a dog
4. Light eater
5. Staying away from home

Agas are gone, times have changed and so our education system too has altered. But, in current education system a student should;

- Know how to operate technology,
- How to make Power Point Presentations,
- How to use Projectors, etc.

Children learn from what they perceive through their five senses that is through seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling. AS in ancient system today too many institutions employ counselors and other techniques to improve their mental as well as physical health. When certain martial arts were practiced earlier similar strategies were adopted in present education system too.

Gurukul system was overruled by cast system whereas technology in current education has widely leveled these distinctions and brought an equal platform for individuals across the world. Today, students sitting at any part of the world can take part in the learning process irrespective of their class, caste and gender. Only the Brahmins were privileged to study in those institutions and when technology became an integral part of education they could learn whatever they needed and they could even had a choice to select whatever things they would study. All the students were equal and the advent of technology provided a democratic platform for the students.

The Gurukul system of education begins by the Upanayana ceremony in which the students were admitted to the Gurukula and it was the foundational state in a Gurukul system. The students were compelled to stay away from their home and lived with the Guru as a family member. Teaching methodology was practice based and the students engaged in a collective learning process like what exactly in a peer teaching system. This was a more creative and diverse environment and the learning too were more inductive and process oriented.

Even though the teachers had complete autonomy over the curriculum and the organization, the students could move from one Gurukula if he is dissatisfactory with the system. And the students were also allowed to move to other teachers to find solution for their queries and doubts. This system does not hinder the students from self study and learning. The most popular learning strategy adopted by Gurukula system was through debates and

discussions which are a used in present system too. Intellectuals, thinkers, philosophers and students from faraway places were assembled to participate in these debates and discussions and these were organized regularly. This methodology later led to the evolvement of logic called Vakovakyam, Tarkashastra or the science of disputation. One such incident can be cited from Mahabharata- the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in the Bhagavat Gita. Similarities can be found in this method with the Socrates' method in ancient Greek tradition. He resolved every question by raising multiple questions and it was an endless play of questions, arguments and counter arguments. The modern system too adopts this student centered learning strategy. Thus, if we revisit our own educational histories we can see some traces of ancient traditional education system in modern western pedagogies too.

In the ancient Gurukul education system the students were not dependent on their parents as there was no any fee structure apart from Gurudakshina which a student gives to Guru when he leaves the Gurukul. In Gurukul system, they imparted various skills like martial arts, use of weapons for self defense, scriptures, household chores, discipline and respect towards life and nature.

When Yoga and Asanas were practiced in Gurukula, a modern version of such a physical exercise was incorporated in present educational scenario in the form of physical training, body fitness programmes and Gym. When they chanted mantras and gapas, we chanted rhymes and light music. The students were engaged in physical games like kabaddi at that time and now along with academics they are trained in cricket, basketball, swimming etc. "Swim N' Survive" schemes were introduced in the schools in Kerala with a special focus on giving coaching for the students in swimming. In this way we can find similarities in traditional and present education system which are practiced based. As we know that hearing is 'you have an idea about it', writing is 'you know it' and doing is you 'understand it'. Life skills were taught in these institutions with slight variations with time and form.

What is the present status of education? The debate is still going on whether education kills creativity. Some countries insist on the need for a self learning model. Every system would be capable of making its students to set up a mindset to prepare them for any adversities in life. We should not go with the time, but far beyond that.

Kerala is known to be the first state in the country to include Information Technology in the state curriculum. It was started by 8<sup>th</sup> standard and teachers were trained to handle lessons as well as technology in the later part. Free Software like GNU/Linux was incorporated in the education system in spite of protests from various parts. The state has now advocated IT enabled education and IT @ school project was introduced and every other subject was taught with the aid of technology. This project was launched in 2001 under the Department of General Education, Govt. of Kerala. Also it has implemented the EDUSAT network, an endeavor solely for the purpose of education and it was inaugurated by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005 in Thiruvananthapuram.

Changes and transformations have occurred and the education system still is in its transitional phase that the role of a teacher is remodeled in Virtual Classrooms where we can sense the virtual presence of a teacher in these online meeting spaces. These innovations support student learning up to an extent. These classrooms remove the slashes of boundaries of time and space and just as the face to face real class room setups these online settings are available through the network all the time, 24 hours a day.

Bob Maiden in his book titled 'The Virtual Classroom Starter Guide' gives the characteristics of a virtual class room as follows,

"There are several terms for live online events: Webcasts, Webinars and Virtual Classrooms. Whatever the term, there are similarities among nearly all Synchronous online events. Nearly all programmes are short in duration, ranging from 30 minutes to 2 hours. They often are led by a live instructor, with a facilitator assisting the main presenter. The number of participants or learners varies depending on prerequisites, level of content, blending with other modalities and so forth"

K.Alliance is one such enterprise which offers a wide range of corporate and e-learning courses and is one of the fastest and easily accessible online training organizations. Such virtual classrooms provide an exact environment of real classrooms as the students can take part in live class discussions, question and answer sessions and if it is an instructor led virtual classroom there will be group discussions and the participants can even raise their hands to

voice their opinion. The instructors and the students can write in the white board or electronic flip charts and they can respond, laugh and applaud. In some virtual classrooms there are facilities to share one's comments by clicking on certain smiley face or by clapping in order to show approval and they can also disagree by pressing some smiley faces showing negative signs and responses. Instead of picking up information from the dead website pages, a student can participate in live interaction with people from far away regions across boundaries. They can share their ideas and doubts on the particular subject.

Virtual classroom enhances e-learning in a number of ways by offering a curriculum of 24 hours. Time won't be a hindrance in learning and people of different age groups and employers can also learn through this medium. Effective performance and assessment are assured by many agencies and that makes it a reliable source for acquiring knowledge. Unified access and unified administration is another major characteristic of these settings and the links to classrooms and recordings are automatically transferred through this virtual medium.

Things are changing faster than ever before. Every now and then technology has a big deal over our life and activities and people are adopting new strategies to be competent in this system. Yes, of course we can adapt and we are curious enough to learn without an authoritarian framework. It is still a debatable question whether schools are really needed to boost up one's knowledge and talents.

"I suppose it is because nearly all children go to school nowadays, and have things arranged for them, that they seem so forlornly unable to produce their own ideas"

– Agatha Christie

*Don't Go Back to Schools, A Handbook for Learning Anything* is one of the most influential works by Kio Stark who dropped out herself from Yale and she seeks to establish how people achieved success without going to schools. For holistic learning education should go beyond classrooms and textbooks. Education encompasses much more than a name, location or scores and is a

never ending learning process. In this book she interviewed many successful personalities whom she referred to as 'independent learners'. Independent learning suggests idea such as 'self-taught' or 'autodidact'. She views learning as a social activity in which we learn together. By the term independent learner she does not refer to a person learning in isolation as no learning is possible through isolation. When she says to quit schools the alternative she suggests is that people should find other people to learn with and from. Because the most successful learning happens when students are able to communicate and learn together.

Virtual classrooms and e-learning methodologies have transferred the education system with manifold and multi dimensional effects. Education is not confined to geographical boundaries and borders. This new paradigm shift has broken all the boundary lines and brought everything under a unified network. These modern strategies and processes facilitate education at greater speed and ease with minimum time loss and cost. In essence, education enables changes, alterations, growth, and mistakes and equips us to move forward irrespective of the medium, it can be the real classrooms, virtual classrooms or something beyond such institutional frameworks.

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# NEW TREND IN LANGUAGE LEARNING USING TECHNOLOGY

**Mr. John Odackal**

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**Ms. Anitha Rajan**

*Assistant Professors*

*Department of Science and  
Humanities*

*Viswajyothi College of  
Engineering and  
Technology*

*johnodackal@gmail.com  
anu850@gmail.com*

Every individual with his uniqueness adopts, adjust, accommodate and accept the existing trends deploying those assimilated inclinations under given circumstances or environment. The new trend in language learning with the help of digital technology – using computer mediated instructions, audio visuals and other allied activities is meticulously shared with personal touch in a classroom. The effectiveness of such blended learning largely depends on various factors. The sacred devotion of the teacher may not be well received by the easy going, fun loving student, lousy with mobile games, peer chats and day dreams. The initiative of Maharashtra Government to introduce value-added programs like mainstream thought and values, NCC and Bharat Scout & Guides compulsory in minority schools ought to be taken up nationally extending to all to tame and mould the young minds. Dialects and languages are verbal expressions of different cultural backdrops. The latter is more formally refined through ages; by sages, creative thinkers, Literary Luminaries, with eclectic global blend of culture propagated by religious leaders and socio-political interventions.

Examining the vastly varying Indian situation today, one may find the multi-linguistic communicative skills quite common among the natives. It testifies the power of informal language learning, naturally inculcated from very early age sans technology. It is not the Laptop mediated digital learning but of schooling in the lap of a mother, influence of siblings in the family, play-mates and peers in the society. Term it as mother-tongue or media that enhances one's life skill. Necessity knows no law. Under pressure left with little choice for communication in an alien background or to facilitate a bread-winning pre-occupation or job, language learning does not so much rely on digital technology than self-motivated intensive learning. Right attitude, self-motivation, perseverance, guidance<sup>3</sup> and audio-visual aids would serve the purpose. Learning theoretically how to swim shall not make one a swimmer. Physically, dive into the pool, gasp for breath, gulp down unwittingly some water and grow through experience in the art of swimming.

Commercialization of language teaching and learning promotes the false promise of easy mastery of a language with the ready-to-use attractive digital gadgets and applications. Authoritarian attitude of teachers is challenged by the young aspirants. Utilization of language labs is becoming obsolete in the noisy modern trends. It is too demanding to the young with their "laissez faire" approach to focus on language learning. They would appreciate watching English thriller movie instead.

Student-centered, customized grooming and language learning process alone may be a way out to bring desirable changes. Situational training, role=plays, story-telling, presentation on a prepared topic and short speeches are recommended for active individual involvement whereby due value for language learning shall take root. In all these cases, judicious usage of digital technology shall be more absorbing but the unexplored expanse of the internet world lures! Irresistible it is for the undecided, distracted and procrastinating lot to ward off the powerful charm of internet magic wand. Language learning is best done when one wants to master it. When the learner begins to enjoy himself the lull of self-confidence, social acceptance, approval and respect, robust learning occurs and there shall be no turning back.



Connectivity is the greatest boon that digital technology has bestowed on man helping him to reach out to the world around him. The stringent norms of Puritanism, the liberal expressions of the Romantics and the Revolutionary didactic shift of the Victorians that nurtured English language paving way for a wider platform for numerous creative writers as of today have been pushed back-stage by the current English speakers. The advanced English language dictionary is being over-loaded with regional words globally. Indian English speakers and writers have found new identity. The use of Communicative English is largely corrupted with the influence of culture giving less importance to grammar and learning through memorization.

“Listen to the BBC news everyday and you will learn to speak English” maybe good for a story. It shall definitely tone up those who have done their homework. Knowledgeable language teachers with an appreciable spiritual bank balance shall inspire the young with a degree of conviction, motivate and guide them using technology only as an aid or as a desirable means of practice. “Those who can - do: those who can’t - teach” situation is applicable to those whiners who neither inspire nor influence the young to face the challenges of language learning. A re-vamping of the prevailing educational system is inevitable.

The ever-changing technology has brought clear, easily available, applicable and fool-proof learning material with definitive tools for monitored learning and evaluation. Teachers can only give soul to this divine process as to make language learning wholesome experience. Allow the students to be in the free-to-roam mode enabling them to discover wider connotations and use of verbs. Lack of focus is a major hazard facing the youth today. Be cool and blame them not for it. Nature has its own course. A moth attracted by light finds its end; a fish by a bait and beetle trapped to death lured by fragrance of lotus. Man possesses five senses that distracts!! If they are not harnessed by good conscience, his mind shall wander unbridled. This balancing act is better termed as “displine”! Can today’s teachers be sacred enough to play the inspiring role models and will the administration reciprocate with unconditional support?

Listen to proven highly paid orators like Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton and others who share hands on experience and be affected.

Dr. Shashi Tharoor, MP, has made his mark globally as a great speaker drawing energy from the audience. Be yourself and establish your own benchmark! The immortal speech of Swami Vivekananda at Parliament of the World's Religions; Chicago, "Sisters and Brothers of America...", electrify the minds of millions even today. Martin Luther King Jr. from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the Washington DC Civil Rights March addressed, "I have a dream...". It reverberates down the ages. Bishop Fulton J Sheen delivering one of his sermons said, "Show me your hands. Do they scar from giving? Show me your feet. Are they wounded in service? Show me your heart. Have you left a place for divine love?" They were all trendsetters, finished speakers, relevant even today energizing the new trends in language learning using technology. Sans technology, it would not have been possible for us today to learn from these geniuses so vibrant, and who won the hearts of millions. Good speech well delivered cuts like a double edged sword. It is a treat to the listeners and rewarding to the speaker. Beauty in the artistic use of language! There lies the power, and influence of language. Share the power of 'the word' – language learning awards it. Go above board building power through using mobile assisted language learning. Technology can recreate virtual live classes. Students can do their project work even to the extent of creating own projects.

English is a global language and certified as a window to the world. All are solicited to find a place in the world securing the breadwinning occupation – a job looking through this window. Try learning language – sky is the limit; nay, go beyond; for man has left his footprint already on the moon!

The techie young generation of the day has an edge over the elderly pedagogue for the latter's lack of computer proficiency and speed. Humility and magnanimity of the teacher can sublimate the barrier being in complaisance with the students' superior grasping power of technology to mutual advantage in turn inviting active involvement in the language learning process utilizing technology. When students are continuing to harness technology gracefully, encourage them to do so watering their creativity. One may link language learning to leadership skills, a confidence building exercise, and to improved interpersonal skills.

Change is the only unchanging thing in the world. Technology keeps changing. The aptitude and attitude of the young surprise the old. The mode of sharing knowledge then ought to change. Children experience the changing technology and the teachers look agape observing the children play with it. It is heartening to note that the poets and philosophers corrected society when there was excess of exploitation, corruption and inhumanity. Language refines! Trendsetters aspire for the unattainable perfection and compromise with excellence. The touchstone of language learning experience enables one to be more humanistic, rational, creative and critical. Enhance the process of learning with the aid of digital content, platforms and facilitators that match the taste of the young; the promise of tomorrow.

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# CONTRACTIONS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE - UBI ET VIRENS? (WHERE IS IT HEADED?)

Subin Varghese

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Anusha T.

*Research Fellow*  
*UGC Major Research Project*  
*Dept. of English*  
*Malabar Christian College*

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*III BA Functional English*  
*Dept. of English*  
*Malabar Christian College*

‘Language is an expression of man in words’ says CL Wrenn, and 20<sup>th</sup> century linguist Prof. Michael Halliday views Language as a semiogenic process, which helps man to understand himself and the world around him. English is one such language which because of its extraordinary receptiveness and adaptability has these days become most useful to the welfare of mankind. Today English is the most mixed language among the prominent languages of the world, which once was a pure *lingua franca* when Anglo-Saxons first conquered England in 5<sup>th</sup> century. Simplicity of inflexion, relatively fixed word-order, and use of prepositions and development of new varieties of intonations for expressing different shades of meanings are different hallmarks of English language, which have made it so popular that today it is spoken by the largest number of people in the world. But do not take it to be granted that English is easy to speak. To speak English, one has to master it with great care and industry. ‘*English is easy to speak badly, but difficult to master*’, says Mallikarjun Patil in her work *The English Language*.

It is estimated that the number of native English speakers is around 300 to 450 million and more than one billion people are believed to speak some form of English. Even though the accounts varies, it is sure that hundreds of millions of people use English around the world, whether as a native, second or foreign language. English in some form has become the native or unofficial language of majority of countries around the globe today. *'English is the only language used in international air traffic control and is virtually the only language of a whole range of other activities from scientific research to pop music'* says Stevenson.

As the use of 'W3' increased rapidly, English language was also handled respectively. The main reason behind this phenomenon was that, WWW was a global communication system and the language it used was none other than English.

"For the electronic media that bind the world together are essentially carriers of language...The English language is now the operating standard for global communication."

–Economist

There isn't any sort of surprise when said that English is the major language used in World Wide Web and computers because, internet was born in US as a result of Pentagon research and development network and only was recently opened to the public use, which means, Internet has its roots in US and it is not surprising that about 80 percentage of all electronic information stored in computers and transferred via Internet is in English. English being the most popular languages in more than 100 nations, people around the world are busy accruing the language so that they can compete globally. Many international companies, even though they are capable of developing web pages with other languages keep going with English as their webpage language. This inequality in language usage builds walls within cultures those who can and those who cannot use internet. The serious part is that, this wall of discrimination is built by those who can and those who cannot speak English. This makes it necessary to learn English to live in the world of internet, which makes English the number one language to use in *'virtual world'* even.

### **English in India**

English became a part of Indian culture since the arrival of British Empire. It was Lord McCauley, who tried to establish English education in India. Even though, it was for their efficient reign, English education benefitted Indians too. English thus became the then official language of India. Later, English was included in the school curriculum. Even now, we follow a pattern of tri language formula where three languages are used for communication. According to this policy, Hindi is considered as our national language, English is to be used as official language and mother tongue of each state is used for communications within the states.

Through the large scale socio cultural interaction with regional contexts, English became Indianized. A variety of English which is obviously non native and different from the standard British form has come to known as Indian Variety of English. Indian Variety of English is not vulgarized form of English, but creative and resourceful with distinctive individualistic socio-linguistic features. The term Indian Variety of English is not enough to describe all kinds of regional variations of English, for language varies according to definite geographical boundaries, socio-linguistic backgrounds and other decisive reasons. Thus several regional varieties of languages have come into existence such as Gujarati English, Bengali English, Tamil English, and Malayalee English etc. these varieties of English language has developed in India because, English is learned only as a second language. Before acquiring English, a student in India learns his/her mother tongue, which is different for each state. This in turn influences the English language usage.

### **English in God's own country**

It was missionaries who came to Kerala for propagating Christianity among the Keralites, who brought English language to 'God's own country', Kerala. Since the establishment of minutes by Lord McCauley, English education and thus language flourished in Kerala. Schools began to follow tri language system in which students were taught mother tongue, official language and national language which was Malayalam, English and Hindi respectively.

And since the first communist government of 1950s, schooling has been both free and compulsory. Even though there are no specific statistics about the English literacy in Kerala, considering the trend among educated Malayalees to hunt for job in urban areas and even overseas shows that English literacy is also in its heights.

English has become a symbol of status and pride. People who speak English in public spheres are accepted as reputed and well educated and those who don't are considered substandard. This change in society developed a culture of using English (even though unaware about the grammar and meaning of words) when in a public space. There are many around us who uses the language wrongly which often brings laughter amongst the listeners. People intentionally add English words in their Malayalam speech to show off their proficiency in English language. New generation phrases like '*no scene bro*', '*bro*' instead of 'brother', '*whazzupp?*' '*peepzz*' instead of 'people' etc are a very few examples of language variation

According to P Bhaskaran Nair, the problem of wrong usage in English language has its root in the basic English education. English is treated as a mere subject than a serious tool for communication. The scope of English language is limited as exam oriented paper for scoring high marks rather than its communicative use. This makes the English communication of educated Malayalees more passive than active, and more in writing than in speaking. After all language is primarily spoken, but Malayalees' spoken English becomes too hard to work out as P Bhaskaran Nair observes.

### **Flaws in English language in India and Kerala**

Despite the preference for English as a medium of instruction in some schools and all institutions of higher education, its communicative use is more or less restricted to public domain. The problem begins right from the schooling, where even though the medium of instruction is English and teachers continue teaching in Malayalam. The fact that linguists support the use of mother tongue to teach second language is very much true. But this does not mean that second language teaching should only be done using mother tongue. According to the Kerala's education system, students are given a provision

to attempt their exams both in Malayalam and in English. This naturally makes the learners to use their mother tongue to score more marks. This system of double standard should be '*deleted*' for developing a better language usage.

Birth of internet boosted the development of communications too. WWW, in its childhood was just a dream for Indians and particularly for Keralites. But now, its overwhelming power is seen in every nook and corner of our life. There is no doubt to say that commonness of internet have improved the use of English language because as discussed earlier 85 percentage of the websites in the internet uses the global language; English. Days in which people had used internet only for sending and receiving E-mails are now '*older stories*', the most '*recent news*' about the 'net' shows a pattern in which people using the facilities of internet for each and everything. All media, whether it is print or electronic have got their particular websites which takes the user to the '*virtual world of reality*' in a single click.

Social networking websites have made relationships more close than they really are. It happens thus that we are able to meet our dear ones face to face even though they are not near to us. Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Pinrest etc have made us more social in this techno savvy life. Whatsapp, Messenger, Chaton etc are some of the messaging applications (or simply known as apps) which have made messaging more simple and cost effective than SMS facility available through the network operators.

As per the information from different websites, it should be stated without doubt that, since the invention of Short Messaging Services, texting has increased considerably. Since SMS was send through another channel in the network, texting was made more easy and reliable in case of emergency. Even though the user is outside the band width of the service provider, as soon as the device reaches inside the coverage area, the text message would be delivered. Delayed delivery and permanent failure of message delivery is less than .0.2% of chances. But since characters of the text messages require more space as it went bigger, and the channel for transferring this textual message was less, SMS is to be limited to a certain number of characters and thus it was reduced to a maximum of 160 characters in a



message. Even with these limitations, Short Message Service was provided by every GSM companies and this service was made mandatory. Within a short period, SMS was widely used than calls and according to many telephone companies, SMS was a boon because their network could provide more speedy connections.

However, people began using messaging services more frequently than calls and thus spoken language was over thrown by written communication. Soon, variations happened in texting; when people found it difficult to express their needs in just 160 characters, they began to shorten words to fit it to one single SMS since if it was sent as two different parts, it costs double the amount of an SMS. There begins the creation of a new 'language' known as SMS language, which has been used both young and old. In the beginning, 'Hai' was replaced by 'Hi', 'Good night' was reduced to 'Gudnt', 'Sweet dreams' was shortened to 'Swtdrms' etc. but as years followed, 'Gudnt' 'swtdrms' was further '*compressed*' as 'GN' and 'SD' respectively. More creative ideas like 'GDn8' and 'GD9t' etc also developed. Since then chat messages became too short that one who was not familiar with such language could hardly make out the meaning. However people who were avid users of SMS and other messaging services, found it easy to convey their notions to their receiver

### **Experimental group**

The use of texting language has changed the way in which they answer the examinations even. Recent surveys among the teachers and students show that, there are answer scripts which evidently shows this 'movement'. It cannot be said as decaying of English language. But it should be treated as a change or variation in language use. This has been happening since the evolution of English language. Word reforms and addition of new vocabulary is to be said as the development of language rather than its decline. Even though our teachers and 'older' generations cannot accept this change, it should be said as the future language.

To find out whether my intuitions are true or not, a sample study have to be done among the teenagers who are the pillars of days ahead. Youngsters of

the age seventeen to nineteen are taken as the research group who are basically students and frequent users of all sorts of messaging application both over the internet and outside the 'net'. The research group is at present limited to a number of hundred students residing in and around the city of Calicut because this is a minor project which has to be handed in within a short time span. A questionnaire was passed among them and primary data was collected.

### Analysis

In this age of modern applications and mobile phones, it is rare to find people without computers, mobile phones and internet connection in it. While taking classes for some of the higher secondary students in and around Calicut, something stroked me thoroughly. It was found that almost 15% of the students, while writing their class tests wrote words which were the shortened forms of the original. Whether it was accidental or not, condensed form of words are accepted to a certain extend and this is because of frequent 'texting' or 'msgng'. Students agree with their whole heart that, English language which they use for 'chatting' with others over the messaging applications are strictly reduced to its maximum, for saving time and money. Of course, it takes more time, energy and patience to type the full text. But it is made so easy when cut short. Data charges and messaging charge also depends up on the time we spend on the internet and length of the text respectively. This saving in time and money eventually leads to a new form of language because we always look for profit in whatever we do.

Children who are usually enthusiastic about new things and who are eager to discover things, uses mobile phones to try and type letters, capture images and listen music. Children of 2014 is living in a world which uses technology for communicating with each other and no doubt that if this is the progress, the children in near future will be born in to a world of internet.

The language thus used by the generation of the next will be more compressed and 'economical'. The survey which was conducted among the teenagers of the age group seventeen and 22 also depicts the same results. Many among the group were not interested in taking part in the survey and

some partly gave their opinions only. A few among them replied personally that they were not avid users of mobile phones and internet. Few did not have a mobile phone or computer even.

The participants of the survey belongs to different colleges and schools which are prominent in Calicut and most among them are techno savvy who spent much of their leisure time with mobile phones and computers. Some among them also has a tablet computer. This does not mean that, all participants belongs to the upper class strata of the society, but a mixture of all the three classes that is, the lower class, middle class and the upper class society. These participants have been using mobile phones and internet at least for one year and above. A large group among the samples has been using cell phones for more than two years. Which means an average of the samples belongs to the group who are capable in rephrasing and restructuring English language according to their use. They have either coined new short forms, new words or continues to use the compressed forms of English language to communicate with each other. This does not make a difference whether they are exchanging their ideas with their friends or someone who is unknown; it also does not make any problem whether the receiver is elder than the sender or whether the receiver is a respectful person like teachers or parents even. For them, language is not incomplete and communication is complete, for one among the definitions for language defines it as a set of rules and symbols which are commonly shared by both the sender and the receiver. And communication becomes successful when the message transferred from the sender to the receiver is decoded and understood to give a response to the sender.

## **Conclusion**

While going through all these findings made through the survey, it has to be concluded that, language; whichever it might be have originated since the evolution of human beings. As it is difficult to say when exactly human beings originated, so is the case of language. Origin and development of human beings is said to have taken place through an evolution process, where once only a single celled organism later divided and grew in to a multi celled,

complex system of life. Evolution of language can also be considered in the same way. In earlier stages, language too was 'single celled' means, it too had only verbal sounds and later only when human being began settling down as civilizations, they found it necessary to record their 'stories' which later became 'history'.

Language thus developed became specific and systematic and for this reason, language is known as system of system and species specific. Later when linguists began studying language as a whole with all its peculiarities, developed many theories and named them accordingly. Ever since then each language began to evolve according to the users, situation, culture, gender, region etc. Language is thus user specific, situation specific, culture specific, gender specific and region specific respectively. Language varies from users to users and so it should be pin pointed that language is thoroughly based on society. There is a 'mutual friendship' between language and society like two sides of the same coin. Scientific study of language in relation to society is known as Sociolinguistics, which can also be called as sociology of language.

The process of evolution of language is ongoing and each change in society makes a change in the language which it uses too. Thus English language which was once considered as the language of the downtrodden and of the 'common man' has now become the language of the 'globe'. Later through the inventions in the field of science and technology, English language also discovered many new words and added them to its vocabulary. It should be said that, vocabulary building and 'online status' of English language which always welcomes new 'friends' and 'posts' which can be referred to words and phrases respectively, is what gives an upper hand for this language. Social networking sites and messaging services whether it is online or simply Short Message Service provided by different network operators has gradually made changes to the language. Since the users of these facilities were none other than the teenagers, changes were easily admitted and more changes were made by themselves.

With the results of the survey which was conducted among the teenagers, it was found out that, the above mentioned statement is true and valid and

while referring many resources for the project, it was found out that in some colleges and universities across the globe, SMS language is acceptable to write their final exams even. Whether it is a fact or not, there is also other side of the same coin saying that this sort of language will rather kill the original language. But however, since language is not restricted and is free to change its shape like an Amoeba, resulting in new forms.

Before logging out, to conclude, it should be posted that, English language however, will prevail to be the ever living language and changes will happen continuously and may be after a span of fifty to hundred years, it may remain as the only language among other dying languages. Its script may have changed thoroughly say for example only limited to the International Phonetic Alphabet.

# PERSPECTIVES ON BLOG AS A READING INSTRUMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Aswathi M P**

*Assistant Professor  
PG Department of English  
K.A.H.M. Unity Women's  
College, Manjeri  
aswathimp@gmail.com  
Phone: 9447349388*

In the present day of binaries, reading is most commonly categorized as a receptive skill and hence considered to be passive, that can be relegated to the margins against the productive skill speaking and creative skill, writing. Still located in the midst of other receptive skills, such as listening, reading receives a comparatively higher status. Thus the skill of reading is measured to be partly marginal, when the first appraisal is taken into account. That misnomer is developed out of the conception of tracking this skill acquired out of continuous recognition and use of the semiotic signals, the community identified and used and still using for a period of time, as for the oversimplified purpose of knowing the meaning of the text at the superficial level. To know, including recalling and recognizing, the content, occupies the base plane of learning. So, the understanding of 'what is reading?' may be fruitful only if one defines 'what is reading for?' or proceeds further to why to read blogs, that is widely conceived to be fore light reading while one thinks of Higher Education which presupposes the students as a group of emerging scholars who could read even the intellectually profound texts.

Reading, as Francis Bacon suggested in the essay "Of Studies", evokes the feeling of 'full'ness, the kind of self realization that the reader is a complete man. This is the denominator to position reading at higher strata of skills and that brings forth the re-evaluation of the potential of reading to read the written, and hence the apparently rigid works to re-read using new parameters of understanding. Reading is an activity existing on the polarized and fluid identities the reader and the writer. With the 'Death of the Author', theory of Roland Barthes, a new light was thrown on the active role of the hither to marginalized reader. Thus the reader was born, at the cost of the death of the author ( Barthes 6 ). The new media, blog, is also a vital tool in deconstructing, without destroying the preconceived notions that a writer can easily be a reader, but a reader cannot always be a writer. On this platform the reader, reads, reflects, reallocates the read in the new contexts, adding her/his temperament to the ideas gathered, making comments, sharing on other medias with her/his own titles and subtitles or with notes, writing responses immediately on online or print medium and thus subverts the canonical status of writer, and the speaker, but later reinstates the category with a modification, i.e. reader cum speaker, or writer-cum-reader.

What is reading for is a question fundamental in the context of using the medium for reading as well as using the medium as a tool for enhancing the rate of reading in terms of quality as well as quantity. Reading is a learned skill which is used for a variety of purposes. A person may read to have ideas, another to enrich vocabulary, a third person to enjoy the literature, a fourth one to learn the language. Thus the why part can vary from person to person and from context to context.

In order to use innovative tool and strategies for learning, one has to get rid of the outdated assumption that reading is a passive activity, and has to place the activity in the realm of dialogue, translation of the thoughts in the script to the readers' sphere of understanding. So reading will not end, though the physical activity of reading ends, when one completes a work, or a piece. The learning that takes place simultaneously and after reading is the byproduct of the whole process, and hence is it a never ending task. The

dialogue with the written text and the interior monologue of the reader will refine and later defines the reader. Thus the probe what is reading for, will be re-charged with the answer that the writing, with/after the refinement is the ultimate aim and the preparation to meet the ultimate aim through diverse experiences is the major objective of reading, if it is placed in the wider sphere of education. This could be possible through motivating the student to be the active participant in the task, which is highly challenging in the modern era, where the popular approach towards reading is a prompt and easygoing affair. In this context the traditional platforms diminish the appetite of the post-millennial readers to the written text in print.. Thus to ensure participatory learning, the learner should be provided with a unique platform where he or she has autonomy of expression of the experience, where the need to have speed and spontaneity, the characteristics of the era are respected. Another proliferating thought in favour of an online platform for reading is the emerging attitude to have popularity in circles of similar interests, to have feedbacks for the purpose of identifying the image created. Multi-authored or interlinked platform provide ample opportunities in this juncture, for the less ambitious in the group to compare and contrast, in terms of knowledge, creativity, effective communication; to familiarize with different styles of writing, modes of delivery using conventional or multimedia devices, of the same topic or different topics and to enrich vocabulary.

Ewan McIntosh, Development Officer of Scottish CLT, in a summary of action research funded by the John Dickie ICT Action Research Award from Learning and Teaching Scotland, titled, "Using ICT as a Means of Supporting the Gifted in Language", describes the weblog or blog:

Historically, a weblog, or 'blog' for short, is recognized by its regularly updated, time and date stamped posts, running down the computer screen in chronologically reverse order (i.e. the most recent post comes first). Crucially, there is an 'Add Comment' feature so that readers of posts can leave their opinions, questions or thoughts. Finally, there is a writing style element: blogs are written by one individual who gives his or her thoughts in a generally relaxed 'spoken' style. (McIntosh, 8)



Now a days the students as well as the teachers engage in various kinds of operations, such as, listening, speaking, reading, writing and invariably engaging in conversations, more on nontraditional collaborative media such as Face book, Twitter, My space, Linked in, Scribed, Google Plus and so on. This highlights the acceptability of blog as an academic tool, rather than considering the extra academic possibilities of inviting fun or assembling trivia on an online platform. At the same time this strategy, of learning through reading blogs, does not absolutely discard the learning of language and literature through enjoyment. Blogging facilitates a parallel structure to the exposure that the modern technologically inclined generation of students enjoys through their netizen identity in the virtual platform.

Blog parallels the sober arena of objectivity of the popular and traditional media, but at the same time adds to the integrity of the individual's subjectivity, than the unreliable objectivity of the ideological apparatus behind the commercial media. Blog, in Kerala, has much more extensively used as a medium of self expression, for asserting the views and rights and questioning the authority. These propagandistic and autobiographical elements connected with the blog makes it as an effective tool to enhance reading, especially in higher education. But when the use of this medium as a reading resource comes in to enforcement whether it is in the lower classes or at the higher level, the caution to be taken is higher since the potential of the medium as a propagandistic tool is high, and the matter, in the text for reading will more easily be perceived than the manner in which it is written. So to have a fruitful beginning the teacher(s) can try a multi-authored blog, where heterogeneity of a homogenous group can be served periodically: say once a day, once in two days, once a week and so on, and where the teacher or teachers can write down some interesting, unconventional, autobiographical stuff about reading, and can be prescribed for student reading.. Before pushing oneself to the activity, the group has to decide the vision and mission of the blog in a broader sense. If it is a monologue blog, the students can hear only a single voice and it limits the reading experience. Still if the prescribed one is a single-authored blog, the reading span can be increased with motivating prompts for making comments, making

comments on comments, connecting comments and analyzing, making a meaningful comments after reading the post and comments.

At this point stagnation will occur due to two possible reasons. Firstly, the teacher is the main speaker and the students though speak, the scope is limited in the comment space. Secondly, a blog article, being a piece of intellect than of a scholarly research, has the limitations of the lack of research materials to be underlined. Thus the reading will be closed after a few diversions. So some effective strategies to rejuvenate the stagnant reading due to blog reading will be the challenge next to be confronted. The blog, being an occupant of an interconnected web, this challenge, if tackled by linking similar scholarly data, with the thoughts, opens up the possibilities as to whether to proceed in the empirical line or in the academic line. This is the real advantage of the blog, as a reading tool. It can satisfy, both the subjective and objective realms of the same student, and can satisfy the creatively oriented group and the critically oriented group alike. Multi-authored blogs are at a higher plane in this regard compared to the singles.

While thinking on New-Media as reading promoters and/or supporters, one has to clearly spell out the rationale of using blogs, than of using twitter, face book, what's app or so many similar options. The major attraction of the blog is the resistance it has on external interferences. This will help the reader to have prioritized reading, if the focus is a particular blog. Hence, the blog, while allowing the possibilities of discussions, limits the deviations of reading by making it focused, and hence a better appetizer for the educators of reading. Thus the question, why to choose blog, when one has a pool of media is answered convincingly.

Now appears the question 'how' to mold a blog according to the theory. In order to commence blogging activity as a part of academics the writer (s) can choose either a free platform such as 'Blogger' or 'Word Press'. Another possibility is to follow the specialized platforms such as *Edublogs* focusing on teachers and students with supporting features for education. If the platform exclusively used for studies is opted, they would offer features such as enabling video comments, free from adult content, secluded platform etc. They would provide certain facilities free of cost and if the user wishes to

upgrade, that can also be allowed by paying a sum. Since it is difficult to change the established address, before leap, it should be wise to research on the possible options, equating them with our specialized requirements. The invitation is easier than retention. This is true of blog reading in specific and reading in general. So to stimulate the taste of reading teacher-blogger can add variety ingredients on the platform. It can be a short memoire, or travelogue, or an excerpt from a book, a poem, a quiz, a cross word, a photo with cues etc. In order to be in friendship with the reader, it needs to have a semi-formal, friendly narrative style. The aim of the reading should be kept in the mind of the blogger i.e. whether for the sake of curiosity, to know the topic, to have an elaborate idea on the topic, or for fun. After having the decision regarding the expected aim of reading, the expected direction should also be planned. The direction defining may not be tightly knit, but ensuring the avoidance of possible pitfall can take the reader easily to the vantage point. Only reading and nothing more will be a dead investment, at least for a period. So reading should lead towards discussions. Since the discussion will not take all on a sudden, the blogger-writer can wait for a couple of weeks, to know the possibility of a discussion. If nothing happens, or nothing happens in the expected way, the blogger can trigger some points that will enable the reader react. This can be a picture, cartoon, audio, video or a written comment. Once the rapport is established, the blogger has to step into the shoes of the reader, and can have self reflexive comments. Thus the writer can be the reader and can make the reader a writer. "The more we know about effective uses of technologies for teaching and learning, the faster we can adopt these new practices, facilitate their proliferation across higher education, and increase student success," said Hester Tinti-Kane, Vice President of Marketing and Social Media Strategy, Pearson. (New Survey). If the focus is laid on student success as bloggers, the collaboration techniques such as buddy blogging, and review techniques such as peer review can be enforced for quality and dignity of blog posts.

The advantage of using blog as the reading tool in higher education lies in its accessibility. It is very much user friendly compared to sophisticated websites. It allows multiple reader responses at the same time, and it is primarily for

the decentralization where one reader reacts to another reader at times, and the mistakes in notions, and perhaps in expressions will be corrected online. Another advantage is the transparency; even the outsiders can have interference possible, even if it is an author centered world. Thus it allows the possibilities of including the experts who can direct the weak reader. Blog is a purposeful support system, to engage the students with the content, rather than an instructional aid from teacher side alone. Since the student is motivated and empowered to use the platform, with sense of autonomy, it is more student centered. As the scholar Allen remarked :

The really important step forward that universities can take is to begin fostering communities that are less specifically connected to units and are, instead, about issues, subjects, disciplines or professions and which are distinct from those already forming in the virtual world of the Internet by being associated with overall courses offered by that university. Student membership of these communities should become integral to their course completion; where necessary, whole components of the course should become (instead of 'study') knowledge-based community participation (Allen).

It is high time to acknowledge blogging as a necessary activity to be undertaken, to achieve academic grades.

Blogging enriches the student experience, facilitate collaborative teaching and learning, and makes the impossible activities possible. Rather than gathering the information, the building or construction of knowledge will take place through blogging. If properly planned, and well executed, this activity can occupy the centre of educational sphere than on the periphery as is occupying now. Finally, it increases the readers' chance to be a writer, and hence the shortest route to the career of creative writing. So, blog by its dynamism makes the more receptively inclined group, to the producers of knowledge. This fact underlines the need to add the blogs a part of the course, and to use library and language lab facility, to help the student reader oriented towards reliable blogs, the visible monologue, immediately, and reliable bloggers in future through the dialogue the readers create.

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# AUTONOMOUS LEARNING: INDEPENDENT LANGUAGE LEARNING SKILLS FRAMEWORK

**Dr. Ashok Kumar**

*Dr Ashok Kumar G Nair  
PhD, (Linguistics, Commu-  
nicative Language)  
Faculty,  
College of Banking &  
Financial Studies, Muscat  
Sultanate of Oman.*

**E**nglish Language teaching presents a real time challenge to both the learners and the providers. The teacher is the one in daily, direct contact with the learner and who has the advantage of the knowledge, curriculum and the administration behind him. It has long been understood that attaining proficiency in the language is more a collaborative attempt than an individual one. As the teacher is not always present to guide the learner, it is critical that the latter inculcates the habit of autonomy in learning. This is to discover methods to establish reconciliation between the innately collaborative nature of language learning environment and the inevitable individuality of learning it. According to Holec (1981) the ability to control their learning by the learners, referred to as 'autonomous learning', has been one of the ways in which the connection between the teacher and the learner is made more efficient and link in-class learning to outside-the- class language capabilities. The rationale for developing teaching that is learner-centric, theoretically and pedagogically, is developed well.

Since the middle of the last century, mainly from the work of George Kelly (c.f. Kelly, 1955) and

other academicians, there has been a heightened interest and understanding of the opinion that the learner is active and brings in past experiences, thoughts, understandings and likings to the classroom than one who is a passive recipient of knowledge of the provider. Stevick (1980) and Atkinson (1993) note that these approaches considered the learner as a person responsibly creating his experience in learning so that it contributes to the overall development of the self and adds to the satisfaction. In the same way is constructivism as it provides a central position to one who is learning by lessening focus on the knowledge and deals more with the process of learning. The role of the learner is the main aspect of this process and for this to be successful, there is need to make the learner become knowledgeable of the process and the ways to control it.

Language education has been controlled by these developments by way of focused teaching methods based on these ideas (Gattegno, 1963; Lozanov, 1978); for example, Silent Way and Suggestopedia show a general trend towards language learning with greater learner focus.

The 1970's and '80's saw further progress in understanding the characteristic features 'good language learner' (Naiman et al., 1978). Promising students of the language mutually exchanged many specifications like being vital in their studying and self-motivation. Consequently, this gives language trainers an obvious set of goals to be achieved in the classroom. For instance, if scholars are made more enthusiastic, they can be transformed to study well. Practically, the after-effects of these researches are not so transparent. The 'proactivity' and 'self-motivation' are two issues of concern in the operationalisation.

The meaning of such ideas is greatly debated. And, even though there was a point of agreement among them, it still would not be obvious how students could be created, for instance, to self-encourage. Tutor influence would, perforce, be a way of guidance and any developing enthusiasm could thus not be told to emerge from the student. Another notable issue is connected to the query of whether the specifications of positive language scholars result in the achievement in language acquiring process, or whether these specifications are merely incorporated with better academic results. In order to be an accomplished language student, even without being vibrant,

for example, it just may occur to be that more effective scholars are also, commonly commending, more energetic. On the other hand, deep study on the serious language pursuer may not be a strong way of illustrative capacity. Same issues encircle the theme of student autonomy, that, even though it had been disclosed and utilized as a political construct for many hundred years, evolved as an instructional construct only in the 1980s, practised to relate to the capacity of students to get an upper hand over their studying. (Holec, 1981)

Many of the features seen in the 'ideal language scholar' derives from the competence. Unless the scholars are hyper-active in their knowledge acquiring, they may possibly take upper hand, for example, in deciding what to study or how it should be, otherwise they should have some range of encouragement to do so. Moreover, it only helps the execution of a pedagogy for creating the self-learning complicated. For the above mentioned reasons, it is not so easy to point out the real consequences of learning for bright language scholars. However, autonomy also contains a more political aspect, in addition to the learning aspect, connected to the concept of personal freedom of selection. As concerned to the learning process, students are not capable of 'taking control' or making selections about their education, unless they have the autonomy to do so. Practically, this implies that financial and other drawbacks of particular sectors in the vast population, government-directed education plans, curriculum and the use of established study materials, are samples in paths in which the progress of freedom may be obstructed. In some cases individual tutors can manage these difficulties, but it does not happen. The vague meaning of the definition of autonomy is a real obstacle in addition to the existing ones. There has been a huge amount of study that was directed at developing theories over many years and autonomy has become to be used as a cliché (Benson, 2007). This word comprises of concepts such as motivation (Ushioda, 1996), awareness (van Lier, 1996), and interaction (Kohonen, 1992). It is often thought that this absence of being specific may lessen its effectiveness and makes it more difficult to put it into practice. Quantifying autonomy has proved more difficult with some studies like those of Lai, (2001) and Vanijdee, (2007) standing



out as autonomy is pointed out as a target for basic education aim which adds to developing of other abilities. It is disputed that these progressions were not unique at all, and that in reality similar things had already begun in the nineteenth century (van Essen, 2002) and therefore it cannot be split down into individual segments for reviewing. Consequently, some practical samples or comprehensive structures survive that could properly guide trainers in functionalising freedom of action in the learning location. Recently the happenings in the curriculum, both as a continuation of the activities done in the area of autonomy, and out of it, have viewed a better comprehension of the responsibility of the student in the education scenario. Most academicians support that a noticeable twist is happening in the learning away from the trainer-focussed curriculum toward a student-centred system where the student is in harmony with the subject of the activity and the subject intake procedures (Fotos and Browne, 2004). A driving force for this is the effort carried out in the realm of 'individual conflicts'. The aforesaid structure of activity signifies, in the midst of other things, how the pursuers vary in their ability to function, save, and take back details; the way they disagree in relation to age, brilliance, concept in language acquaintance; and the mode in which there is difference in their style of learning.

In relation to the research done in cognitive psychology and general learning, a similar realm like 'learning styles' tries to recognise the style in which scholars vary in their education choices. This idea may be utilised by tutors to correlate instructional modes with a person's way of studying, and to confirm that a variety of education styles are available. It is understood that students' way of capturing tasks in various modes has also led to the idea of the direction in which students have to identify their education. The place of 'learners' voices' (Benson & Nunan, 2005), is an instance of this motivation, and tries to better identify learners' encouragement, causes for achievement, fossilisation or dropping out, and students' options in how they view language acquaintance. The choice in scholars' voices is an illustration of a social and aesthetic approach on studies. Accordingly, learners of the language and education can be acquired in relation to the relevant situations: their 'what', 'where' and 'how' (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001).

There is considerable attraction in sociocultural approaches of second language acquisition which has had recognisable influence on language practising methods these years. What is common in all these developments and ways is that they anticipate that students have, or will develop, the capability to handle topics around lesson themes and the education (Fotos & Browne 1997), and are capable to work on personal thoughts, experiences, studying ways and choices. Practically, this is not the real situation. Learners require preparation and encouragement. This makes them fine with and can see increased demand for education. As it is identified by Reinders & Cotterall (2000) from an evaluation of factors that the factor with the most prominence of achievement in a self-access area was the range of training the learners had acquired. The facility of instructional things for self-learning too is not enough.

Former researches show (Jones, 1993; Reinders & Lewis, 2006) that those instructional things always had the drawback of the required helping modes, like clear directions or answers, and do not clearly motivate learners to reciprocate on the process of learning. Furthermore, the relevance of being prepared is also emphasised by Hurd (1998) when he identifies that in case learners are not exposed to freedom to be involved in their learning, no amount of material can make them to take more active participation in their learning. The outcome may not be satisfactory even if the learning materials are aptly chosen. Reinders (2007) realised that learners that were provided facility to an on-line self-evaluating method, comprising range of equipment, such as analyses of needs and studying preparations and strengthened outline like directed rubrics and automated signs, often took only a small part of the study contents, without enough preparation, observation and verification. Obviously, there is a key activity for the provider in improving learners' understanding of their reception outside the learning location, and for assuring the attainment of getting the important areas of learning.

Considering the pedagogy for autonomy, in spite of the common approach towards greater student-focussed methodology in the learning process, and the inclination to student freedom in specific, it is not always transparent

how every teacher can adapt the basic principles. Specifically in connection to student freedom, there is terminological misunderstanding, and the present teaching books and aids may be insufficient to assure that learners create the required knowledge and capabilities. Regarding this, many methods have been considered to nourishing autonomy. It is classified

Style	Comprises	References
Scholar training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Particular or minor courses</li> <li>● aim to creating autonomous education skills.</li> <li>● increasing learners' understanding of the significance of getting education outside the classroom.</li> </ul> <p>Such programmes often comprise techniques, instructions and often also add general learning skills, rather than language learning strategies only.</p>	Rubin & Thompson, 1994
Directions for strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Often promised as part of normal classroom training</li> <li>● sometimes extended as particular classes</li> <li>● or brief courses on language education strategies.</li> </ul>	Macaro 2001; Oxford 1990
Self-reliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Usually thought the most normal way of executing freedom</li> <li>● the possibility of a self-reliance centre</li> <li>● self-acquired materials</li> <li>● include available materials for self-learning and staff support.</li> <li>● self-access education is incorporated into class</li> <li>● the tutor working with learners in the classroom</li> </ul>	Gardner & Miller 1999

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● sometimes used outside lesson time, for revision or training aims, either with a teacher or individually.</li> <li>● Example: Writing Centres.</li> </ul>	
Language directing or language counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A kind of language promotion whereby tutor and student collaborate</li> <li>● speak about student's requirements, development,</li> <li>● adviser provides the result, suggests materials,</li> <li>● supports the students to prepare their studying.</li> </ul>	Mozzon-Mc Pherson & Vismans, 2001
Specific tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● creating or linking on-line or print methods for the handling of the learning process</li> <li>● goal to nourish learner freedom.</li> <li>● Examples: electronic portfolios, such as those created by the European Union</li> <li>● tandem learning systems and personal learning situations</li> <li>● focus to support, develop formal and informal education.</li> <li>● created on-line situations</li> <li>● give materials for self-study,</li> <li>● techniques for self-learning,</li> <li>● chances for teachers and learner interaction.</li> </ul>	White, 2003 Tandem learning: Schwienhorst 2007 Portfolios: Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000 Online learning environments:

Figure 1 Methods

as specific and general methods. Specialist styles comprise the planned programmes and designs which fail to consider any role of, albeit with linkage to, usual in-class training, and that cater for improved learner freedom as a prime objective.

Most of these methods are possibly well-known to most learners. As the focus is mainly on the real functioning of student freedom and its application in the language studying room, this study is limited to general language instructional scenarios and finds the methods by which tutors can instil freedom in the learning place. The clear method for this connects with specific ways that may be considered inside the classroom. The specific ways are kept aside, and the concentration is on the pedagogical things of freedom that tutors can apply in their language tutoring. It is significant to focus on the political and philosophical matters of freedom which are seriously taken in this structure. All classrooms and organisations are not related to this situation but a study of this case of applying freedom moves too far from the main objective of this study (Benson, 2000).

Moreover, it is not easy to functionalise student freedom. On the other hand, as discussed elsewhere (Reinders, 2000), it is somewhat easy to implement self-learning; for instance, to identify learning that is mobilised by learners or when the learner observes individually. Because of this, the outline below begins from the student and their deeds. These deeds can be motivated, copied and scrutinised. They, in fact, is basically an extension of self-designed work done by Knowles in the 1970s (Knowles, 1975). He dealt with learning in general learning rather than learning language; however, a majority of the rules he noticed function equally to language study and create the foundation of the outline below. A same method was considered by Winne & Hadwin (1998), who noticed four important stages in educational study scenarios.

Educational learning generally needs a considerably vast area of self-learning and student self-dealing and will be a rational beginning for discussion on strategies for bringing up learner freedom. Winne & Hadwin's four stages add (1), defining activities; (2) fixing aims and preparation (3), enforcing learning techniques and skills and (4), meta-cognitively adapting learning.

Stages in learning	Directed by teacher	Practical Area	Directed by learners
Understanding needs	Entry tests, tutor Evaluation report		Student feels problems in handling of the language.
Fixing targets	Decided by the teaching programme, somewhat		Decided in context, approximately adjustable.
Preparing studies.	fixed. Fixed by the tutor. Somewhat adjustable.		Decided in context, totally adjustable.
Fixing the materials	Supplemented by the tutor.		Self-choices of students
Fixing study techniques.	Tutor gives a role model and instructions.		Self-choices of students
Drilling	Tasks and Exercises given by the tutor.		application (language use) and testing.
Observing the development	Frequent evaluation and classroom report on exercises and activities.		Self-observation and comments by the class-mates.
Evaluation and reinforcement	Exams, syllabus replacement.		Self-evaluation, feedback

Figure 2: Phases in the progress of students' self-reliance.

The second section explains how, in general, each phase is considered in a total trainer-guided atmosphere such as physical class environment and the extreme area in the right in an entirely student-guided atmosphere. So many instructional and knowledge acquiring conditions would possibly reach somewhere between these two concepts.

Let us think about these phases one by one with clear focus on how these can be applied in the studying room. Extracting the requirement, it is strange that the learners do not exhibit any exact idea about requirement of language, and the divergence existing between what students feel is required and where the real drawbacks exist. Unfortunately, many students possess limited knowledge of the educational requirements (Barcelos, 2008). On the other hand, they have almost no idea about their plus points and minus points as language students. For instance, they must develop their writing abilities, but unaware that they are weak in studying with and from peers, which is a studying strategy, and one that will make an impact in their writing improvement. In the learning rooms, students are simply awarded their grades that show their real position, but not personal data of their merits and demerits, adding their education requirements. Specifically, students' personal requirements usually do not straight away give learning room experience and students may be pardoned for surprising what the connection is between their studying and the tutor's training.

A substitute is to create wide requirement evaluation system which a focal point of the class in the beginning weeks of the programme and to motivate learners to impart their results with others. Following learning room exercises should be connected explicitly to the located requirements learners are asked to reciprocate on their achievement in finalizing tasks in connection to the requirements. The language and study requirements should be documented (perhaps in a learning documents or portfolio) and assessed frequently. The requirement evaluation is the beginning of an active system, which is repeated at periodic gaps. Likewise, learners will be conscious of the significance of arranging their activity with their demands with a regular system. Fixing targets as the requirement survey supports to take the first move in recognising their plus points and minus points, fixing targets supports them to be clear about the results they focus at. As Nunan (1999)

says students who have attained a level where they are capable to identify their own objectives and develop their own chances in education has, by term, become self-dependent or autonomous.

Established programmes have inflexible guidance as to what the learners are supposed to study. In most cases, for tutors it is not feasible or possible to avoid present syllabus and needed study results (for instance, in the case of external benchmarked tests), but students should be motivated to consider the education programme as one factor in capturing their own aims, and to find out extra help or chances for training, if required. Moreover, having specific targets permits students to concentrate on certain specifications that are very important to them. In the long run, it may be possible for tutors to motivate a curriculum shift toward a range of student-option in the education programmes: the dissimilarity between student-focused and traditional syllabus creation is that, in the previous one, the education system is a combined work between tutors and students, since students are keenly attached in the decision-creating activity in relation to the topic of the curriculum and how it is trained. (Nunan, 1999: 2) The only solution to shift to student-focus is that the students have some influence on what they are trained.

Preparation for fixing study objectives and getting ready for education are the two sides of a single coin. Moreover, a learner's aim helps to focus on his final target and preparation is like identifying the good way to reach there. Preparation includes designing feasible plans and distributing time wisely for it. This area is usually not done explicitly by tutors. They move to in-class learning in the following aspects: 1) topic and exercises 2) the sequence of the topic and exercises 3) the mode in which students are supposed to cooperate and communicate. On the other hand, most learning rooms describe the 'what', 'when' and 'how' of the student's action. Student-focused approaches will target to motivate students to take these decisions individually. That implies providing the students an option, for instance, whether to use an argumentative essay, descriptive essay, or a cause and effect essay. It suggests providing various ways of works for the same group of exercises for the same set of books or language topic. Meanwhile, some exercises are not to be finalised in a prescribed sequence. Finalising materials is the duty of



the tutor, but there is a growing trend to include learners in the preparation. (Aston, 1993; Benson, 1994). For instance, Dam (1995) told learners to identify real resources external to the curriculum so as to utilise them in the classes and the self-access room. The learners (c.f. Ellis, 2000) could be involved in the material production and sharing on many of the activities.

### **Selection of learning strategies**

Most of the students are satisfied to give the tutor the freedom to select the activities to be selected for the classroom but still require the capability to find the techniques to apply it in the learning process to select a wide range of techniques appropriate for the exercise, if they need to do it themselves in their studies. Basically, techniques are classified into cognitive techniques like the method of memorising words, metacognitive techniques like ability to self-evaluate, and socialaffective techniques like the ability to identify chances to communicate in the language, on self-encouragement and it is significant that tutors think how will these be completed in-class through samples, modelling and drilling. The most important techniques of language training is seen in Cotterall&Reinders(2004).

First of all learners could be asked to identify their present techniques. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1990), is very useful in this. By finishing of the survey at a later time, students can identify whether they have established their repertoire. A significant point regarding accepting the developments students create in their options and utilisation of studying techniques, by providing routine reflections and by giving merit on the basis of improvement in this aspect. Tutors give chances for exercises in the learning room atmosphere and supplement their valuable reflections on it. Subsequently, activities for home are given by many tutors including repetition tasks. The learners are not provided with varieties of exercises in these resources similar to what they have studied as the new language point. Also, it doesn't extend any selection as how the new knowledge will be practised. The capacity to research on language and to face the risks is a significant matter of autonomy. (c.f. Schwienhorst, 2007).

The tasks and the practical resources are so vital to motivate the learner to see the paths to overcome the hurdles created by a pedagogic atmosphere,

constituting the learning place, the self-evaluation centre, the institution and to blend new education into their daily lives. The risk is to identify an equilibrium between the learner autonomy, even though providing continuous support. This aid can be in the way of seriously designed activities that demand learners to drill the language themselves, but to provide their efficiency back into their activity itself. For example, through a webquest, or by evaluating a matter, where learners must see samples of specific language practice. Likewise, the resources can assure that the language is purified and that daily demonstration and review will happen, giving an opportunity to take the selection by the learner.

There are scheduled short-tests and projects for a fixed syllabus to assess the development, usually conducted by the tutors after paying keen attention on the programme and they provide suitable reflection on the course. For the improvement of freedom in learning, students are supposed to nourish the capacity to observe their own development and related plans for the reinforcement. It includes feedback on their interest levels and other society related concerns about their studies. Study diaries in the style of an education blog are suitable methods to motivate. These can be individual or collaborated with peers and, and if they are on internet, the tutor could give the comments too. Students are required to be motivated to improve the needed vocabulary. Most of the students' capacity is minimal to the base level language and inculcating aspects (c.f. Reinders, 2007).

Students may mention the difficulties in comprehending a native or near native user of the language without finding out the reasons for their actual problems. The possibility is that the student may not have listened carefully or could not differentiate the sounds like in 'p' and 'b'. Also, there might be the problem of understanding the use of linkers such as 'however', 'even though' etc. Most feedbacks focus on difficulties. It is significant to motivate learners to document their achievement and to find out the cause for them. It is useful to provide a model log book or getting feedback in the class itself. Tests and reviews in observing somebody's development is a continuous activity that happens as a component of every learning segment whereas tests are less regular. Many learners like to have a feeling of success and the exam grades can give a kind of outside validation which is significant to

them. Refusal of this is totally not acceptable or recommendable. Still students need to be provided chances for supplementary tests to make them confident in their studies when they no longer have the help of the schools. Portfolios are used by many tutors for this objective. The Council of Europe has created the European Language Portfolio (free download [www.coe.int/portfolio](http://www.coe.int/portfolio)). On-line tools, such as Ning ([www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com)) and Eduspaces ([www.eduspaces.com](http://www.eduspaces.com)), are more modern 'Web 2.0' usages that can be functioned for the same objective. Self-evaluation hand-outs and tasks that motivate learners are the choices included in the practice of what they have studied. e.g. to get a talk with a native speaker or to read an academic passage without a dictionary. It is key that the tests be connected to the student's former attempt. In some cases, resources (and teachers) make the problem of personalising the education and making a blanket exam to test that understanding. Substitute forms of exams are practised by some tutors, for instance, those in which the learners' own evaluation support their end level marks. c.f. Pierson & Ekbatani, 2000.

An important thing in the self-learning system is the reciprocation that underpins all of the phases considered previously. The main stage is the final feedback that comes after observing one's achievements later work through a review of one's aims and preparations. For that students should be motivated to plan about what happened beneficial in their studies, what went wrong, why it happened so, what other methods can be used and how these will relate to the aims. In this style, feedback is the adhesive that keeps the self-learning compact. The final feedback alters the education proceedings from a one shot order to a cycle of education where the former practices are the creators for further education. As Little says: 'the pursuit of autonomy in formal learning environments must entail explicit conscious processes; otherwise we leave its development to chance' (2001, 34). Education is an important social procedure and, of course, it is a cognitive aspect. Communication and co-operation are now seen as important to the establishment of self-reliance. (van Lier, 1996; Schwienhorst, 2008).

There are some recommendations about the education where learners might get advantage from communication and co-operation in their autonomous studying. This is applicable to tasks including feedback. There are many

ways in which students can interact with peers regarding their education and support each other leading to the awareness of their part in the education procedure which often thought as the feedback by an individual activity. Regarding this, the affective part of education is so important to achievement, specifically in the autonomous education, where the traditional classroom atmosphere is exchanged with the regular connection with other peers and the reflection happening frequently. Students are answerable for the prolonged motivation which is less common in this situation.

Learners' thoughts can be challenged by self-studying and may end up in distress in language studies. The blanket term covering the affective aspect of learning is self-motivation which is the main structure of the sample explained below. Tutors know that students require affective push, but do not always copy the strategies for self-encouragement and shared strategies for students to attract each other for help outside the classroom.

This cyclical style of the self-learning process is shown in Figure 3, with feedback, support and communication extending the cognitive, affective and social backbone

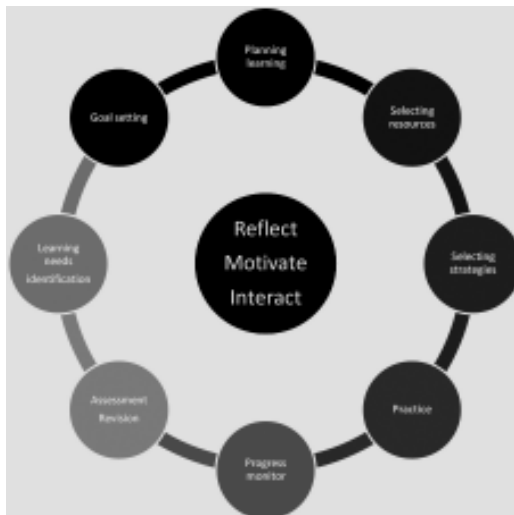


Figure 3: Cyclical nature of the autonomous learning process

## Applying the structure

Creating self-learning is a long procedure and the effective application of the structure explained above therefore deals to a considerable range depending on the endurance of the tutor. Anticipating learners to be committed to their education from day one to the next, is not practical. Self-learning is a mental condition which emerges slowly that demands some particular skills. The total classroom scenario requires to assess and motivate self-assessment and the learners' approaches and roles in the education. Usually tutors say that students are not interested to make active participation (Brown, Smith & Usioda, 2007; Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994; Huang, 2006; Tsang, 1999) and they may be depressed of the unsuccessful attempts. It may be useful that the acquaintance of being told to lead their education is fully unique to learners. Some of my learners were surprised when I enquired them how they felt best handling a specific activity. The students had never regarded the query. Because of this some students may argue with the teacher for not executing the job properly.

It is there for very important to begin with a transparent rationale: preparing learning, selecting materials, fixing techniques, finalising objectives, pointing out studying needs, observing development evaluation and revision, and practising: feedback, encouragement and communication for any changes in the classroom.

Call an elder pupil to speak about the significance of autonomous learning after the programme. The students pursuing higher levels can be given opportunity to speak to those at lower levels in a language acquisition course. Cotterall (1995) has made a study that focused to assess learners' willingness for freedom. This could be a beginning stage for deciding how much planning learners are planning to require. More than providing learners a rationale, move slowly by contextually providing some feedback time, or by sampling one of the skills in the outline. When learners are satisfied with these breaks from (what they are supposed to be) usual classroom teaching, someone can slowly move to applying the whole structure, at the beginning in the style of a project. Moreover, scholars will require the help while capturing these skills.

Demanding to collaborate together in groups or pairs and provide frequent reflection on their education objectives or the materials they have sorted. Scholars must know that someone is there to lead them when required, and will require being encouraged to exist with what may be a new and at times discouraging procedure. (Dickinson 1995, 168). Therefore, it is vital to link the work scholars do by themselves with what happens in the remaining class. It can be made this link by enquiring learners to speak about their feelings, either in public or by imparting their study diary with you. Motivate the learners to speak about what worked for them and what did not suit, and support them to find out the reason for this. Tell success stories with other peers. Applying freedom in learning should never be an instance of sink or swim, but a slow testing of the waters with a lifeguard on hand, before actually diving in. A sample of this procedure of 'acculturation' to what is, in spirit, a new shape of education for many scholars is the progress of a 'supported self-learning system' followed at some universities. It has a considerable number of scholars who have been evaluated as being in danger zone for underachieving educationally because of lack of (academic) language proficiency. Most of these learners are without time bound regarding their course and it is so important to provide them range of chances for utilizing studying materials and help. The college has a self-reliance centre where learners can go whenever they wish and they can find self-learning resources, but more importantly confronted with a devoted 'language guide' who will support them to design their studies and who will provide them right reflection on their development. The course motivates learners to plan their learning, help with the identification of study materials, recommend suitable techniques, provides training, and as reaching the final stage, motivate learners to observe their own development and recognise their aim in learning the language and methods. This tends learners at every point to revise their options to make feedback on their selections, their achievement and problems, and motivates continuous communication with language teachers; a description can be seen in Reinders (2006).

The complete history is not covered by the above tips and recommendations. The study does not really address the political consideration of self-learning. Some schools do not encourage that much freedom in the syllabus

because some tutors see it problematic to apply this outline of learning. Moreover, it is feasible to fix on one or more components of the structure as a beginning phase. Additionally, student freedom is not only about the improvement of a collection of skills, but is about improving a particular mentality that views education as an energetic system of research. A beginning for the tutor trainers, therefore, is to motivate feedback on the key aspects what tutors view about the education scenario. Trainers underlying aspects of education can be brought forward, and can be used as a beginning stage to consider the priority of (demanding learners to cope with) the various factors of the sample above and to create thoughts on methods to make this into practice. The application of this structure mentioned above will not make sure learners' improvement of self-learning, but the tasks include a change in objective from teachers to scholars. Understanding that they are well counted as individuals and are back supported in their education will realise that the scholars are more inclined to create this mentality. Based on this, tutors are more closely to consider the significance of scholar possession of the education system.

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# BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

**Dr. Francis O S**

It is rare to find a language class that does not use some form of technology. In recent years, technology has been used to both assist and enhance language learning. Teachers at undergraduate levels have incorporated various forms of technology to support their teaching, engage students in the learning process, provide authentic examples of the target culture, and connect their classrooms in other countries where the target language is spoken.

Proven visual learning methods give students a framework to brainstorm ideas, gather and organize information, build comprehension, and develop written essays, papers and reports. Educator and student resources, including lesson plan ideas and study tips, support curriculum integration, and online access facilitates peer review, collaboration and student-teacher interaction, engaging students, extending learning time and increasing achievement across the curriculum.

Webspiration gives us everything we need to brainstorm ideas, organize information, solve problems, plan projects, write, study and communicate more effectively. With *Webspiration PRO*, work is always available and securely stored

*Dr. Francis O.S .  
Assistant Professor,  
KMMGCWC*

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Further, some technology tools enable teachers to differentiate instruction and adapt classroom activities and homework assignments, thus enhancing the language learning experience. Distance learning programs can enable language educators to expand language-learning opportunities to all students, regardless of where they live, the human and material resources available to them, or their language background and needs. In sum, technology continues to grow in importance as a tool to assist teachers of foreign and native/vernacular languages in facilitating and mediating language learning for their students (Kenning 289).

While technology can play an important role in supporting and enhancing language learning, the effectiveness of any technological tool depends on the knowledge and expertise of the qualified language teacher who manages and facilitates the language learning environment. In some cases, however, school and university administrators have permitted technology to drive the language curriculum and have even used it to replace certified language teachers. Language technology companies have made unsubstantiated claims about their products' abilities to help students learn languages, thus confusing administrators into thinking that these technologies can be an effective cost-cutting measure. There is currently no definitive research to indicate that students will acquire a second language effectively through technology without interaction with and guidance from a qualified language teacher.

Technological innovations have changed language learning radically from the old-fashioned image of pupils learning lists of verbs out of textbooks. Although language teaching has a long history of using technology, dating back to the 1960s, recent developments such as social networking and easy-to-use video cameras have removed many of the limitations. Whereas using technology may have once meant a weekly trip to a computer lab, it can now involve anything, from Facebook and Twitter to podcasts and videos in

the classroom. One possible question that may arise here is, should teachers try to evolve their teaching to fit with the latest gadgets, or should they stick to their old ways?

Those who use tech say the advantages are obvious. Russell Stannard, a linguistics lecturer at Warwick and founder of a teacher training website, says that languages and digital technology are a natural fit. “Language development is around four skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – and all of those are facilitated by technology. There’s a very strong link between the affordances of technology and the type of things we’re trying to do as teachers.” (89).

Language teaching is becoming increasingly more sophisticated as teachers take up the call to integrate innovative materials, resources including technology, and strategies into their own practice. For instance, the rise of freely available social media for communicating with others, combined with time-tested teaching approaches such as project-based learning, is attracting growing interest from language educators (Wigglesworth 121) call “Project-oriented computer-assisted language learning or PrOCALL”). This bespeaks the need for a variety of research into the optimization of this pedagogical proposal, what we call Technology-Enhanced Project-Based Language Learning (TEPBLL). Accordingly, studies into TEPBLL should not only focus on validating the approach via individual results of products stemming from its application but extensive investigation of processes should be carried out, in order to facilitate better understanding of how the integration of project content, materials, resources, technology, teaching strategies, and human interaction all contribute to the art of learning immensely.

The use of technology should never be the goal in and of itself, but rather one tool for helping language learners to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways to accomplish authentic tasks. Further, all language learning opportunities whether provided through technology or in a traditional classroom setting, should be standards-based and help develop students’ proficiency in the target language through interactive, meaningful, and cognitively engaging learning experiences, facilitated by a qualified language teacher.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) acknowledges and encourages using the potential of technology as a tool to support and enhance classroom-based language instruction. ACTFL also acknowledges the potential of well supervised and articulated distance learning programs to fill a need where classroom teachers are not available. However, because language is one of the most complexes of all human activities and interactions ACTFL also recognizes the pivotal role of a qualified language teacher to incorporate and manage the implementation of technology so that it effectively supports the language learning experience.

The global economy has created such demand for cross-cultural communication that people cannot help but pay more attention to language learning, both as a problem to solve and as a business opportunity to explore. The oft-cited observation that there are more people in China learning English than there are people living in the United States is not only accurate, but it offers a glimpse at the truly staggering demand for language learning around the world today.

One simple way to do this is by taking advantage of everyday technologies that are not necessarily intended to teach language but can nevertheless be harnessed to provide instruction when we are most likely to benefit from it. There are, in fact, many ways to use technological applications for language learning. Here are three particularly useful places to begin:

It is no surprise that watching movies and TV shows in a language we are learning is a great way to get the authentic listening practice we need to improve our proficiency. Indeed, many people believe that watching foreign films in their target language—but with subtitles in their native language—will improve their second language skills. However, the minute we start watching with subtitles in our native language, we are dooming ourselves to failure. That’s because reading takes over from listening, and we do not pay attention to the speech; after a few moments of growing accustomed to the subtitles, we will not even notice that we are reading. The good news, though, is that if we watch a movie with subtitles in the language we are learning, rather than English, we are more likely to understand the video and learn from it.

Changing our settings gives us the opportunity to use a new language to complete tasks that we are already doing anyway. We can sort and filter emails, search for apps, and browse the web, all in the language we are learning. And, as with the GPS recommendation, we have some context for the new vocabulary words we are learning, and some sense of how to complete these tasks, all of which will help us. In addition, we will have frequent opportunities to work on our reading skills, since every time we want to open an app, check our email, or find a document, we will be forced to practice in the language we are learning.

Virtually every type of language teaching has had its own technologies to support it. Language teachers who followed the grammar-translation method relied on one of the most ubiquitous technologies in U.S. education. The blackboard was a perfect vehicle for the one-way transmission of information that method implied. The blackboard was later supplemented by the overhead projector, another excellent medium for the teacher-dominated classroom, as well as by early computer software programs which provided what were known as *drill-and-practice* or, more pejoratively, *drill-and-kill* grammatical exercises. In contrast, the audio-tape was the perfect medium for the audio-lingual method. University language classes in the 1970s and '80s usually included obligatory sessions at the audio lab where students would perform the dreaded repetition drills.

By the late 1970s, the audio-lingual method fell into disrepute, at least in part due to poor results achieved from expensive language laboratories. Whether in the lab or in the classroom, repetitive drills which focused only on language form and ignored communicative meaning achieved poor results. The 1980s and 1990s have seen a shift toward communicative language teaching, which emphasizes student engagement in authentic, meaningful interaction. Within this general communicative trend, we can note two distinct perspectives, both of which have their implications in terms of how to best integrate technology into the classroom. These can roughly be divided into cognitive approaches and socio-cognitive approaches.

Technologies which support a cognitive approach to language learning are those which allow learners maximum opportunity to be exposed to

language in meaningful context and to construct their own individual knowledge. Examples of these types of technologies include text-reconstruction software, concordancing software, and multimedia simulation software. Text-reconstruction software allows teachers to provide students various texts in which letters or words are either missing or scrambled. Students work alone or in groups to complete or re-arrange the texts, thus supporting a process of mental construction of the linguistic system. While such activity could in theory be carried out with paper and pencil, the computer facilitates the process for both teachers and students. Teachers can quickly and easily create re-arranged texts or cloze exercises from any original word-processed passage. Students can use hints provided by the computer to assist their learning process (Myers 24).

Concordancing softwares like Monoconc from Athelstan, allows teachers or students to search through small or large texts to look for instances of the actual use of particular words. Concordancers are thus supplements to dictionaries in that they help illustrate the usage of a word, rather than just its definition. Concordancers are also useful for investigating collocational meanings or grammatical features.

Multimedia simulation software allows learners to enter into computerized micro worlds with exposure to language and culture in a meaningful audio-visual context. The best of these programs allow learners a good deal of control and interactivity so they can better manipulate their linguistic input. One excellent example of this is the multimedia videodisc program *A la rencontre de Philippe* developed by the Athena Language Learning Project at the M.I.T. Laboratory for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. *Philippe* is a game for intermediate and advanced French learners that incorporate full motion video, sound, graphics, and text, allowing learners to “walk around” and explore simulated environments by following street signs or floor plans. To help language learners understand the sometimes challenging French, the program provides optional comprehension tools, such as a glossary and transcriptions of audio segments, as well as a video album that includes samples of language functions. Students can also create their own custom video albums, which they store on their own computer diskettes.



While text-reconstruction programs, concordancers, and multimedia simulations are often used in pairs or groups, the software programs by themselves do not require human-to-human interaction (Higgins 172).

There are several different approaches for using the Internet to facilitate interaction within and across discourse communities. One way is to use online activities to foster increased opportunities for interaction within a single class. This takes place both through computer-assisted classroom discussion and through outside-of-class discussion. Computer-assisted classroom discussion makes use of synchronous, real-time writing programs, such as *Daedalus Interchange* by Daedalus, Inc. The class meets in a networked computer lab, and students communicate through writing rather than through talking. Students type in their messages and hit a key to instantly send the message to the rest of the class. All the messages are listed chronologically on the top half of the screen and can be easily scrolled through and re-read. The entire session can later be saved and passed on to students, either in electronic form or hard copy.

Since their availability, a succession of audiovisual recording devices (e.g., reel-to-reel, VCRs, PCs) has been used to capture language samples, and myriad playback and broadcast devices (e.g., phonographs, radios, televisions) have provided access to authentic speech samples. The espousal of audio-lingual theory in the 1950s brought the widespread use of the language laboratory in educational settings (Salaberry 123). Influenced by behaviorism, the lab was progressively replaced in the 1960s by drill-based computer-assisted instruction, which decades later was itself surpassed by a more intelligent, interactive and multimedia computer-assisted language learning. The popular acceptance of the Internet in the 1990s advanced the development of computer-mediated communications. As technologies continue to evolve, so does their propensity to shrink in size. Other technologies that hold the capacity for language learning include PDAs, multimedia cellular phones, MP3 players, DVD players, and digital dictionaries (Zhao 47). Such portable media—referred to in popular and scholarly literature as mobile, wireless, handheld or nomadic—are now social staples. Mobile learning, or m-learning, is a burgeoning subdivision of the e-learning movement, further evidenced by European initiatives such as *m-learning* and *Mobilearn*.

Several other free and commercial mobile language learning programs have recently become available: the *BBC World Service's Learning English* section offers English lessons via SMS in Francophone West Africa and China (Godwin-Jones 165); *BBC Wales* has similarly offered Welsh lessons since 2003 (Andrews 203); and an EU-funded initiative known simply as 'm-learning' provides English lessons directed towards non-English speaking young adults. The goal of such programs is to engage new kinds of learners in a time and place of their preference. Norbrook and Scott (209) suggest that portability and immediacy, rather than localization, are the essential motivating factors in mobile language learning. Further, lessons are provided in bite-sized format, a fact appealing to busy students (McNicol 104). Lessons are typically delivered several times a week or even daily, include translations, and provide options for further context-based applications.

One of the newest technologies with potential application in language learning is moblogging, an amalgam of mobile and weblogging. Miolo further defines moblogging as using a cell phone or PDA "in the field" to post words and/or pictures to a web site (29). Blogs themselves are a recent trend in language teaching. They provide opportunities for language creation (i.e., journaling) and collaborative activities. Moblogs offer the potential to expound these benefits by removing time and place boundaries and adding authentic and personal visual content.

Personal digital assistants (PDAs) are more often associated with m-learning than cell phones. Their use has been integrated into various disciplines within high schools, universities, and medical schools (Carlson, 102). In language learning, one of its primary functions has been as translator. Software programs such as *MobiLearn* allege to turn PDAs into 'talking phrase books.' Digital audio files (e.g., MP3s) provide high-quality sound in a compressed format. The portable media players developed to listen to them are also rather compact. Most renowned amongst them is Apple's iPod, the latest version of which not only provides audio functionality but also video (Godwin-Jones 238).

Mobile technologies clearly offer numerous practical uses in language learning. In many cases, they are readily available. In Japan, for instance, cell

phone ownership has been reported to be nearly universal amongst college-aged individuals. In a recent study of students in higher education in the United States (Kvavik, 2003), 82% owned cell phones. In the same study, however, less than 12% owned PDAs. Even in cases where they must be acquired, mobile technologies are typically less expensive than standard equipment, such as PCs. The portability of mobile media is another benefit. They can be just as easily utilized outside of the classroom as they can in it; learners can study or practice manageable chunks of information in any place on their own time, thereby taking advantage of their convenience. Ultimately, what these benefits indicate is the potential MALL has in expanding social inclusion in language learning.

Notwithstanding its benefits, MALL also poses related challenges. For instance, inherent in the portability of mobile media are reduced screen sizes, limited audiovisual quality, virtual keyboarding and one-finger data entry, and limited power. Further, their availability can be limited. While cell phone ownership may be almost universal for college-aged individuals, this is not true for other populations or media. The costs to educational institutions of purchasing them en masse could be staggering. Nevertheless, Gilgen has demonstrated the possibilities of developing mobile labs for schools with limited funding. Other potential drawbacks include limited nonverbal communications, limited message lengths, a lack of cultural context, and potentially limited social interaction (174). While mobile technologies are advancing, their output is quickly moving from verbal to visual, a clear disadvantage for language learning (Colpaert, 2004). Connection problems are also a concern: web-based language learners might choose to limit their online connection times, or they may not have access at all.

Outside-of-class discussion is usually carried out using asynchronous tools, such as e-mail or conferencing systems. Special lists can be set up so that students' messages get automatically forwarded to either a small group or the whole class. Electronic communication within a single class might be viewed as an artificial substitute for face-to-face communication. However, it has been found to have a number of beneficial features which make it a good tool for language learning. First, computer-assisted discussion tends

to feature more equal participation than face-to-face discussion; teachers or a few outspoken students are less likely to dominate the floor, resulting in class discussions which are more fully collaborative. Second, computer-assisted discussion allows students to better notice the input from others' messages and incorporate that input into their own messages, thus expanding opportunities for learning of new linguistic chunks. Third, computer-assisted discussion, which takes place in writing and allows more planning time than does face-to-face talk, features language which is lexically and syntactically more complex than oral talk (Warschauer 199). Finally, since computer based discussion can take place outside of the classroom, it provides students increased opportunities to communicate in the target language. For all these reasons, language teachers have found single-class computer-mediated communication projects to be beneficial.

The World Wide Web offers a vast array of resources from throughout the world. While the majority of web pages are in English, increasing numbers exist in other commonly-taught (and some uncommonly-taught) languages, including Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Sanskrit and Chinese. Accessing and using these pages in language education supports a socio-cognitive approach by helping immerse students in discourses that extend well beyond the classroom, their immediate communities, and their language textbook. This is particularly critical for *foreign* language students who otherwise experience the target culture only through their instructor and select curricula. Students can use web pages as authentic materials for conducting research on culture and current events (Osuna and Meskill 67) or for gathering material for class projects and simulations. Students can also publish their own work on the World Wide Web, thus enabling writing for a real audience. In some cases, teachers have created in-class online newsletters or magazines that their classes have produced. In other cases, teachers help their students contribute to international web magazines which include articles from many students around the world. And in other situations, students work together in collaborative teams internationally and then publish the results of their projects on the web.

What are the benefits and challenges of using new technologies in the language classroom? One question often asked by administrators is whether or

not technologies truly work, that is, if they promote language learning and do so in a cost-effective way. These types of questions motivated much research in the 1970s comparing use of computers to non-use of computers. These researches ignored two important factors. First of all, the computer is a machine, not a method. The world of online communication is a vast new medium, comparable in some ways to books, print, or libraries. To our knowledge, no one has ever attempted to conduct research on whether the book or the library is beneficial for language learning. Seeking similar sweeping conclusions on the effects of the computer or the Internet is equally futile.

Secondly, and even more importantly, new communications technologies are part of the broader ecology of life at the turn of the century. Much of our reading, writing, and communicating is migrating from other environments (print, telephone, etc.) to the screen. In such a context, we can no longer think only about how we use technologies to teach language. We also must think about what types of language students need to learn in order to communicate effectively via computer. Whereas a generation ago, we taught foreign language students to write essays and read magazine articles, we now must also teach them to write e-mail messages and conduct research on the web. This realization has sparked an approach which emphasizes the importance of new information technologies as a legitimate medium of communication in their own right rather than simply as teaching tools.

In summary, then, the advantages of using new technologies in the language classroom can only be interpreted in light of the changing goals of language education and the changing conditions in postindustrial society. Language educators now seek not only to teach students the rules of grammar, but rather to help them gain apprenticeship into new discourse communities. This is accomplished through creating opportunities for authentic and meaningful interaction both within and outside the classroom, and providing students the tools for their own social, cultural, and linguistic exploration. The computer is a powerful tool for this process as it allows students access to online environments of international communication. By using new technologies in the language classroom, we can better prepare students for the kinds of international cross-cultural interactions which are increasingly required for success in academic, vocational, or personal life.

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# WHERE ARE THE TEACHERS? WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THEM? - THE STRATEGIC REDUCTION OF THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN CURRICULUM TRANSACTION AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL IN KERALA

**Dr. Johney G Vadakel**

*Assistant Professor  
Government Arts and  
Science College,  
Kozhikode.  
johney\_gc@yahoo.co.in*

Thoughts about schools and schooling immediately remind us about teachers and students. We understand school to be a place where teachers and students interact on a regular basis as per a preset plan to enlighten the minds of students with information, skills and knowledge. It is the sacred duty of teachers to introduce the world and various aspects of human life to the students in a way that the students understand. The studies, experience, knowledge and exposure of the teachers serve as their resource in the classrooms. Schooling starts with the three Rs and it opens the wide vistas of learning to the students. Schooling serves as a foundation for higher studies at the tertiary, post graduate and research levels. Kerala is now confronted with an alarming situation regarding schooling. Teachers at the primary level admitted that most students are not able to read and write the mother tongue. On realizing the gravity of the situation, the government of Kerala issued a letter to the primary school teachers to the effect that they

are to take measures to ensure that all students at the primary level acquire the basic reading and writing skills in their mother tongue before the first of November 2015. When we consider the academic achievement of the students in school from the primary to the higher secondary level in the Kerala public school system it can be understood that most students are deficient in their reading and writing capabilities in the mother tongue and in the second language, English. To add to this many students are not sure about the fundamentals of various subjects.

The letter issued by the government, on being taken up by the media, alerted the public about the sorry state of the state's schooling. The public came to realize that the education system had failed their children in many different ways and that it failed even to impart primary literacy to them. Discussions are live in the social and academic settings about the rationality and effectiveness of schooling in the present system of education. Two decades have passed since the paradigm shift in schooling was introduced amidst much debate and virulent criticism. Lakhs of students have completed higher secondary education in the new paradigm in these two decades. When the constructivist curriculum was introduced, the assurance to the public from the academia and the government was that the students would become constructors of their own learning and achievement. Rote learning was popularly rated as outdated and was banished from the sphere of school education altogether. In language teaching, students were introduced to discourses and language activities, doing away with the importance given to the text book and compositions: "the approach to curriculum in English is activity-based, process oriented and learner-centered, rooted in Constructivism focusing on the desired learning outcomes" (*English 6*). Deliberate language teaching was replaced with promises of providing scope for interaction which would facilitate the acquisition of the first and second languages. The methodology of English language teaching was designed in keeping with the findings of Noam Chomsky and Stephen Krashen. After twenty academic years passed by in quick succession, the society at large and the academic world now realize that most of the youth of today and the students in schools are not able to read and write their mother tongue,



Malayalam and English their second language, without errors. The curriculum revision was celebrated as being in concurrence with the latest and the best of international practices, and its implementation was a meticulous and acclaimed process. But all this has been to the detriment of a system of established schooling which had won the acclaim of the world as the Kerala model.

Amidst the dust of doubt and criticism of the public instruction system, the advocates of the revised constructivist curriculum have once again come forward to support and scaffold it openly through the media. Dr. T P Kaladharan voiced his support of the paradigm shift in the Mathrubhoomi weekly, which is seriously read by the educated people of Kerala. In his article, he voices his confidence in the effectiveness of the revised constructivist curriculum by bringing in the theories of Noam Chomsky, Jerome Bruner and he also delineates the merits of the Whole Language Approach which he believes to be the best for language teaching. His article was an effort to support the new paradigm against the arguments presented by Jeevan Job Thomas, who brought in the findings of neuroscience to prove that deliberate prior learning is a must for further learning. He, in his article in the Mathrubhoomi weekly, exposes the hollowness of the claims of the Whole Language Approach drawing heavily on the new developments in brain science. He pointed out that the phonic approach to language teaching and learning is more effective than the Whole Language Approach. The Whole Language Approach upholds the view that humans see and understand the whole word before they specifically notice the letters in the word. The basic premises of the approach are summarized as follows:

1. Children are expected to learn to read and write as they learned to talk – that is gradually, naturally, without a great deal of direct instruction and with encouragement rather than the discouragement of constant correction.
2. Learning is emphasized more than teaching; the teacher makes detailed observations of the children's needs, then assists their development accordingly. . .

3. Children read and write every day – and they are not asked to read artificially simplified or contrived language, or to write something that does not have a “real” purpose and a receptive audience.
4. Reading, writing, and oral language are not considered separate components of the curriculum or merely ends in themselves; rather, they permeate everything the children are doing in science and in social studies, and they are integrated with the so called creative arts.
5. There is no division between first “learning to read” and later “reading to learn”. From the very beginning, children are presented with predictable and repetitive whole texts and are encouraged to compose whole texts of their own, however brief- real language written for real purposes and a real audience (Weaver 6).

Based on the findings of brain science, Jeevan Job Thomas pointed out that the brain has a definite area to process letters and words. This area in the brain named Visual Word Form Area, VWFA, is located in the left hemisphere. Exercises in literacy, or deliberate learning of letters and words establish neuronal networks in the VWFA and these networks are strengthened by deliberate recurrent reading and writing through the years. “Brain science points out that there is marked difference between the VWFA of the literate and the illiterate people” (81). It is to be added that reading and writing are skills that cannot be acquired non-consciously or accidentally though Noam Chomsky claims that language acquisition is a non-conscious process. Chomsky’s claims may be more relevant with regard to the various dynamics involved in spoken language but regarding reading and writing the findings and the evidences thrown in by brain science sound more convincing. Much deliberation is required to acquire proficiency in reading and writing; the neuronal networks that back up these skills have to deliberately established through practice.

Exposure to language helps language acquisition. Kaladharan in his article writes about the experiences of Malayalees who went to Mumbai and Delhi in search of job opportunities and learned Hindi language. “They learned the language as they were compelled to participate in communication con-

texts in the Hindi language” (Kaladharan, 36). Kaladharan’s claim is only partially true as these people did not learn to read and write these languages just as they learned to speak. Most of them who learned languages of other states from and through oral communication had to learn writing and learning of these languages deliberately. This again justifies the claims of Jeevan Job Thomas and the proofs provided by brain science.

A cursory analysis of facts informs us that the constructivist, Whole Language curriculum of Kerala public schooling system has not been the best. The government and the academicians have been quite misguided in the adoption of the new paradigm. Though Whole Language Approach and Constructivism are good and high sounding academic terms they have not been as effective as they claim to be. Reading further into the politics behind the adoption of the new paradigm we can trace the involvement of the World Bank into Indian education, including the education system of Kerala. Rajan cherukkad, a noted Journalist from Kerala points out that “Before the implementation of DPEP Kerala was ranked No. 1 among the Indian states in education. The primary education system of Kerala was on par with the European standards of achievement. The success story of the Kerala Model, depended on the achievements in the spheres of education and Health”(samrajyathwam, 32). He adds that the Kerala Model which won international acclaim has been played upon and hijacked. In his book on educational reforms in Kerala, he points out with proof that the DPEP program and the curriculum revision were funded by the World Bank. He also presents a copy of the agreement signed by the representative of Kerala State with the World Bank.

The forces of globalization look on the world as a large market with infinite possibilities of trade and commerce. It could be traced that the constructivist curriculum and the Whole Language Approach were offered to India compulsorily along with the financial aid of the World Bank. As it was part of the Structural Adjustment Program of the World Bank the government could not deny it. The World Bank is the extended arm of globalization and it aims at profit making in all its deals. The agenda that prompted the World Bank to intervene in the education system of India and that of Kerala was to pave

the way for the successful implementation of the neoliberal agenda. It was never the aim of the World Bank to educate the masses and uplift them; it aims at making people willing recipients of the products of globalization by tuning their attitudes tastes and preferences. Rajan Cherukkad and many others who are informed about international politics in these times of globalization point out that the forces of globalization foresee that if the people are educated and have the capacity to think and form opinions they would never support neoliberal policies. Globalization can achieve its successes only if people of various nations remain under educated and misinformed. They took up the combination of Constructivism and the Whole Language Approach as the best to suit their purposes. This is a powerful academic cocktail that gradually erodes the quality of education and the intellectual and academic standards of the people. When education fails and the minds of people become weaker, it can only churn out generations who are de-rooted from their culture and social circumstances making them an easy prey to the evanescent glitters of consumerist satisfaction.

When the constructivist paradigm was introduced replacing the previous behaviorist paradigm, it was assured that it is the ultimate and the most modern way to knowledge. Constructivist language teaching was acclaimed as the best that would enable the acquisition of the first and the second language. Constructivist education aims at the construction of meaning and knowledge in the minds of the students with the help of exposure to language. Deliberate teaching is replaced by measures that ensure the construction of meaning. It does away with rote learning which characterized the behaviorist paradigm. In the language classes, language activities are made ample use of, to enable language construction. The students work singly, in pairs and in groups taking the responsibility of language acquisition on their own. Both Constructivism and the Whole Language Approach diminish the role of the teacher. They cast aside deliberate teaching describing it as a process that makes classrooms teacher centered.

The significant aspect of constructivist language teaching is that it limits active teaching by the teacher. The teacher's role is reconstructed to be

that of a facilitator and co-learner. The role of the teacher in constructivist language curriculum is redesigned as follows :

- Plans and provides challenging situations.
- Diagnoses the learning difficulties and provides remediation.
- Continuously evaluates the progress of the learners
- Gives scaffolding/support wherever necessary.
- Promotes divergent thinking.
- Acts as a democratic leader.
- Acts as a co-learner.
- Acts as an efficient researcher.
- Facilitates inter-personal and intra-personal interaction.
- Gives a variety of learning experiences.
- Facilitates reference/data collection. (Source 16)

The terminology in which the new paradigm was couched was fascinatingly modern. Everyone, with a progressive bent of mind was satisfied by the redefining of the system and the role of the teacher. When put into practice, it is proved that the beautiful terminology is only a cover up for the denial of true education to the students. The new paradigm has demeaned the teacher. The teacher's role has been whittled down to the detriment of the teacher and the student. The teacher's role as a facilitator makes her a passive spectator to what the students does. The teacher is only expected to guide and give directions. The responsibility of knowledge construction is placed upon the students. Learner autonomy and child-centeredness may sound beautiful but it diminishes the actual achievement of the learners. How can students construct all the knowledge that they require? If that were possible, it would not be required for any child to go to school. Knowledge can be constructed by children alone or in groups at any place that they gather together. The heart of the matter is that the teacher and teaching have been ousted from the classrooms with ulterior motives.

The alarming fact is that teachers have been sidelined and their role in classrooms has become minimal. The actual and active teaching that they do is fragmentary and insignificant. They are only asked to introduce the lessons and the activities. As stated earlier the fundamentals of language have to be taught deliberately through active teaching. If the fundamentals of language are not seriously taken up for active teaching the students miss the essentials of language. Even after the fundamentals are taught the students can gain much from the active teaching done by the teachers who have greater experience, knowledge and reading in comparison with the students. This does not mean that the all the teaching is to be done deliberately by the teacher as in the behaviorist paradigm. The behaviorist paradigm with completely teacher oriented classes had its demerits. It is in the name of these demerits that the constructivist student centered paradigm was introduced. But this revision has downsized the role of the teacher drastically to destroy the entire process of education

As the teacher role has become insignificant in the constructivist classrooms, teachers are not challenged to teach actively on a day to day basis. By becoming passive witnesses to classroom procedures their teaching abilities dwindle through disuse. A language teacher has much to do in classrooms, through active teaching. Through the years he painfully realizes the erosion of his academic strengths and the erosion of true education itself. It is painful to observe how in the new Constructivist paradigm the teachers get pushed out from active teaching causing lasting detriment to the minds of the students and the teachers themselves.

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# AN EVALUATION OF STUDENTS' AFFINITY TO INTERNET

**Dr. Lakshmi Pradeep**

*Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.*

[E.M.Forster, Howard's End (1910)]

*Assistant Professor,  
Dept. of Journalism and  
Mass communication,  
Farook College,  
Calicut  
lakshmiprd@p@gmail.com*

**B**arring the odd beast and monk, just about everyone is connected these days (Wellman, 2005). Internet has revolutionized the communication world. It has fundamentally changed the way people learn, play, create and communicate. Today it has become a part of our life. It is not just a technology, but an engine of social change, one that has modified work habits, education, social relations and maybe most important, our hopes and dreams.

The Internet scenario has undergone a transformation in the past few years. In 2015 it has reached 46.4% of the world population and 30% of Indian population. In 2010, it had penetrated 28.7 percent of the global population and only 8.5 percent of the Indian population (internetworldstats, 2016) India is one of the fastest growing Internet markets in the world growing at 14% in 2014 (internetlivestats, 2016). The increasing popularity of internet has attracted the attention of communication scholars, to



fathom its promising developments, uncertainties and lurking dangers in the horizon of our cyber society.

The net is so vast and growing at lightning speed that each person's experience with it can only be a tiny sample of the whole. 'I am not sure that I know what the internet is; I am not sure that anyone does' James Costigan (1999. P.XVII). The chameleon like nature of internet and its mutability makes it like a bowl of jelly, keeps on changing, meaning different things to different people at different times. The degree of affinity of different people to this medium is also different.

The benefit internet is capable of providing to the society depends to a large extent on what the users do with it and their attachment to the medium. So it was pertinent to gauge the affinity to internet among the students who happen to be the most avid users of internet. Media affinity can be described as an attitude toward a medium that reflects the importance people attach to a medium and its content. It is an indicator of audience attachment to a medium. The credit for conceptualizing affinity and developing a Likert scale to measure audiences' intensity towards television goes to Greenberg (1974) and subsequently Rubin (1981). This study focused on students as youngsters being instinctively exploratory and inquisitive take to new media technology more quickly. One can see the emergence of vertical networks that function between generations where the skills are no longer passed on from oldest to youngest but from teenagers to adults as they are early adopters and act as technological gurus who pass on information about new technology to the elders in the family. ( Drotner, 1999).

Using a longitudinal approach the present study sought to gain an insight into the changing patterns of internet use and affinity. The first phase was a survey conducted in 2009. The second phase of the study in 2015 adopted quantitative and qualitative methods.

### **Objectives**

To compare changes in the following social dimensions of internet in 2009 and in 2015 .

1. To assess students' Internet affinity and correlate it with Internet usage (i) longevity, (ii) regularity and (iii) time spent.
2. To gauge students' Internet affinity variations, in respect of demographic variables.
3. To assess the satisfaction from the Internet.
4. To explore popular websites amongst the students

### **Study Design**

The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase in 2009, survey was conducted using a questionnaire. To arrive at a representative student sample of Internet users in the state of Kerala, a multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. A total of 900 students were surveyed in the three districts; 300 each in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, and Kozhikode districts respectively. Following elimination of 183 incomplete questionnaires, the sample size was reduced to 717.

In this study, Rubin's affinity scale (1981) was adapted to assess the importance of Internet among students. The five-point, five-item Likert type scale consisted of the following five statements: (i) I would rather access Internet than do anything else, (ii) I could easily do without Internet for several days, (iii) I would feel lost without Internet, (iv) If I am unable to access Internet I would not miss it, and (v) Accessing Internet is one of the most important things I do each day. For each statement, respondents were expected to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree which were to be scored from 1 to 5 to develop an affinity index. The affinity index could range from 5 – 25. The higher the mean index score, the higher is the affinity; the lower the score, the lower the affinity towards Internet.

Internet usage pattern was explored from three perspectives of

(i) longevity of use, (ii) regularity of use, and (iii) time spent using Internet. The influence of demographic variables on affinity was examined.

In the second phase quantitative and qualitative methods were used. In December 2015 data was collected from 50 students using a questionnaire, and 10 students were interviewed. The study seeks to make a comparative analysis of internet affinity in 2009 and 2015.

## **FINDINGS**

This longitudinal study seeks to throw light on changing trends and patterns of Internet use and affinity from 2009 to 2015 amongst students from different demographic categories.

### **1. Affinity**

In 2009 students did not have a strong attachment to internet. Using the affinity scale , the affinity score could range from 5 to 25. But their mean affinity score was a mere 13.12 (Std. deviation 4.62; std error .17), so students' Internet affinity could best be described as moderate. Perhaps, this could be attributed to the fact that Internet was comparatively a new medium in India in 2009 and affinity was yet to get firmed up.

By 2015, much water had flowed under the bridge, the scenario was transformed. With a mean affinity score of 20.8 clearly their affinity to internet has increased remarkably. A majority have developed a strong attachment to this medium as it is an important, inseparable part of their life.

### **2. Longevity of Internet Use**

In 2009 rural students formed the bulk of the new users of Internet (76%), ie those who had used internet for less than 6 months. This substantiates the proposition that technologies often spread from the urban centres to rural hinterlands. Such a disparity between urban and rural areas has been noted even in some parts of developed countries like rural US, Canadian North, Australian Outback (Hudson, 2007). Students from high income families had a longer experience of using Internet. Historically those with disposable income are the early adopters of technology.

However by 2015, 90% of the students have been using the internet since more than three years. Hence it has become a part of their lives. Yet glimpses

of the second level digital divide existed in terms of quality of access, defined in terms of factors such as the technical specifications of smartphones, broadband connections, multiple internet access points, speed of connectivity and related peripherals. This difference was seen between the high income and low income groups.

### **3. Regularity of Internet Use**

Early research had suggested that girls lagged behind in using Internet as they had less access to computers (Kubey & Larson, 1990). The results of the 2009 phase of this study also lent support to the existence of the 'gender gap' in Kerala as male students were more regular users of Internet than females. So also, the younger and affluent school students residing in urban locations scored high on Internet use regularity. One plausible reason for the female students lagging behind in regularity of Internet use in 2009 could be lack of Internet facilities at home and colleges. More than one-third of the sampled students reported using Internet at cybercafés. Many girl students mentioned about societal pressures which inhibited them from going alone to cybercafés.

However the popularity of inexpensive smart phones coupled with falling internet prices has helped to bridge the gender gap and digital divide. Most of the students are regular users of the internet with 87% accessing it on a daily basis. Many access net on their smart phones.

### **4. Time Spent**

In 2009 students from higher income families were spending more time on the net than their less affluent counterparts. By 2015, income was not significant. Now students are spending more time on net compared to 2009, with 26% spending more than 2 hours daily, now the pattern of time spent has also changed. Earlier they were sitting for longer periods of time at one stretch, but now they are accessing net frequently, but only for a short period of time. The reason is that most students are accessing net on their smart phones, which is always easily accessible to them. They frequently check WhatsApp, Facebook. Is this the beginning of internet addiction

amongst youngsters? The falling cost of smart phones and internet access has brought it within the reach of average middleclass. The few students who do not have internet access in phones or at home, use net occasionally, and whenever they use for specific purposes, spend more time at one stretch.

### 5. Correlation of Internet Affinity with Usage Longevity, Regularity and Time Spent

It is appropriate to assess the possible relationship between Internet affinity and the three dimensions of Internet usage – longevity, regularity and time spent – as these also indirectly reflect the importance students attach to Internet. So the four variables were subjected to Pearson correlation. A positive correlation would suggest of a linear relation where one is reflective of the other. The results reported in Table 1 demonstrate the presence of a positive linear correlation between and among them. The strongest correlation (.441) was between Internet affinity and regularity of usage followed by time spent on Internet activity (.347) and longevity of Internet use (.272). There was also a positive correlation among the three Internet usage dimensions: regularity of use, time spent and longevity of use.

**Table 1**

#### Correlation of Internet Affinity, Usage Longevity, Regularity and Time Spent

Variables	Affinity	Regularity	Time spent	Longevity
<b>Affinity</b>	1.000			
<b>Regularity</b>	.441 (.000) **	1.000		
<b>Time spent</b>	.347 (.000) **	.240(.000) **	1.000	
<b>Longevity</b>	.272 (.000) **	.281(.000) **	.382(.000) **	1.000

**Note: Pearson correlation is significant beyond .01 level (2- tailed)**

Perhaps, it is the regularity of Internet use that defines users' affinity. Those who consider Internet an important media, in all probability access it regularly and thereby attach a high importance to it.

Such a correlation unambiguously points out that affinity is a reflection of the three usage dimensions of regularity, longevity and time spent. That being the case, there is immense scope to examine whether the three usage dimensions could be used in conjunction to assess the affinity to a medium. In fact, there is a need for an alternative affinity determinant to Rubin's affinity scale as the five statements of the scale are not free of semantic shortcomings. A summated index of the three media usage dimensions of regularity, longevity and time spent could be used in lieu of Rubin's affinity in ascertaining the affinity to a medium.

## 6. Internet Affinity and Gender

Affinity was higher among male students (mean 13.88) in 2009.

**Table 2**

### T Test – Affinity and Gender

Gender	N	Affinity Mean	Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	327	13.88	1.41	4.84	4.114	715	.000*
Female	390	12.47		4.33			
Total	717	13.12					

**Note: \* t is significant at the .01 level and beyond (2-tailed)**

In 2015 no significant differences were seen in affinity patterns amongst males and females. Perhaps it is an indication that the gender divide is narrowing.

## 7 Internet Satisfaction

In 2009 a whopping 86.8 per cent of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the medium.

**Table 3: Internet Satisfaction**

Level of satisfaction	N (%)
<b>Satisfied</b>	622 (86.8)
<b>Neither</b>	87 (12.1)
<b>Not satisfied</b>	8 (1.1)
<b>Total</b>	717 (100.0)

Satisfaction levels increased in 2015 to 92%.

## 8. Popular websites

Which are the websites or Apps commonly frequented by students today? A notable finding in 2015 was the overwhelming popularity of WhatsApp, followed by Google, Facebook, Wikipedia, and Youtube in that order. In 2009 Google, was ranked first, followed by Orkut, Gmail, Yahoo and Facebook. Email which was one of the popular uses of internet is no longer important for the students, as they increasingly turn to Whatsapp, Facebook or Twitter for interpersonal and group communication. Pass time, and social interaction appear to be the primary drivers of net use amongst youngsters. These findings were also reflected in latest figures released by Mobile messaging App WhatsApp. It has crossed the one billion user milestone globally with the addition of 100 million users in the last five months. Nearly one in seven people on earth use WhatsApp each month to stay in touch. 42 billion messages, 1.6 billion photos and 250 million videos are shared everyday on the platform (Indian Express, 2016). Online banking, shopping, downloading music and films have also become more popular now.

Wikipedia is the most popular informative website. Very often it is used for assignments, seminars. Many students said it was the only site they referred for assignments, and often they did not search in other detailed websites. Perhaps this gives an indication of the 'cut, copy, and paste' culture very common among youngsters, wherein they don't bother to seek detailed knowledge on that topic.

The interviews with students reveal they are yet to realize the immense potential of WWW in serving their education related needs despite the fact that it is a treasure trove of information and education on every conceivable subject. Some of the reasons could be lack of awareness about the education potential of the net, lack of efficacy in searching for educational content, limited high speed access, language barriers in educational content and expenses involved in downloading large amount of data.

Only in one college visited by the researcher for data collection in 2009 (Sacred Heart College, Thevara, located in an urban area in Ernakulam district), all post graduate classrooms were equipped with computers and Internet connectivity. Here, the postgraduate students were regular users of Internet. Even In 2015, other colleges have not yet adopted this practice. They have a centre where students can access internet, yet this is located away from the classrooms and does not give the convenience of having a computer in class. The practice in vogue in Sacred Heart College could be followed in other colleges. Higher educational institutions must change with time and utilize new media and new technology.

These findings demand the attention of society, in particular the education subsystem. Concerns arise as a large majority of students are using Internet for pass time and social interaction. This trend is disturbing as it negates the multimedia and interactive potentials of internet to serve the important instrumental uses of education and learning.

Yet another perspective has been put forward by technology writer Nicholas Carr in his seminal work 'Is Google making us stupid? What the Internet is doing to our brains'. He argues that Internet might have detrimental effects on cognition that diminish the capacity for concentration, contem-



plation and memory retention. "Thinking has taken on a staccato quality, I fight to stay focused having lost the ability to read and absorb a longish article or book" (Carr, 2008). But long term psychological and neurological studies have yet to yield definite results. Whenever any new media arrives, such fears are common in society.

The fast growing popularity of internet among Indian students certainly augurs well for it to become a medium of daily use. In general the students are enamoured of this medium and consider it important in their lives. The interviews suggest Internet use is associated with decline in traditional media use, such as newspapers more so among youngsters, as Internet is a more interactive and interesting option.

Some of these findings are on expected lines, some are pointers to future trends, and their implications are thought provoking, especially in the light of increasing diffusion of Internet in Indian society. Such studies besides providing a new theoretical framework to explain Internet will perhaps also give a framework for formulating policies suited to prevailing conditions.

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# ICT IN THE CLASS ROOM

**Blossom George. MA, B.Ed**

ICT define as information and communicative technology or technologies is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer, and network like hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as video conferencing and distance learning. ICTs are often spokes of a particular context, such as ICTs in education, health care or libraries. The term is somewhat more common outside of the United States. It stands for the purpose for their primes as a “diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate; and to create, disseminate, store and manage information”.

In the fast decades information and communication technologies have provided society with a vast array of new communication capabilities. For example people can communicate in real time with others in different countries using technology such as instant messaging, voice over IP (VoIP) and video conferencing. Social networking website like facebook allow users from all over the world to remain in contact and communicate on a regular basis.

ICT often used as an extended synonym for information technology. It is a more extensive

*Guest Lecturer*

*HSE*

*Wayanad*

term that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunication, computer as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage and audio-visual systems, which enable users to access, store, transmit and manipulate information.

However ICT has no universal definition as “the concept, methods and applications involved in ICT are constantly evolving on an almost daily basis.” The broadness of covers any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically in a digital form eg. Personal computers, digital television, email, robots. Rapid growth especially in developing countries has led ICT to become key store of everyday life.

Teaching and learning have moved from instructive to constructivism. Constructivism demands the more effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). But, in order to achieve this, certain strategic changes have to be brought about in the style adopted in the usage of ICT at present. These changes include, using to deliver and control instruction has to be modified as using to support the learner’s creation of knowledge investigation and thinking. Changes like linear logic and programmed instruction and learning towards non-linear, networked, branching, hypertext views of learning is intended to establish meaningful connections among various items of knowledge. ICT has considerable potential to catch the tentative nature of knowledge in constructivism, as the use of ICT involves drafting and re-drafting, editing and selecting, making connections and reflecting.

ICT can provide situated learning metacognition, higher order thinking and a social basis for learning. It helps for the breaking of subject boundaries and for the development of project-based, real-word (‘authentic’) learning and authentic assessment. Student-centered learning and intrinsic motivation also are advantages of using ICT in Education. The above described features of the can be considered as corollary of constructivism. In a context where neither the teacher nor the text book is the repository of all knowledge, the ICT is an embodiment of, and medium for, the practice of constructivism. This is because it is an expanding store of accessible information and it requires students to evaluate and select relevant information and to select their own pathways for learning. Student-centered learning is a natural

consequence of ICT usage and control of learning by the learner is a significant feature of ICT usage.

The impact of ICT and new technologies is the shift of emphasis from teaching to learning and from the product to the process of learning. Students will need to focus on how and where to acquire, store and utilize knowledge rather than on how to remember it in its totality. Effective teachers will be those who can scaffold learning for students and support them in the navigation of their own learning. Castro claims that using ICT in classrooms, particularly in the constructivist approach, has great potential to develop student's higher order cognitive skills. Similarly Wishart reports that computer programs can act as cognitive tools which facilitate the construction of higher order schemata as well as the use of cognitive skills such as formal, abstract reasoning which were previously considered to be unattainable by younger children. Project-based learning, involved in the learning through ICT, should encourage students to make decisions and to find our answers for exploratory 'What-if question, such tasks require discussion and communication for reaching the final product or solution.

The ICT have recently gained ground swell of Interest. It is a significant research area for many scholars around the globe. These nature has highly changed the face of education over the few decades. Some countries achieved high levels of effective use of ICT to support and change the teaching and learning process in may subject areas.

In 2006, there was a study carried out in national, international and European schools. With the aim to draw evidences regarding the advantages as benefits of ICT in schools achievements it seeks to measure the impact of ICT of students outcomes. The study also tried to establish a link between the use of ICT and students results in exam. The findings are amazing: ICT has positive impact on students performance in primary schools particularly in English language and less in science. Schools with higher level show a rapid increase in performance in scores compared to these with lower level. In addition, schools with sufficient ICT resources achieved better result than these that are not well equipped. There is a significant improvement on learner's performances. Finally, teachers becomes more convinced that educational achievements of pupils are due to good in ICT use. In fact, high

percentage of teachers in Europe states that pupils are more motivated when computers and internet are being used in class.

Many pupils consider ICT tools very helpful in that it helps them to do assignment, teachers see that ICT enable students with special needs or difficulties. It also helps to reduce the social disparities between pupils, since they work in teams in order to achieve a given task. Students also assume responsibilities when they are ICT to organize their work through digital portfolios. In addition to the study short that ICT has significant impact on teachers and teaching process. ICT also helps to interventions and training seminar organized by government. It also helps the teachers to do their task such as preparing lessons, sequencing class room activities etc. So that teacher's lesson plan more efficiently, effective and creative. ICT also helps teachers to team work and share ideas for better school curriculum.

ICT also provides an evidence that many teachers use ICT to support innovative pedagogy. There is also evidence that black board and interactive white boards play a central role in fostering teachers communication and increasing collaboration between educators. Therefore ICT can improve teaching by enhancing an already practiced knowledge, and introducing new ways of teaching and learning. Without ICT teaching learning process is difficult to achieve. Teachers have not fully changed their use of ICT in education; however, most of them changed their way of thinking about the application of ICT in education. Teachers have increased their use of ICT in lessons where students look for information on the net and use it afterwards for subject specific areas, they use ICT for class presentation. Nonetheless, teachers do not make use of ICT to engage students more actively produce knowledge. Increase in the use of ICT to teach innovative teaching methods.

Many teachers use ICT to support traditional learning methods for example, information retrieval in which students are passive learners of knowledge. Instead of active producers able to take part in the learning process. ICT helps to promote sufficient potentials and skills that enable the students to open new opportunities and this will help them to study how the technological tools can enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools, so that they can achieve better outcome.

ICT also allows high quality lessons through the collaboration with teacher in planning and preparing resources. Learners can learn new skills like listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill and writing skill. New technologies encourage independent and active learning, It will helps to increase self confidence and self esteem.It also real truth that many learners found learning technologically help them and enhance them their creativity and stimulating much better than in a traditional.

Another important advantage of ICT is feedback will be very rapid. ICT can assess higher order thinking and learning (using real world situation). ICT helps to reduce learner's anxiety in examination.ICT has the potential to develop and use alternative strategies for more fruitful assessment and it also helps to the teachers and learners are partners in the co construction of knowledge. With ICT the role and task of the teacher are still vital and add value to learning.ICT helps to group work and students centered learning. Major fact of ICT is both information and enjoyment. And the learners can come across with people and be in touch with the outside world. Although the ICT promotes expansion of knowledge and educational resources. Not only the learners enhancement in their learning style but also the teachers support in their varied teaching styles.

To conclude, Information and communicative technology can be used to improve teaching learning process, set readiness, help easy understanding, aid memory, provide recreation, create interest, effect stimulus variation, give clarity, precision and accuracy, provide concrete experiences, develop language skills through repetition and improve quality of language.

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# DECOLONIZING THE SPIRIT: TOWARDS A TRANSGRESSIVE PEDAGOGY

**Dr. Ninnette Rolence**

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**Roshni Prabhakaran**

*Assistant Professor  
Dept. of English  
MCC, Calicut*

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*Assistant Professor  
Dept. of English  
MCC, Calicut*

The major purpose of education, especially the discipline of Humanities, is to facilitate the students populace to relate and situate themselves in a fast changing dynamic world. The earliest modes of teaching and learning, as history records, was not a mere one way epistemological and intellectual flow from the teacher to the student. The Gurukula system is a very good example of this. But as time rolled forward, the teaching methods also underwent drastic changes. Consequently we landed on a state of affairs where the teaching and learning methods became teacher- oriented shifting the centre from the learner to the facilitator. It is this method that needs a total overhauling in the contemporary educational system. Only such a paradigm shift can sincerely fulfill the intended aims and objectives of education. A quick glance at the now traditional education system reveals the handicaps of the system.

Traditional or conventional education is fallaciously used to refer to customs established in the curricula for quite a few centuries now. This system is inclusive of the teacher community only



as the source of knowledge and often tends to exclude the experience of the students. Unfortunately our society has deemed this as the appropriate mode of teaching/learning. But there have always been voices raised against this mode which is insular. Philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau has stated in the eighteenth century itself that if a child is given a suitable learning environment, he/she would be guided by instinct in the learning process. The American philosopher, John Dewey also came up with a stronger contention regarding teaching practices. In his *Experience and Education* (1938), his premise is that imposition from above will result in a coercive practice which tends to expression and cultivation of individuality. He also states that learning through texts and teachers is opposed to learning through experience. He also stresses that serious subject matter can be conveyed only through experiential learning, i.e., learning through experience. Thus educational reform has become a prerogative of the time, a reform that adopts and promotes progressive education practices, an experiential learning process that is more holistic in its approach i.e., which focuses on individual students' needs and self-expression. A sequential learning process can defeat the purpose of democratic education, while actually education purports to attain a higher level of culture. Traditional teacher-centered methods focused on rote learning and memorization. The aim is to instill students with the "essentials" of academic knowledge, enacting a back-to-basics approach. It ensures that the accumulated wisdom of our civilization as taught in the traditional academic disciplines is passed on from teacher to student. Moreover, this traditional approach is meant to train the mind, promote reasoning, and ensure a common culture.

The role of the teacher as the leader of the classroom is a very important tenet of Educational essentialism. The teacher must interpret essentials of the learning process, take the leadership position and set the tone of the classroom. It is normally assumed that the teacher is the center of the classroom, so they should be rigid and disciplinary. It is true that establishing order in the classroom is crucial for student learning; effective teaching cannot take place in a loud and disorganized environment. But this does not mean that the students should be denied speaking spaces. A class room is a heterogeneous society where the live experience of every individual

student is unique. In our Indian context it is more individualistic as our society has vaster experience of myriads of caste, culture and society. These needs require an educator who is academically well-qualified with an appreciation for learning and development.

Our conventional education system again affects a flaw as it bypasses the heterogeneity of the student community. It tends to look at a class room as a homogeneous whole, treating every child equally and teaching them the same things at a same pace and same intellectual level irrespective of the disparity in their intellectual, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Every classroom is marked by individual differences of learning abilities, likes and dislikes. This system is thus very unfair at the core. This leads to disastrous results as it creates a community in the form of people who always feel misplaced and are the misfits in the society. The vast majority of students learn through conservative, traditional educational practices. The students are acquainted with a behavioural pattern where they are too much familiarised with the presence of the teacher/professor. Thus any radical pedagogy must acknowledge the presence of each and every individual in the class. This is the instance where critical or engaged pedagogy acquires significance.

According to bell hooks, a African American social activist and reformist, a classroom that employs critical/engaged pedagogy is a place in which the teacher aspires to learn as much from her students as he or she plans to teach. The class is centered on conversation and discussion. She argues that conversation is a mutually engaging learning partnership in which power and knowledge is shared. A conversation-based model of learning is especially useful in a diverse classroom because it is less likely that dialogue becomes argumentative. The role of the teacher seems to be one of a facilitator. Teachers must be able to create a safe space in which all students feel comfortable and confident that their opinion is worthwhile. While the teacher is control of what is learned, he or she is not necessarily in control of all the teaching. Students are almost teaching themselves through critical thinking.

Hooks thinks that engaged pedagogy is vital and essential because it aims to restore student's will to think as well as their will to be self-actualized. She

introduces the teaching strategy in direct response to the general trend of student's distorted conceptions of what school is and what their role as students is. "By the time most students enter college classrooms, they have come to dread thinking." While it is indeed a grim outlook on the state of education, students are beginning to realize that traditional schooling rewards them for simply regurgitating information. Engaged pedagogy not only invites a student to share their ideas, it only embraces what they have to say and advocates an open-mind for all viewpoints.

Paulo Friere, Brazilian educator and influential theorist of critical pedagogy, criticizes the "banking model" of education and he proposes democratic model of problem –posing education. This would help the learner to have a critical perception of the world in which they are situated and enable them to occupy a subjective position and overcome the object position in a society that makes them enact such a position. A community of teacher and scholar should be developed wherein teaching and learning strategies can be effectively be combined with critical analysis. This community should comprise of individuals who share a common vision and who are committed to articulating that vision. When such an articulation takes place it becomes a discursive process.

This discourse would lead to cultural literacy and canonical revisions. Consequently there would be a paradigm shift, decentering the master narratives and critically engaging with these narratives. Cultural literacy enables the students, especially the marginalized ones to recognize their cultural repositories and critically analyze how there are positioned in it and how they can cast meanings out of their subjectivities. Once cultural literacy is attained, the marginal voices would come to the centre of the classroom, and they come to the centre of the curriculum too.

As a extensive and loosely linked area of educational theory and practice, engaged pedagogy views schools not as sites where a neutral body of curricular knowledge is passed on to students with various levels of success, but it takes schools as cultural and political arenas where different cultural, ideological, and social constructs are constantly in struggle. The question then becomes how to construct a practice of education that can, on the one

hand, account for why some students fail to “succeed” in school and, on the other, develop ways of teaching that offer greater possibilities to people of color, ethnic minorities, working-class students, women, gays and lesbians, and others, not only in order that they might have a better chance of “success” in the ways traditionally defined by education but also in order that these definitions of success, both within schools and beyond, can be questioned and changed. Broadly speaking, then, engaged pedagogy aims to change both schooling and society, to the mutual benefit of both.

Friere says that a dialogic process hides the true nature of dialogue as a process of learning and knowing. Dialogue should always be epistemologically dynamic. It is not a closed circuit, but should develop a better understanding about the object of knowledge. Otherwise the individual lived experience will not meet any theoretical ends. To quote Friere, “Curiosity about the object of knowledge and the willingness and openness to engage theoretical reading and discussions is fundamental.”(ibid, p.382). He says that practice must not be negated for the sake of theory. This would reduce theory to mere verbalism or intellectualism and to negate theory for the sake of practice, again, runs the risk of losing oneself in the disconnectedness of practice. Thus there should be a fair collapsing of theory and practice. To achieve this one must have an epistemological curiosity. If the students lack epistemological curiosity, it is difficult to create it. If students should be able to formulate their lived experience into knowledge and also utilize the already acquired knowledge. Only then students will be able to participate in dialogue as a discursive process. The analysis of oppression through a convergent theoretical framework is required where the object of oppression is cut across by such factors as race class, gender, culture, language and ethnicity. Friere rejects any theoretical analysis that would collapse the multiplicity of factors into a monolithic entity, including class. The class room should have a positive and engaging attitude. It should take into consideration the fact that identity development is a dynamic process and is a variable of instruction.

An engaged pedagogy must include not only a language of critique but also a vision of a better world for which it is worth struggling. Such a vision involves a certain degree of optimism, a belief in alternative possibilities,

and a way of moving beyond the despair into which a critical and ethical view of the world can often lead us. Teachers need to see themselves as, in Gramsci's phrase, "organic intellectuals" working with others for social justice. Teachers, as organic intellectuals, exercise forms of intellectual and pedagogical practice that attempt to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. This view of teaching aims to oppose the way teachers are today often positioned as classroom technicians employed to pass on a body of knowledge, and in its place offers a version of teaching that removes the theory-practice divide and stresses the significance of working towards social transformation that benefits the majority and not the privileged few.

Radical pedagogical proposals should effect significant social changes. For this there should be epistemological relationship of dialogue. According to Friere, "Dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task." (Friere, Paul and Donaldo Macedo. *Á Dialogue: Culture, Language and Race*". *Harward Educational Review* vol.65, no.3, fall 1995, p.379). This means that dialogue should not become a method. The fundamental goal of dialogic teaching is to create a process of learning and knowing that invariably involves theorizing about the experiences shared in the dialogue process.

Inflated celebration of experience would lead to a reductionist view of identity, resulting in uncritical appeals to the discourse of experience. This is because sometimes Friere's concept gets misinterpreted wherein dialogical teaching method fails to link experience to the politics of culture and critical pedagogy to form of critical narcissism. This creates, on the one hand, the transformation of dialogical teaching into a method invoking conversation that provides participants with a group-therapy space stating their grievances. On the other hand, it offers the teacher as facilitator to a safe pedagogical zone to deal with his or her class guilt.

Teaching is a performative act. It is this aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom. Teachers are meant to

serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning. As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence. It is essential that as teachers teaching in a foreign language, we have not only ways of thinking about language and language learning but also ways of thinking about education and inequality. As teachers, we need to ask ourselves what sort of vision of society we are teaching towards. Are we merely attempting to fulfill predefined curricular goals or do we have an ethical understanding of how education is related to broader social and cultural relations and that therefore there is a need to teach towards a different version of the curriculum and a different vision of society?

The primary aim of the teacher in the class room should be to implant and develop critical consciousness. The teacher is pressed with the need to facilitate the students to survive physically, emotionally and economically in this fast changing world. The students should be equipped with a level of consciousness that would enable them to control their lives and their learning so that they may effect change. Friere states that this level of consciousness requires the students to think both from a subjective position as they are 'in' the world', and from an 'objective distance' considering themselves as 'with' the world. From this critical perspective students will be able to reinterpret and resist those dominant cultural representations that are not useful to them. Thus the teachers are committed to reattach literary texts to their worlds and to the people who live in those worlds.

To sum up this process a teacher teaching humanities must be initially concerned with developing the basic skills of reading, writing, analysis etc and also to teach them the basics of English language like grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure etc. This should simultaneously be taught to be critical of these institutionalised ways of thinking, speaking, learning and knowing to bring about a radical change in the analytical knowledge creating process. This paper strives towards an analysis of how new methods can be introduced to meet the aims and objectives of what education and curriculum means.

The first objective of this study is to make a comparison between teaching using the traditional method over new critical pedagogical practice theorised by Paulo Friere and Bell hooks. This objective was set to determine the aptness of this teaching method for the students who were tested to foresee possible changes made to the teaching style in comparison to student's preferred teaching style. The second objective is to determine whether students learning style differed after employing new pedagogical approach. Also this was useful to check whether the change in the teaching style reflects a change in personality, growth of character and confidence of the students. A group of 50 students were randomly made part of a survey where they were asked to point out the difference between these two modes of teaching. Also they were asked to enumerate the advantages of the new pedagogical approach over the traditional manner of lecturing. The students were grouped into four different categories based on their academic record, their previous mode of education, and most importantly based on their caste and class. This was to enforce how the traditional mode failed to satisfy the heterogenous groups and only catered the more privileged ones. The students who faired excellent and moderately well in academics preferred traditional mode clubbed with a few more academic activities. They were classified as the group A. They were continuously exposed to traditional method of lecturing, note taking, assignments and seminars for one month. The students who faired bad and who come from lower and lower middle class were in group B. They were exposed to new critical thoughts and activities for exactly same period of time. Here the learning became student centred and occurred in small groups led by facilitators. They were made to practice innovative self learning, discussion in classroom, peer group teaching and followed by a session between facilitator and students.

Such a pedagogical practice promoted the eradication of the teacher student negation whereby the teacher teaches and the students are taught; the teacher knows the whole thing and the students know nothing and the teacher is the subject matter and the students are mere objects. It encourages a problem-posing dialogue which originates from the live experiences of the learners. It endorses epistemological curiosity among both the groups.

It also implores us to use our teaching and learning to effect positive social change. For those of us who attempt to bring

critical pedagogy into the humanities classroom, the challenges and concerns are many. Understanding what some of these obstacles are and how they are manifested in institutions of higher learning goes a long way in devising strategies to assuage their deleterious effects.

The majority of students who attended the experiment based on the innovative teaching methods are between the age 17 -20. In a conclusive test conducted based on the practice of these two methods in two different groups, group B was more rational and competent than the group A. The same students who were academically handicapped and was in midst of class and caste complex turned out to be well proficient. The result in their growth of character and confidence was very well evident. The group B students did well for both their group activities and their individual tests. The only area where they need a bit more improvement was in their grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.

The conspicuous problems that rose in front of us from effectively executing such a pedagogical practice. We found that especially in the start of the semester, students may feel slightly uncomfortable with discovering their own voices, asking improbable questions, and tolerating different kinds of uncertainty and ambiguity. Initially, these students were more comfortable with the traditional mode of compulsory note taking. Yet our experience is that students adapt quickly. They gain confidence after a particular period of time and could flair exceptionally well. By the time the students pass on to their second and third semester, they would be absolutely self-assured to handle a class on individual merit.

Because critical pedagogy demands the students to engage in frequent group works, the possibility of the “free-rider” problem exists. Free-riders are students who benefit from group grades without doing their fair share of the work. To avoid such an issue, we arranged the faculty to meet the groups outside the class time where the mentor can facilitate their progress by suggestion or direct intervention (Yamane 1996). Further, individual students in each group can be required to keep a “work log” detailing the time



put into the projects (see Fobes and Hefferan 2007). Some instructors also build in peer grading as another mechanism to deter free-riders. The weak students in the classroom was grouped along with the more proficient students so that they can get an aid in their process of preparation. Later they are regrouped with different students where they can share this experience that they had in their first time and by the end of the session they were actually ready to give away a presentation even individually.

One of the most difficult problem that arised was breaking down the teacher-student contradiction. How do we invite students to be co-teachers if we begin from a position of intellectual authority? How do we encourage students to take control of their education if they know that we are still the gatekeepers of the course? Although we certainly have some degree of institutional and intellectual authority, we can still negate some of this authority. Bickel (2006) offers an example of “democratizing the classroom” whereby students, through debate and dialogue, decided the subjects they covered, the amount of reading assigned per week, the due dates and page lengths for paper assignments, and the attendance policy. As Bickel discovered, by inviting students to assume co-ownership of the classroom, instructors may actually find themselves gaining more respect, and paradoxically, more authority among the students. Furthermore, eliminating the contradictions between students and teachers does not mean that teachers no longer teach; rather, it suggests that “both the teacher and the students know that open, curious questioning, whether in speaking or listening, is what grounds them mutually” (Freire 1998:81). “to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (Freire 1998:30).

Once we decide to de-center some of our authority we are likely to feel somewhat hypocritical when it comes time to grade and evaluate students. Equally complicated is figuring out what methods of assessment should be used. If the goals of critical pedagogy are to promote dialogue and encourage students to name their world so that they can change their world, how do we evaluate such objectives within the context of the substantive course content? Having students to participate in the construction and selection of evaluative measures is one way to address this challenge. Another approach

is to re-evaluate pedagogical goals and objectives and create alternative means to assess student learning. As mediators of knowledge, we aimed at grading or assessing them based on what they produce or create, not on what they reproduce or merely pass on. Again treating the classroom as a group of heterogeneous community, we tried to evaluate students not on objective parameters, but rather on their subjective merits.

Although we may try to frame critical pedagogical assignments by encouraging students to work towards eradicating social inequalities and promoting social justice, some students may hold conservative perspectives that are at odds with our views. Even the subjective politics of the instructor and the students may interfere in the result of this inquiry. As a result, some students voiced reservations, even resistance, about being required to work for social change. We felt that the best way to address such concerns is to dialogue with students about the purpose and obligation of education. Also teachers should act as mere facilitators, merely to give directions to the student community if they digress or are in some kind of distress. Teachers should only mediate the ideas of their students, not try to manipulate them.

Freire (1998) argues that epistemological curiosity—the endless questioning, the awareness of our “unfinishedness,” the capacity for the beginner’s mind—is a crucial component of critical pedagogy. If we truly want to be co-learners and co-teachers with the students, if we want to construct a classroom environment that legitimizes their voices, and if we want to create avenues for them to explore the possibilities of being agents of change, then we need to do a lot of creative, critical, and challenging work to ensure that these goals are achieved. One of the underlying themes of critical pedagogy is that education is much more than just the transmission of knowledge. Instead of merely inculcating students with “objective” and “value-neutral” facts, figures, and theories, we must recognize that “education as a specifically human experience, is a form of intervention in the world” (Freire 1998:90-1).

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# DIGITAL NATIVES AND THE GENERAL ENGLISH CLASSROOM

**Ms. Preethi Sara Joseph**

## **Introduction**

The post globalization era we are living in is a habitat to Marc Prensky's "Digital Natives" and "Digital Immigrants", the terms he use to refer to the tech-savvy learners of today and their educators who have been introduced to technology rather than being born into its lap respectively, in his work *Teaching Digital Natives: Partnering for Real Learning*. Technology or ICT, the generic term which refers to the use of technology in various forms of a learning tool was introduced in some form in classrooms since the last decade which has made the classrooms more interactive and interesting. It has been proven over the years that ICT has the potential to play a predominant role in making English language more relevant, motivating and interesting for the students. Technology has been put to use in English language classrooms to make language learning and its use more appealing and effective in schools and colleges. However, there is a general perception that technology does not have much to contribute in higher education especially in General English classrooms.

*Assistant Professor  
Dept. of English  
Mar Thoma College  
for Women  
Perumbavoor  
speak2psj@gmail.com*

The habit of buying and reading books has dwindled greatly today and teachers and educa-

tors encounter learners who have lost the interest in traditional textbooks and prescribed syllabi, a resultant of the impact of technology. The disinterest and apathy of these learners are often at its worst in the General English or Common Course (English) classrooms. The prescribed syllabus often includes pieces of prose, poetry and drama which usually deal with issues and concerns such as holocaust, gender issues, freedom struggle, human rights and so forth. The literary pieces on these topics include more of essays and other similar works of epic length and the concerned teacher faces a double edged sword as takes over the textbook- a large group of bored but otherwise vibrant tech-savvy youngsters and the challenge to race through the prescribed portions within the stipulated time period.

This paper seeks to illustrate practical ways of how technology can be used or integrated in everyday General English classrooms for effective teaching-learning which also includes the development of English language i.e. the use of ICT in General English classrooms with emphasis on the development of the writing skill which is quintessential for the learners to qualify their examinations. To exemplify this purpose, the General English/ Common Course text book “Musings on Vital Issues” prescribed by the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, for II Semester B.A., B. Sc. (Model I) learners is used.

### **“MUSINGS ON VITAL ISSUES”**

The textbook entitled “Musings on Vital Issues” edited by Dr P J George has been prescribed by the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, to be taught during the Second Semester in General English classes. The course comprises of three modules, namely, “Globalization and its Consequences”, “Human Rights” and “Gender Questions”. The aim of the course is to provide an overall awareness about relevant societal and global issues and to inspire the students to think critically about these issues which are confronted by the contemporary world. The teacher’s task is to ensure that at the end of the course the students understand and evaluate afore mentioned issues and concerns of the world and that they acquire the ability to respond empathetically to these social issues. The learners should also become

equipped to write literary and critical pieces on issues of social relevance. The various modules comprise of essays and other prose pieces such as Fritjof Capra's "The Dark Side of Growth", Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream", Amartya Sen's "More Than 100 Million Women are Missing" and so forth. The text also includes poems, short stories and drama. Some of these are D H Lawrence's "Money Madness", Kalpana Jain's "Stigma, Shame and Silence", Wole Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation", and Taslima Nasrin's "At the Back of Progress".

The teacher's responsibility in handling a paper such as this is no small feat. Even the short stories which otherwise make an interesting read have to be critically interpreted and analysed in the light of the theme provided. The teacher's task varies from creating the right ambience to introduce the topic, build an interest in the students, take the prescribed lesson, and equip them to write answers from the concerned chapter in the University examination. The complexities and intricacies of the General English teacher is higher than that of teachers handling other classes of English because the teaching-learning in the former context have to be carried out amidst a sea of at least 65 tech-savvy youngsters pursuing their Degrees in various subjects under Arts and Science within the stipulated time period scheduled by the University. The teacher's challenge is often fuelled by the lack of interest or pseudo involvement exhibited by the learners due to the traditional textbook and topics. It is in this context that the teacher can resort to ICT resources to motivate the students to study the prescribed syllabus, however conventional the subject matter may seem, going beyond the traditional classroom setting, simultaneously developing their language skills and furnishing their abilities to perform well in the examinations.

## **TECHNOLOGY AND THE GENERAL ENGLISH CLASSROOM**

The use of technology in the educational sector places the student at the centre of learning. The learners are inspired to involve in reflective peer and collaborative learning allowing spontaneous absorption of the topic under consideration rather than forced teaching and learning. The application of

ICT provides opportunities to create well-designed, learner-centered, interactive, affordable and efficient e-learning environments. Some of the most commonly used technology and related resources include gadgets such as laptops, net books, smart phones, smart boards, e-books, films, documentaries, images, audio clips, CALL, discussion boards, online courses including MOOC and many more. The internet continues to be the greatest and most leading reservoir of materials and resources for digital classrooms. However, the most commonly used ICT resource in everyday classroom scenario is the PPT which is a conglomeration of various types of files and formats including colourful graphics and audio. It can function within the most limited technological resources yet, motivate the learners nevertheless.

As much as the relationships between teachers and students have undergone a phenomenal change, the nature and context of learning too have been affected. Consequently, the function and relevance of the contents of courses have all been challenged and redefined.

Thus, the use of technology in teaching of language other than language acquisition is now being explored greatly. The significance of the General English course in the syllabi of the Degree courses is now challenged. Language teachers are now compelled to seek new pedagogic approaches for the discipline as a whole. The complexity of the syllabi of the General English course today is heightened by the inclusion of inter-disciplinary subjects such as Environmental Studies, Economics, Gender Studies, Legal Studies etc. It is in this context that technology assisted learning becomes the need of the hour to fulfill the aims and objectives of the prescribed syllabi of the General English courses thus leading to compulsive use of new and innovative teaching methodologies.

There are several benefits in using technology as an aid in teaching. It can be used as a supporting material (audio, video, images and so forth to enhance the effectiveness of the classes), e-copies of scholarly works can be used which otherwise may not be easily available or used rightly and so forth. The use of technology-assisted learning is thus a more stimulating way of delivering content and initiates whole hearted and spontaneous learning.

## **ILLUSTRATION OF TECH-ASSISTED PEDAGOGY IN EVERYDAY GENERAL ENGLISH CLASSROOM**

The incorporation of technology in teaching in order to do justice to the Aims and Objectives of a prescribed course is one of the most effective teaching pedagogies, irrespective of the content as it allows easier administration and flexibility to the learners. By integrating technology in imparting the everyday classroom, the teacher goes beyond the traditional teaching paradigm as it uses interesting and interactive and definitely better supporting materials. This also initiates interaction between the teacher and the learners, stimulating the learners to think for them and absorb the content impulsively rather than being taught thus allowing the learners to share wholeheartedly the responsibility of learning and preparing the lessons along with their teacher. However, both teachers and learners should remember eternally while using technology and its resources as an aid in the classroom that technology is not a replacement for a teacher or teaching i.e. it should be used only as a quality enhancer which is put to use in the appropriate manner. Keeping these facts in mind, it nearly becomes a horrendous task for the teacher to find the appropriate resources to suit the needs of the class all the while bearing in mind the impact of the resources being used.

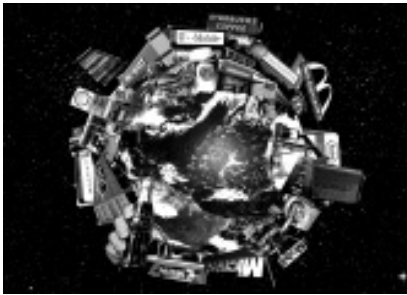
The General English textbook under consideration deals with a wide range of topics not exclusive to English language and literature. It includes Economics, Political Science, Law, Behavioural Science, Feminism and many more. These are to be taught to students belonging to both Arts and Science stream. Thus, there exists a blurring of subject boundaries and technology is the perfect solution for this amalgam. It encourages and facilitates a multidisciplinary perspective on learning and on research. The internet is the greatest contributor of resources for the classroom and when these are used appropriately, it results in the successful implementation of the Aims and Objectives.

The three modules “Globalization and its Consequences”, “Human Rights” and “Gender Questions” which comprise “Musings on Vital Issues” are taken for illustrating how technology can be used in everyday classrooms (General



English) as an effective teaching tool enhancing both qualitative and quantitative learning among the learners spontaneously. The internet is used as the key source for the various resource materials such as films, audio and video clippings and images. PPT is used as an aid in the mode of delivery.

“Globalization and its Consequences”



A discussion can be initiated among the students on these images which are presented through PPT. The initiator questions can include, “Is there any truth or reality of the world depicted in these pictures? Why?” “Who are the people influenced/affected in this context? How?” “What is the role played by the governments and the leaders?” The points arising in this discussion can be entered into the PPT in front of the students. The teacher can then give the concluding remarks based on the homework done and the contribution of the students which will give them a holistic understanding of what ‘globalization’ is and its impact, thus, introducing the module. With a solid foundation laid in this manner, the chapters in this module can be taken as seminars, group discussions etc using PPT. The teacher and the students thereby share in the preparation and comprehension of the content. The key points of each chapter can be taken down. To conclude the module, the class is to be shown a movie such as “Children of Heaven” or “...” and then write a critical analysis of the movie watched on the basis of the various chapters they have dealt with in this module as an assignment which is to be

mailed to the teacher within the stipulated time period or pasted on a discussion board or online forum prepared for the class and the grades of this assignment too will be published online.

Shoot 5 pictures each of your society depicting the impacts of globalization (positive and negative) and post them in your class's Whatsapp group. These photos can be put up for an exhibition in the college. The best pictures can be put together and developed into a short film. A very entertaining and exciting activity such as this will definitely serve as a catalyst to involve all the learners whole heartedly. These multifaceted tasks ensure learner centered teaching and enable to the teacher and the learners themselves analyse how well they have comprehended the lessons taken and their efficacy in using technology.

Similarly, for Module II, the speech of Martin Luther King can be used for introduction and analysis of Human Rights. This video clip can be played questions such as "What is the historical significance of this speech?", "What is he dreaming of? Why?" "Does this speech have any relevance today? Why?" Learner centered activities can be initiated as in the previous Module. The class can be divided into groups and questions can be given to each group. This can be used to initiate group discussion, debates and many more literary activities,

This pattern of teaching-learning can be continued into the next Module "Gender Questions" as well.

This methodology of incorporating simple elements of technology into every day classroom context using materials from the internet provides a window to fascinating resources which are not otherwise accessed or made available to the students to help them develop an interest in the prescribed University courses. The teacher though has an additional task of finding appropriate materials besides preparing from the prescribed text; tech-assisted teaching also allows a more flexible mode of delivery. The new pedagogy followed creates the right ambience for seminars and discussions based on the topic at hand evoking spontaneous and natural responses from the learners who imbibe the crux of each chapter and its purpose naturally.

Thus, preparation of the lessons becomes an interesting and exciting experience for the teacher and an attractive class for the students.

## **SIGNIFICANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILL**

Writing is regarded as the visual representation of speech. But speech has the advantage of the non-verbal signs such as gestures, intonation and many more which lack in writing. However, there are many devices such as italicizing, paragraph headings etc that can be used to compensate for the existence of suprasegmental elements in speech. Writing is often regarded as the most difficult language skill to acquire. It is not included in the everyday use of language unlike speaking or listening skills. The chief end of writing is to select the appropriate structure and vocabulary of the topic and its context to make you regarded as communicative.

The education system places the greatest emphasis on the writing skill than any other language skill, yet this is the skill that needs the most attention even at in the field of Higher Education. The development and mastery of the writing skill therefore cannot have a one step solution but rather a holistic and step by step approach. This begins with the speaking skill. The learners should be able to utter what they want to write, the right choice of words with the order of how the sentences are to be arranged i.e. the learner must first choose the question to be answered and then choose the structure and vocabulary required, develop this and then write it down in the answer sheet. Spelling and grammar mistakes, out of context words, lack of clarity are some of the most common errors that the learners make during their written examination which cost them their marks greatly. It is quite a stressful experience for the learners and a good number of them long to do away with General English papers for this very reason. The teacher through time and patience can remedy this problem. Technology is the best solution to sort this concern.

Illustration: The teacher can make the students watch the film “Children of Heaven” or “The Way Home”. The class can be divided into groups. Each student must work in the assigned group and the whole group or individual student can be asked to do one or more of the following tasks:

- Take a seminar with the aid of PPT on the film
- Write a film review in the form of a blog (the class can start their own blog where each learner is a blogger)
- Apply the film to the poems of Module I such as “For the Dispossessed” and “Kalahandi” and write a critical review
- Analyse the films in the light of one of the prescribed essays of Module I.

All these assignments and questions can be put up on the online discussion board or message board. A prescribed format and deadline should be set for submission of their works which are to be sent as an email to the teacher or posted as blogs. All the assignments can be put up as blogs and at the end of the academic year the best blogger may be selected.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be concluded that with the appropriate use of technology in General English classrooms, the students will be enabled to have a greater degree of control over the delivery of their learning by being able to access numerous variety of resources and materials from the culture in which they live which complement their prescribed syllabus through a holistic understanding of the subject matter.

The tech-assisted classes spontaneously initiate discussion among the students and the use of technology such as e-mails, blogs and many more communication technology provide an environment for interaction and communication outside the classroom as well. General English classes have been a part of the syllabi in almost all Indian universities and the struggles of the teachers handling the classes continue along similar lines and so does the attitude of the students. With the assistance of technology, students and teachers alike are motivated and inspired to fulfill their respective roles with much excitement i.e. this new approach creates an added interest in the course among the students develops an impetus to improve their own knowledge and comprehension. Also, through proper, well-considered planning, technology can blur subject boundaries skillfully and enhance the learner’s experience in the prescribed areas irrespective of the subject background of the learner.

However, it should be remembered that technology-assisted teaching learning pedagogy is an approach which can be adopted in classrooms but can become effective only through carefully thought-out uses and proper integration into the prescribed chapters by the concerned teacher. The traditional text-based teaching learning is quickly losing its relevance and teaching literature today through technology may seem difficult for these English teachers but this pedagogy is the definite answer to the challenges teachers to face in order to involve and motivate their students in their subject.

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# FROM TEXTS TO GRAPHICS

## – EMOTICONS FOR COMMUNICATION

Sarjatha K P

Dr. Premanand M E

*III B A Functional English*  
*Dept. of English*  
*Malabar Christian College*

*Associate Professor*  
*Dept. of English*  
*Malabar Christian College*

### EMOTICON: DEFINED:

“Smileys”, also known as “emoticons” are symbols representing emotions or facial expressions. They help to prevent misunderstandings. An emoticon is a graphical representation either in the form of an image, or made up of text characters of a particular emotion of the writer. Emoticons are often used in messages and emails as an additional comment to the text accompanying it. Very common emoticons used are yawn :-o, sad :- (wink ;- ) among a host of others.

### ORIGIN

Emoticons are said to have originated way back in sixties. It was featured in an article in The Reader’s Digest and the originator is said to be Fahlman. What started as keyboard punctuation marks progressively developed into graphical versions of it. :- ) :- ( Emoticons can be said to be “visual cues formed from ordinary typographical symbols that when read sideways represent feelings or emotions” and the process of communication goes beyond plain speaking, writing and interpretation of words and feelings. “Components such as language and its content, grammar,

expertise and non-verbal cues are also involved. (Rezabek & Cochenour, 1998) Emoticons include nonverbal and verbal modes including gestures, eye, movements, facial expressions, body language etc. Non verbal emoticons include dancing, clapping, mode of dresses, architecture, paintings and sculptors. Emoticons can “*emphasise, contradict, substitute or regulate verbal communication.*” (Wei, 2012)

## EVOLUTION

Hacker’s dictionary codes emoticons as an ASCII glyph while Raymonds (1994) describes it as *an emotional state in email, news or message*. Emoticons are said to be the paralanguage of the Internet. The human brain can process visual elements 60,000 times faster than written texts. This means that the human brain “*decrypts image elements in an instantaneous method while language is decoded in a linear, chronological manner requiring extra time to process* (Parkinson, 2007) The very first yellow smiley, created by HARWEY BALL. was a face that could be used on buttons and cards in order to raise morale. It is noted that he took 10 minutes to create the design, earning a \$45 fee. The smiley gained huge popularity in the following years becoming an international icon by the 70’s and securing a place in pop culture for the coming decades. The growth of the internet and the development of modern computer image formats allowed smileys to move online, in internet culture.

## CURRENT USAGE & CATEGORIES

Emoticons provide emotional information and represent facial expressions about the information that is to be understood or about objects, characters around us. They supplement or complement a verbal situation and provide more punch to the information. However, emoticons can *simply change the connotation of a given discourse* (Amaghlobel, 2012) Emoticons are very useful for setting the tone of your message, it can often be hard to get your message across in online communication. (particularly in more informal conversation) . We can see that the need to be able to distinguish between jokes and serious matters are the driving factors in the creation of the emoticons. With the introduction of richer media in online communication, graphical

emoticons became popular. As animation format became more widely supported, countless animated emoticons and smileys were created and continue to be created today. Smileys and emoticons are frequently used in IM conversations, and most clients support them. Prominent among them are MSN MESSENGER, WINDOWS LIVE MESSENGER, YAHOO MESSENGER, AOL INSTANT MESSENGER, GOOGLE TALK and SKYPE. They are chat clients which provide users with a large set of smileys to use in chats. MSN/WLM and MY SPACE support custom emoticons that can be added by users. Most of these clients feature some emoticons that have been hidden using secret codes and shortcuts.

WhatsApp has made it very easy to transfer text messages, photos videos and audio files from one mobile phone to another. It is even possible to use WhatsApp on computer WhatsApp also provides a large set of emoticons to convey feelings and several other thoughts which would otherwise need several words to express. But many of these WhatsApp symbols are confusing. Most people don't know the meaning of many WhatsApp icons or symbols. While there are some standard ones ( like smile, said, laugh, cry etc); many other symbols seem to have no apparent meaning.

Facebook has even launched a sticker store to provide more emoticons. These symbols are also called Emoji (It is a Japanese language word that means picture letters. Emoji were first invented in Japan and WhatsApp icon set has several items that have a special meaning in the Japanese culture.

Hike messenger is cross-platform instant messaging service for smartphones that uses the Internet for communication. In addition to text messaging, users can send each other stickers, emoticons, images, videos, audios, files, voice messages, contacts and user location. Hike allows users to "nudge", a feature used to ping the receiver in addition the application supports chat teams, graphical stickers and PDF files. Very recently it has launched Hike Direct, a feature that allows users to share messages and files without any kind of data charges within a radius of hundred metres through Wi-Fi direct.

Language is in its third phase of compression. Three centuries ago, we were fed the short'nin' bread of *contraction*; *won't*, *don't*, *I'm*, *you're* made the apostrophe the king of cant, which caused a 19th-century lexicographer to



denounce writers “carrying contraction to such an excess as to make their writings unintelligible to all but the initiated.”

Then came the period of *portmanteau* terms, named after the French suitcase with hinged compartments: *chuckle* and *snort* blended into *chortle*; *breakfast* and *lunch* fused into *brunch*; and, in our time, *broadcast* and the World Wide *Web* morphed into *webcast*

Electronic communication has whisked us into a third phase of compression: the Age of Shortspeak. As we listen and watch replays of multicasts to suit our scheduling convenience, those above-mentioned interminable, boring four-second pauses are edited out. Humanizing *uh, er, ah, um* The acceleration of shortspeak forces us to confront the seamy side of semiotics, which is the study of nonverbal signs and symbols in semantics and syntactics.

Nowhere is this cheerful shortcutting better illustrated than in the meteoric rise of the *emoticon*. Though Merriam-Webster has a 1987 citation by Jim Greenlee using the word to discourage “emotional conversation,” the coinage came to mean “the use of keyboard symbols to draw pictures,” as in Kevin Mackenzie’s 1979 combination — a dash followed by a closing parenthesis, like -), to stand for “tongue in cheek.”

According to Prof. Vyv Evans, a linguist at Bangor University, we are evolving backwards. “As a visual language emoji has already far eclipsed hieroglyphics, its ancient Egyptian precursor which took centuries to develop,” After millennia of painful improvement, from illiteracy to Shakespeare and beyond, humanity is rushing to throw it all away. We’re heading back to ancient Egyptian times, next stop the stone age, with a big yellow smiley grin on our faces. In fact, the Unicode Consortium has announced 38 more of the brainless little icons to be added to the standard set next year. Demand is massive: 72% of 18- to 25-year-olds find it easier to express their feelings in emoji pictures than through the written word. As tends to happen in an age when technology is transforming culture on a daily basis, people relate such news with bland irony or apparent joy. According to many, an emoji is not “progress” by any definition. It is plainly a step back.

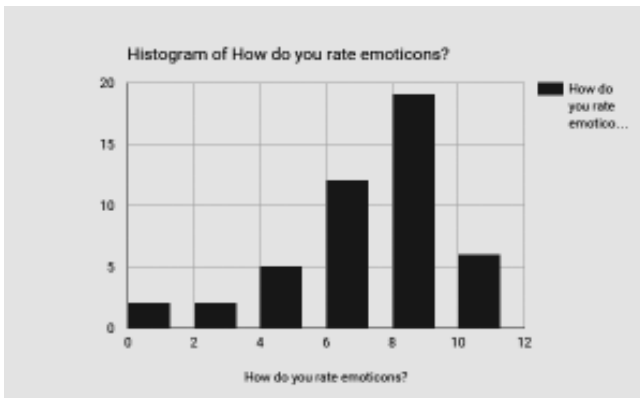
Evans compares Emoji with ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. Well indeed. ancient Egypt was a remarkable civilisation, but it had some drawbacks. The Egyptians created a magnificent but static culture. Hieroglyphs enabled them to write spells but not to develop a more flexible, questioning literary culture: they left that to the Greeks. The Greek alphabet was much more productive than all those lovely Egyptian pictures. That is why there is no ancient Egyptian Iliad or Odyssey. In other words, there are harsh limits on what you can say with pictures. The written word is infinitely more adaptable. That's why Greece rather than Egypt leapt forward and why Shakespeare was more articulate.

## Survey

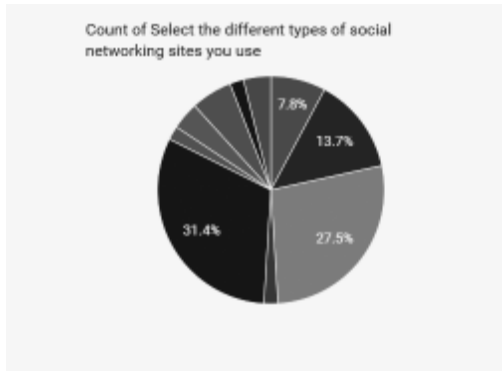
The survey was conducted among 51 respondents, 18-21, studying for their Degree courses at Malabar Christian College, Calicut. The investigation was conducted to study the effects of emoticons

ns in chat language and find out their impact. The researchers sampled the participants to test measures such as user satisfaction, user frustration, conformity. A survey questionnaire was developed and administered to the students. The results were tabulated with bar graph, histogram and pie chart using Google Docs.

## Results & Analysis



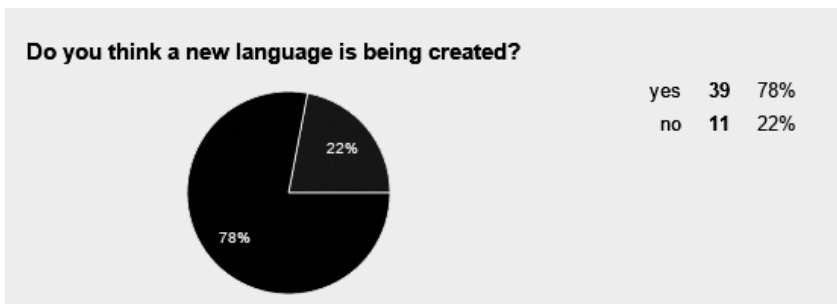
It is found that 76.5% of the youth rated Emoticons above 60%.



Facebook (31.4) was still the major source of chat with WhatsApp (27.5) taking a close second with Hike (13.7) Nimbuzz (7.8) and Instagram following.



An alarming trend was observed among the youth. 52% of the youth chatted for more than three hours while 74% chatted for more than two hours.



Seventy eight percent of the respondents agreed that a new language is being created.

Where this will lead to, only time will tell.

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# “DOES TECHNOLOGY BOOST READING COMPREHENSION OF STUDENTS? A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS OF TRADITIONAL AND SMART CLASSROOMS ”

Rakesh M B

Vidhya Cherukad

*Asst. Professor,  
Dept. of English,  
Dayapuram Arts & Science  
college, Kozhikode.*

*Asst. Professor,  
Dept. of English,  
Dayapuram Arts & Science  
college, Kozhikode.*

## Introduction

English language, one of the most advanced languages in the world, with the widest circulation, has emerged as the most influential language in the modern world. English is used as a medium of communication in diverse fields, e g., tourism, trade and technology, research and innovation. In education, English occupies a really significant position all over the world. It is a medium of instruction in the classroom and a medium of expression in the examination. It has been broadly realized that there is no alternative means of communication that can replace English in the present context.

Language instruction comprises of LSRW subsequently. The main reason for isolating these skills and discussing them separately is to highlight their importance and to impress upon the teachers to place emphasis on their teaching and deal with them in a balanced way. Many people think of reading as a skill that is taught once and for all

in the few years of school. In this view, the credit / blame for students' reading ability goes to primary grade teachers and upper elementary and secondary school teachers at each grade level, need teach only new vocabulary and concepts relevant to new content. Seen this way, reading is a simple process: readers decode each word in a text and then automatically comprehend the meaning of the words, as they do with their everyday spoken language. This is not our understanding of reading. Reading is a complex process. This consists of elements such as the child's home culture, their previous experiences of reading and being able to read to their expectations that reading should carry meaning, their motivation, their view of themselves as a reader, the purpose for reading the text, the cultural value placed on reading and the reading environments the reader experiences. While the purpose of this study is to concentrate on looking closely at the development of comprehension skills, this broader context and its influences should be borne in mind.

From an educational point of view, this means that practitioners and teachers must encourage the development of oral language skills in order to safeguard children's reading comprehension. They also need to encourage the development of specific strategies for reading comprehension and most importantly, they need to encourage children to practice their developing reading skills. Children need frequent opportunities to read during shared, guided and independent reading sessions. Reading comprehension is a highly interactive process; it draws on general knowledge of vocabulary as well as on our experience of the world. This in turn enables us to increase our knowledge in these areas. Reading is considered one of the most significant skills which language learners obtain, particularly as it helps to build vocabulary and leads to life-long learning and improvement in first and second language skills. "The ability to read is acknowledged to be the most stable and durable of the second language modalities" (Carrell)

### **Review of Related Literature**

Many articles were reviewed for this research study. Some of the studies reviewed are listed below.

Shermila Joycillin(1999) conducted a study on "A Study of Skills of Reading Comprehension in English Developed by Students of standard IX in the Schools in Tuticorin District" . She states that the findings warrants a probe into the skills of reading comprehension developed by pupils at the secondary level in relation to certain psychological factors such as reading readiness, reading attitude and cognitive style.

Senechal Monique and LeFre Jo-Anne (2002) studied "Parental Involvement in the Development of Children's Reading Skill: A Five Year Longitudinal Study. The findings showed that children's exposure to books was related to the development of vocabulary and listening comprehension skills and that these language skills were directly related to children's reading in Grade 3. In contrast, parent involvement in teaching children about reading and writing words was related to the development of early literacy skills.

Ali S (2005) conducted a study on "ESL College Students' Beliefs and Attitude about Reading to Write in an Introductory Composition Course: A Qualitative Study ". The findings indicated that the students engaged in reading-writing activities for the first time. The findings revealed that the students have positive attitudes toward reading to write. The findings also revealed that explicit instruction of rhetorical structures has helped them improve their writing competence.

Prapinwong Malinee (2008) studied Constructivist Language Learning Through Web Quests in the EFL Context: An Exploratory Study". The results of the learning outcomes showed that the learners made a statistically significant gain in the vocabulary tests in both units and the type of tasks influenced different learning outcomes. The teacher expressed the positive aspects and challenges concerning the use of web quests regarding the underlying principles and methods embedded in the tool as well as the constraints of the curriculum and assessment.

Roundy R Angela & Roundy T Philip (2009) studied "The Effect of Repeated Reading on Student Fluency: Does Practice Always Make Perfect?" The findings revealed that, on average, the repeated reading strategies increased students' fluency, words per minute (wpm) reading score, reading oriented self-esteem and confidence.

### **Need of the Study**

Out of the four fundamental skills of English language—listening, speaking, reading and writing— reading is considered an important skill in understanding the language. Usually, it is thought that reading skill does not need anything and the learner has to learn on his own. Rather, the reality is, reading is the base of other other skills and it need utmost proper guidance. Reading skill should be guided by the teacher, parents at home so that it helps in better development of the skill among learners. Today, some schools are using smart boards ,where the learner has direct experience with the gadgets and help the learner to develop the skill. The purpose of this study is to find out whether there is a difference between students acquisition of reading skill through smart boards in comparison to the schools which are still following the method of learning with the guidance of the teacher. The purpose is to see whether the teacher is more effective and is important in the acquisition of reading skill or does only technology is sufficient and the teacher can remain passive.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study is

# To study and compare between students' reading comprehension in traditional classrooms and smart classrooms

#### **Hypotheses of the Study**

# There does not exist any difference between reading comprehension of boys of traditional classrooms and smart classrooms.

# There does not exist any difference between reading comprehension of girls of traditional classrooms and smart classrooms.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive survey method is used in the present study. The data is collected by administering 'Reading Comprehension Test' by Dr. Pramila Ahuja & Dr. G.C. Ahuja.



**Sample**

The sample consists of 100 students from class VIII, from two schools of Calicut district. Random sampling is used to collect data for the present study.

**Tool Used**

Reading Comprehension Test by Dr. Pramila Ahuja & Dr. G.C. Ahuja was administered.

**Analysis**

**Table I**

**Means and SD of the scores of boys learning through traditional and smart classrooms**

Boys	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Traditional Classroom	25	27.96	11.6	48	0.96 NS
Smart classroom	25	28.12	11.3		

From Table I, it can be noticed that calculated 't' value is less than the tabulated value; thus 't' is not signified at 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and it can be stated that there does not exist any difference between reading comprehension of boys of traditional classroom and boys of smart classroom.

**Table 2**

**Means and SD of the scores of girls learning through traditional and smart classrooms**

Girls	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Traditional Classroom	25	23.8	9.8	48	1.58 NS
Smart classroom	25	28.5	11		

From Table 2, it can be noticed that calculated 't' value is less than the tabulated value; thus 't' is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and it can be stated that there does not exist any difference between reading comprehension of girls of traditional classroom and girls of smart classroom.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

The findings show that there is no difference in acquisition of reading comprehension among girls and boys learning through smart classroom. This may be due to the fact that teacher plays a vital role in learners' acquisition of reading comprehension. Other factors such as home environment also affect this aspect. If the teacher scaffolds properly, then it will automatically lead to good understanding of the skill. On the other hand, if the teacher is not doing the job of a facilitator, then even with learning through any other means, however effective they are, will not bring fruitful results. Therefore, though smart classrooms help in better understanding of the concept, it needs the teacher to be active with it so that it brings best results in learning.

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# ANIMATED EDUCATION: SCOPE AND RELEVANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

**Fasmina Sherin T**

**A**s Neil Gaiman, the contemporary British novelist has rightly pointed out, “a book is a dream that you hold in your hands.” Children of the past decades lived with those dreams in their hands and hearts that made their life vivid with imagination. Mothers were the best story tellers who could make her child’s mind wander in the distant fairy lands and lonely woods alike. The kids were also eager to grab the storybooks and the new worlds of fantasies were thus unbarred before them.

Gone are those days of fables and fairytales. Time has passed that caused an awful lot of changes in the post millennial world. It has become too hard to find a child with a book in his or her hands in this technologically affluent world. Fortunately or unfortunately, they have found better dreams before their eyes. Children of the present era are born into the digital world and it seems like they are completely engaged with the visual or virtual friends whom they meet over there. Thus, a mere lamentation of the past glory would definitely prove futile since past can never be brought back. It is time for us to change ourselves according to the pace of the time. It has become

*3<sup>rd</sup> Semester M.A English*

*KAFM Unity Women's  
College, Manjeri*

*fasmina.minoos027@gmail.com*

impossible to make the children realize the worth of books when their eyes are literally glued to the television screens.

Educational strategies are always meant to mould and develop the students by incorporating easier methods to grasp the prescribed contents of the academic schedule. It is quite imprudent and utter foolishness to stick on to the age old practices of teaching with so many changes happening in the world outside. Technology is always used as an effective aid in the academic realm since India's technological advancement has made it possible for televisions and computers to reach the masses at affordable prices. The widespread popularity of the smart classrooms and power point presentations has even reached the doors of the remote village schools. Though such strategies are efficiently used in the higher educational scenario, it is a fact that very little developments are actually made in the field of child education. It is to this point that I would like to draw the attention in this paper.

The psychology of younger children has always perplexed the scholars and psychologists alike since it is highly difficult to decipher the unfathomable depths of a child's mind. Children are always curious to learn and observe things that happen around. At the same time, they are quite restless too. The basic instinct of any child is to play around and to seek pleasure. Consequently, it is truly a Herculean task to grab the attention of kids for the educational purposes. Animated films being such a lively media have always been appealing to little children. The children of today are best described by Kurup and Amir (2010), "their world has moved beyond their neighbourhood, school and childhood friends to encompass a 500-channel television universe, the global gaming village, the endless internet" ( Khanna and Gupta 304). These digital natives begin to pay constant attention to the television screens as early as six months of age. Their constant companions are the characters they meet in the POGO, CNN and such other channels until they are sent to the schools at the age of five. Considering this situation, it is not surprising to see that these children are reluctant to learn things written in the blackboards and books. Given that their world has become more colourful and bright with cartoons and animated films, it is high time for the parents and teachers to adapt themselves to the world of these 'smart' kids.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the television occupying a major space in the Indian households. Cartoon network started operating in India in 1995 as a dual channel – Cartoon Network and Turner Classic Movies. By 2001, Cartoon Network India became a 24-hour channel. Disney India started operations in 2004. POGO, Chutti TV and Hungama TV are some of the other popular cartoon channels. The all time favourites ‘Tom and Jerry’ and ‘Popeye’ are still quite popular. Today, children are hooked to cartoons like *Dora the Explorer*, *Ben Ten*, *Chotta Bheem*, *Doraemon* etc. It is quite surprising to see that these channels and cartoons, though often criticized, play a major role in developing the cognitive skills of the toddlers. It has been observed that their vocabulary is enriched due to repeated viewing of cartoons on televisions or on computers with the aid of DVDs and CD ROMs. According to a report titled ‘The Effects of Cartoon Characters as Motivators of Preschool Disadvantaged Children’, cartoon characters stimulate interpersonal skills, learning and social growth. Children associate with the characters more readily than adults in many cases and tend to retain the lessons imparted more easily. If a cartoon character conveys an educational or moral lesson, then it can help speed up the learning process in children.

Children pick up languages in a miraculous manner without any formal instructions of any kind. Jean Piaget, the Swiss developmental psychologist has described the child as an active learner. He has further explained that children learn through experience and make mistakes and solve problems. Piaget proposed that learning should be whole by helping students understand how meaning is constructed. According to him, the adult’s role in helping the child learn is to provide appropriate materials that the child can interact with and used to construct. In his theory on ‘cognitive development’, Piaget has actually delineated the role of adults in the child developmental process to its periphery. He believed that the child has the innate ability to perceive things on its own and that the adults should back off themselves by providing room for the child to grow. On the contrary, Lev Vygotsky, a Russian theorist of the Soviet era has claimed that timely and proper intervention by the adults can help children learn new tasks. His argument was primarily focused on the role of culture in determining the

child's pattern of development, thus making it clear that development moves from the social level to that of the individual by providing ample space for the adult cum skilled 'master' to channelize the child's ability in the proper direction. These slightly conflicting ideas, however, makes it clear that the tremendous abilities that are vested in children cannot be nurtured to its fullest in the traditional classroom setups. With due reverence to both the scholars, let us not try to control and dictate them nor let them loose completely. This moderate attitude in the meaning making process and its cognition can be effectively done with the assistance of visual media in the modern classrooms where a teacher can be better defined as the "facilitator".

A child constantly listens and internalizes things that he or she hears. This is the reason why no child needs any special training to learn the mother tongue. If similar atmosphere is provided to learn other languages, preferably English, a child is likely to be efficient in the foreign language with much ease. Jytha-Laide's study (1994) on a six-year-old Finnish girl named Laura shows that animated films enable little children pick up vocabulary in a second language as well. Laide says:

"Laura was able to use English creatively and that her skills in the areas of speaking and understanding spoken English were outstanding. She seemed to have been able to acquire the English grammar and an almost native like pronunciation of English, mastering many sounds that are often problematic for Finnish learners of English. The results of the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) indicated clearly that she could be placed in the fifth, i.e. the highest level of proficiency" (Khanna and Gupta 306).

The slow speech and the simple and complete sentences used in the animated films encourage children to learn new words by associating the picture and sound.

Moreover, cartoons usually present stories and concepts in a pleasant tone that lightens and brightens up its viewers. There is little doubt that humour, both in pictorial and verbal forms, is useful as a device for gaining and maintaining attention and interest. The introduction of a concept followed by

a humorous example, and then an explanation of the concept will definitely help the students to understand and remember the newly introduced concept. It has been determined that teaching students with an extremely serious attitude generally develops tension and fear in the student's mind. This is where animated education becomes relevant as it is child friendly and thus creating a positive learning environment. It is noticed that children enjoy learning things when presented in the form of cartoons. The inherent humour that exists in cartoons will help the learners to feel at ease and to release the tiresome academic burden which is resulted of the traditional modes of teaching. Modern educational theory highlights the necessity of activity oriented education where even the passive students are stimulated to think and to learn. The effective use of humour and comic strips serves this purpose too.

However there are innumerable difficulties in using animated films as an aid to teaching. The primary barrier would be regarding the selection and availability of appropriate cartoons. If the targeted audiences are the students above eight years, the comic strips that are used should be based on the topics concerned as the purpose is not to entertain but to make them learn things in an easier manner. The skilled students themselves can draw caricatures and sequential art narratives which expands and nourishes the student's potential in multiple levels. Teachers can also download suitable cartoons from various cartoon resources from internet like *Cagle Cartoons*, *Andertoons*, *ABCTooner* and so on. But, when it comes to the children of the pre primary or even Pre Schoolchildren, the selection is to be done with utmost care since most of the cartoons are proved to have a negative impact on children. It is found that most of the cartoons are inherently violent or aggressive that conveys the wrong message into the younger brains. The smashing and the rustling nature of the character easily affects the mental temperament of the children who are unaware that the real world contains far more consequences than what a TV show depicts. Thus, adult supervision and parental monitoring is required to guide the children in the right path. Since children instantly identifies themselves with the cartoon characters, parents or caretakers should be cautious to make sure that the characters can be positive role models that encourage good moral behavior.

The animated films for very young children should have a simple story line which incorporates words of everyday use. The new words should be repeated throughout so that the child can comprehend things clearly by the end of the program. Cartoon viewing should also be supplemented with other activities that may help them to think and act accordingly. Young children can be asked to narrate what they have just viewed after watching the animated films. Children above the age of four can be asked to enact the characters that they have seen. Simple riddles and puzzles can also be given based on the words that they have come across in the cartoons which may help them to understand the meanings associated with each word.

Other than regular cartoons, there are several educational CDs for young learners that have cartoon characters teaching alphabets, numbers, colours and English words for everyday things. Children would definitely enjoy the presence of their animated 'teacher' than a strict teacher who shouts at them! Programmes like Playhouse Disney, Disney's clubhouse and BBC's C Bee Bie's have proved helpful to serve the purpose of infotainment. The grave atmosphere of the classrooms can thus be altered with the proper use of cartoons that suits to the interests of the fun loving young children. This also helps to create a rapport between the students and the teachers so that one day, students may begin to love their teachers as much as they do love Disney!

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