



## ICT ON TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Muh. Takdir<sup>1</sup>

English Education Study Program, STKIP Muhammadiyah Bogor

Email: [takdirbalebo@gmail.com](mailto:takdirbalebo@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

A gale of change is blowing in the pedagogy of English Language Teaching (ELT) ICT has initiated new possibilities into classroom. The role of the teacher, the nature and the context of learning, as well as the function and relative importance of course content have all been challenged and redefined.

This research paper aims at sharing practical experiments with ICT in teaching English language and literature. It deals with the pragmatic aspects of using ICT with the student community of business management and humanities. The extensive use of web 2.0 components, internet, blogs, e-groups, SMSs, emails. Socializing portals, e-dictionaries, e-encyclopedia, power point presentation, webcasting, and audio-video, as teaching tools have been made in the classroom. The student community was motivated to make use of cyber cafes and GPRS mobiles to interact with the teacher. The paper is divided in two parts. In the first part of the paper deals with the experiments carried out to develop Business English skills. The second part is dedicated in teaching literature, while the third part deals with general inferences of these experiments, its limitations and opportunities.

**Keywords:** ICT, ELT, English Language, Literature in English, Experiment, Teaching through Technology.

## INTRODUCTION

We live in an era on information explosion. Once there was famine of information, today we are drowned in the deluge of information. A gale of change is blowing in the pedagogy of Teaching English Language and Literature (TELL). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a catalyst agent. ICT has initiated new possibilities into the classroom. The marriage between education and internet technology has made a deep impact on perspectives about teaching and learning. Technology today, has revolutionized in such a way that the methodology use by educators to teach a foreign or secondary language has changed. In fact, the relationships between teachers and students have undergone a phenomenal change (Barad, 2009). The role of the teacher, the nature and context of learning, as well as the function and relative importance of course content have all been challenged and redefined. Therefore, technophobic teachers have no place in this new world order. Technology or multimedia is not a teaching method or theory, but rather it is a tool that aids educators by improving access to different types of media already in use.

Technology is used to stimulate real-life situations and helps learners to have control over the learning process (O'Leary, 1998). Therefore, there must be a complementary relationship between SLA research and CALL practice to create a successful language learning environment (Carol, 1996). Krashen (2007) claims that using computers for free voluntary surfing will encourage students to wander through the internet and read what interests them. Krashen also claims that it will result in higher levels of literacy. Computer-assisted language learning provides new opportunities for learners to engage in active communication that facilitates the development of second language competence (Peterson, 2005). Computer-Enhanced Language Learning will enable learners to pool their knowledge in effective ways and enhance peer correction and language repair work. Computers enable learners to work at their own pace (Hoven, 1999). This research paper aims at sharing practical experiments with ICT in Teaching English Language and Literature. The paper is for the community of Business Management and Humanities.

The extensive use of web 2.0. components, internet, blogs, e-groups, SMSs, emails, socializing portals, e-dictionaries, e-encyclopedia, power point presentation, webcasting, and audio-video were experimented with inside the classroom as teaching tools. The student community was motivated to make use of cyber cafes and GPRS mobiles to interact with the teacher. The research paper deals with very pertinent questions: (1) How far is ICT useful to student community?; (2) What is the role of ICT in teaching English Language and Literature?; (3) What kind of methods can be used to overcome students' problem?; and (4) Can it empower student community? Can it improve their proficiency of learning?

To begin with, the students should be able to comprehend fully what has been taught to him/her and then should be able to reproduce it, not only in exam

but in day to day life also. If the students fail to do so, he is neither empowered nor has his proficiency level improved. The experiments shared in this paper have successfully worked with the student community. What I have not attempted in this paper is the relationship between theory and application. Michael Levy (1997) writes in *Computer-Assisted Language Learning* that he is motivated by a desire to better understand the relationship between theory and application; however the approach taken in paper is more application based than theorizing.

First and foremost, let us review English teaching in the class of commerce and business management. Here, ICT is of great use. As compared to the class of literature, language classes of commerce and management students are more receptive and responsive in using technology. This receptivity of commerce & management students helps the teacher to go beyond horizons in experimenting innovative practices in the classroom. I implemented some innovativeness in teaching text (novel), share market, questionnaire, report writing, letters to editors, business letters and more through web resources, web portals, online surveys, emails and SMSs.

The teachers of English in colleges other than those teaching literatures in English are like fish out of water. These teachers are stuffed with literary theories as they pursue careers in commerce or science or engineering colleges, they may feel like aliens on the earth. Similar were my feelings when I joined commerce and BBA college in 1996. Thanks to technology that it saved me from being alienated or feeling like a fish out of water. Slowly and steadily within three years of my service, I developed some innovative methods to teach business English as well as literary text to management/business students.

### **Experiment 1**

It was Sherlock Holmes' "The Hound of the Baskervilles" that text haunted students as well as teachers of Saurashtra University. But in my class, we enjoyed it. While teaching Sherlock Holmes' "The Hound of the Baskervilles", I prepared an OHP transparency of the pencil sketches published during its first publication in a magazine from that time. At that time, I did not have laptop or LCD projector to make it more effective. However, I used Google image search to aid the presentation. I found innumerable sketches that depicted various scenes of the novel. The text was very difficult. The language was relatively tough, thereby making it difficult for commerce students to understand. The proof of its difficulty lies in the fact that Saurashtra University removed it from its syllabus the very next year because of several complaints received from its teachers. If my students and I enjoyed this text, it was only because of the graphics provided in the novel. Internet helped me in getting these sketches. Later on we viewed the movie *The Hound of the Baskerville* (Lanfield, 1939) in the classroom. Movies always seem to help in remembering things which are difficult to envision otherwise. It was not easy to retrieve an English-based movie in the small town

where I taught. Web portals like Youtube.com and video.google.com helped me a lot. The effect was that most of my students fared well in the textual questions in examination, whereas, the students of other colleges complained that the paper was difficult.

### **Method**

Use of OHP projector with printed transparencies of sketched of images related to important scene from the novel.

CD/DVD player with TV for viewing movie downloaded from web portals.

### **Experiment 2**

Secondly, it was questionnaire and report writing. These are purely commercial and management topics. Guide books have several stereotyped examples. Neither was I happy teaching it nor were my students doing well. I resorted to websites. Luckily, I found [cross-tabsurveys.com](http://cross-tabsurveys.com) and [monkeygizmo.com](http://monkeygizmo.com) for the latest questionnaire. [Surveygizmo.co](http://Surveygizmo.co) & moodle survey were used for report writing. I registered my email id with [cross-tabsurveys.com](http://cross-tabsurveys.com). Regularly they me the latest questionnaire to survey consumer satisfaction in the field of mobiles, telecom service providers, DTH, television soap operas, socio-economic condition of people working in various fields. I took these examples in the classroom. As they all were current topics, it interested students more than those given in books. The latest examples in books are also at least a year old, whereas examples from the internet were as live as something happening at-the-moment, because things are changing very fast. As I saw that students were very much interested in such questionnaires, I asked them to register with the same website. All of us received new questionnaires for online surveys. We participated in the survey collectively and then prepared a report of the results. Report writing is taught as an independent topic. If it is associated with the questionnaire and the outcome of the survey is written as a report, it makes it a lot easier to understand both of these topics.

As I saw the most of the students have started going to cyber cafe and are working sincerely, I created an e-Group for all of the students. I used Yahoo Groups to organize my e-Group. Through this group we circulated reports made on the basis of the questionnaires. I received good responses and emails started flowing in good numbers. On several occasions, I chatted with students to guide them. The discussions become livelier in the classroom. Students discussed emails received by one another. I concluded that students had acquired capabilities to prepare rather good questionnaires and reports. Thus, online questionnaires and reports shared through e-groups have helped me teach these topics effectively. The results were amazing. Their language use displayed remarkable improvement. Previously, they had made mistakes in writing questions. However, that has now changed. One of the most common mistakes made was the use of verbs before subjects in interrogative sentences. This placement of verbs, before subject was,

and is, problematic because of the L1 effect. In the “Gujarati” language, the subject is followed by verb, even in interrogative sentences. While drafting the report, the students seemed to shift from using simple past tense to present continuous tense. Report writing through emails on discussion forums within the groups made them conscious of using the correct form of tense. Thus they acquired skills in writing questions and reports in simple past tense. The students’ overall performance improved, which encouraged me to try new things.

### **Method**

Synchronous and asynchronous mode with help of emails, yahoo e-groups and chat applets (Yahoo Messenger, Skype and Google Talk)

### **Experiment 3**

Thirdly, the most difficult part of commercial English is the Share Market Report. The situation was that many students knew more about share marketing than me. It is always humbling to teach those who know better than you. The first thing I did was to invest hard cash in the share market, then I started reading business magazines and newspapers. But still the share market played hide and seek with me. I found that I confused myself and my students in the share market class. Students were none too pleased. My reading and investment gave me good knowledge of the share market, but still I was not able to deliver well. My way of judging my teaching was by reading the faces of my students at the end of each class. If there was a mark of satisfaction, I would conclude that I had done well. In the share marketing class, I missed this satisfaction on the faces of the students. I restored to the internet. Internet, like Alladin’s Gin, was ready to help me. I found websites like [www.moneycontrol.com](http://www.moneycontrol.com) and [www.Moneybhai.com](http://www.Moneybhai.com) these websites gave me an idea to play the game of portfolio management and this the idea to teach share marketing.

Moneybhai.com is a free online virtual stock market trading game portal owned and operated by moneycontrol.com, which is also run by TV 18 group. This website gave very good services free of cost. Every day it sent emails showing the status of portfolios. All the students received emails with their standing in the market. I asked students to register with this website and start playing the portfolio management game online. We played this game for eight weeks and then the winner was awarded a prize.

They had to forward these emails to me. I organized their emails and made tables of their daily profit and loss. This was discussed in the classroom. I got such magnificent success with this experiment that even today some of the students have continued playing game and they keep notifying me of their progress. Better than that, some of them made their career in it by joining companies like indiabulls, sharekhan, and stock holding. These students write in their emails that it was this online game that helped them generate interest in share marketing and secure a job in a similar field, but rather, I am satisfied with the

way technology has clicked in the classroom and provided a space real learning to take place. They acquired careers in this field because they were well versed in business English. This soft-skill helped them score well in BULATS ([www.bulats.org](http://www.bulats.org)). Thus, one of the hardest nuts to crack, the Goliath of business English – share market report – was conquered with the help of knight called ICT.

### **Method**

Asynchronous by e-groups and synchronous through chat applet.

### **Experiment 4 and 5**

Other topics, such as letters to editors, modern forms of communication, and advertisement, were also taught and learned effectively through ICT. For instance, while teaching modern forms of communication, I used to make live demos of sending and receiving emails from the classroom. Our e-groups helped a lot in order to better understand this topic. Instead of writing artificial letters on imaginary topics, we experimented with writing “real time letters”. This was not done through hard copy letters, but email was used as a medium to send business letters. I asked students to bring their “actual inquiries” or complaints. The students had several inquiries to be made to companies regarding their products and several complaints regarding their services. We discussed these topics in the class. More often the grievances were related to after-sales services in electronic items and mobile phone billings.

At the end of the day, emails were drafted collectively and sent from the classroom with the help of the GPRS internet connection. When we received a reply from companies, we discussed those emailed letters in the class. The companies normally set their emails to auto-reply. Most of the auto-replies were drafted in three small paragraphs with an ideal beginning, middle and end. It helped me a lot in teaching not only the structure of a business letter, but also the type of language used in business letters. The use of courteousness in tone and the typical vocabulary of business letters were better learned through this method. This practice helped students to acquire business letter writing skills. There is always a difference in letters printed in books and letters that are actually written in a business environment. We were able to understand this difference which helped students to learn this skill far better than before.

To teach “letters to the editors”, I adopted an innovativeness in sending real SMS/emails to the editor of The Times of India news daily. First, we discussed some topics of common interest which were daily news items. Then, the views of the students were summarized. Students discussed in groups and the group leader presented the “gist” of their discussion. The main points of the discussions were sent through SMS/email directly from the classroom. When our letters to the editor were published in the newspaper, it was a oment of great satisfaction. And it happened several times. We furthered this practice in discussing business

magazines and wrote to them as well. The entire practice interested students because it was sent through SMS and email. If I would have told them to write a letter and send it through the post offices (snail mail), it would have not generated the same interest, and it would take weeks to get it printed in a newspaper/magazine. This practice encouraged many of students to SMS their views to news channels, newspapers and magazines. When they were printed, we celebrated it with a live discussion about it.

The best result I received through this practice was the fact that some of the students are freelance journalists with leading newspapers and news channels. They give credit to this method of learning language for journalism for getting job in the field of journalism. While experimenting such diverse things, I did not realize that I was unconsciously teaching ESP (English for Specific Purpose) to the students. By and large, they learned English for journalism, English for Business letter, English for SMSs, English for Literature, etc.

### **Method**

MS Office Word for editing, encarta e-dictionary and thesaurus for drafting SMS and Email, SMS test and Email to the editors of newspapers and magazines.

ICT has helped a lot in improving teaching skills. But that is not as important as the fact that it has helped students improve their proficiency in learning literary text, questionnaire, report writing, letters to editors, emailing, SMSing and share market reporting. As an end result, they felt empowered in business English. Due to lack of reliable testing tools, it is difficult to measure how far these experiments have helped students to improve their business English skills. However from their placement and progress we may infer that these web 2.0 tools have helped them to improve their language proficiency.

### **Inference**

Let me lead you to the conclusion after giving my inference on these experiments. The questions may come to mind; what are the benefits of all these experiments?

Well, there is a limit to everyone's memory. No one can remember all the information in the world. With such e-resources and the internet very handy in the classroom, I, as a teacher of language and literature feel confident. As my memory is not over-burdened with facts and figures, I am mentally free to give more time for discussion and explanation. I feel that ICT has improved my proficiency in explaining subtle mysteries of literature. As a result, my students are also empowered to understand language and literature in a better way than they used to do in traditional lecture method. I am not saying that traditional lecture method is out of date and it should be replaced, but the outreach in that method is limited to

a few students. To believe that all the students are physically sitting before us and enjoying our oratory and are “listening” in real sense is nothing but an idiot’s idea. LCD projection aids to their better sensory perception.

They are listening, they are reading and ther also seeing the material. It is well known to one and all that there are various kinds of learners, auditory, visual and kinesthetic. Teaching with the help of ICT tools helps address various needs of the learners. An individual cannot be divided in the water tight compartments of these learning styles. In an individual there is a mingling of all these types of learners. Some part of oneself is visual; the other is auditory and kinesthetic. When a teacher uses ICT tools in the classroom, it helps a lot as three senses work together to increase student’s proficiency.

This leads to student’s expression power, as they themselves have seen and listened to poems, pictures, graphics, text etc. They can express themselves quite well in examination. In traditional lecture method only one sensory perception – listening – is functioning. At the same time we can concentrate more on the number of students on the point of discussion. Psychologically, speaking it has had a better impact to empower and improve their proficiency level. Last but not the least, these experiments led us towards ATL, deriving a term form ATM - any time money, any time learning. The students will be freed from the shackles and learn things of their interest, any time and rom anywhere. They may be travelling and listening to mp3 recordings and still participate in this type of learning. If they are ill or because of social preoccupations are not able to attend classes, there is no need to worry because they can access the website and catch up with the missed class. The true spirit of democracy lies in freedom. These experiments lead towards a democratic freedom in teaching and learning.

I will conclude with a short review on the threats in this ICT enabled teaching-learning system. First and foremost, the teacher should not be technophobic. He/she should be well versed in the art of using techno-gadgets, internet, e-resources, etc. A teacher who is adamant “not to change” is one of the biggest hurdles in this type of system. Secondly, the place where he works should have proper infrastructure. The world still has such places where a constant supply of electronic power is a dream. Even in the most advanced part of the world, hi-speed internet connectivity is not possible. Third, students’ eagerness and willingness to be a part of this system; if they are ready to learn a little bit of internet surfing and emailing, it can come as an added advantage to the success of an ICT enabled teaching system. The students therefore should be more adaptive and responsive to this method. Lastly, ICT can never replace a teacher. A man is better teacher than a machine. Neither text nor technology can replace a teacher. A good teacher will always be good, whether he uses ICT or not. But if he uses it, it could improve the proficiency level of his students and empower them with better understanding of language and literature.

As always, there are limitations to these experiments. What worked successfully in my environment may not work with an equal success rate in another environment. It is possible that several teachers and researchers have conducted such experiments. Their results may vary but one should not stop experimenting. Though there is the danger of repeating the same experiments time and again, henceforth, to avoid repetition, bibliographic records of such experiments should be maintained. We should keep in mind what Michael Levy (1997) said by quoting R.W. Last in *Computer-Assisted Language Learning* "A sense of whole is imperative... practitioners and researchers of CALL have not really assimilated the work that has been done." To assimilate the work that has been done, one has to experiment keeping the following findings of Liu Min, Moore Zena, Graham Leah and Lee Shinwoong (2002) in view, they have done a path breaking study: *A Look at the Research on Computer-Based Technology Use in Second Language Learning: Review of Literature from 1990-2000*, wherein they examined research articles published in the decade – 1999 to 2000. Their findings are equally true for my experiments. Thus, I end my paper with the findings of Lie et al (2002): Research needs to have a solid foundation in theories.

Software needs to be based upon relevant pedagogical and design principles for them to be effective; studies need to use well-established and reliable measures; research focus should go beyond anxiety, attitudes, vocabulary acquisition, language production; more research needs to be conducted in the less explored skills areas such as speaking, listening and culture.

## REFERENCES

- Hoven, D. 1999. A Model for Reading and Viewing Comprehension in Multimedia Environments. *Language Learning and Technology* 3 (1), 88-103
- Kim, I. 2005. *Teaching English Cross-Communication Styles Through Internet-Based Instruction*. *PacCall Journal* 1 (1), 165-181.
- Krashen, S. 2004. *Applying the Comprehension Hypothesis: Some Suggestions*. Presented at *Asia Call Online Journal* (ISSN 1936-9859) Vol.4. No. 1 October.
- Michael, Levy. 1997. *Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Context and Conceptualization*. New York: Oxford.
- O'Leary, M. 1998. *Review of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning*. *Language Learning and Technology* 1 (2), 20-22
- Peterson, M. 2005. *Learning Interaction in an Avatar-Based Virtual Environment: A Preliminary Study*. *PacCALL Journal* 1 (1), 29-40.