Rebuilding the ELT Classrooms for Z Generation Students

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Abstract

The common problem with the present day language teachers is that the method of teaching remains static. In the recent years, innovative teaching – learning techniques and tools have thronged in. Various programmable instructions have been heralded in the field of education. Computer laboratories have been set-up and Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) projectors are being used for effective teaching-learning processes. The question is whether and to what extent the teachers are making use of the available facilities.

Keywords

Communication; Language Learning Techniques; Teaching Materials.

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1. Introduction

The use of audio devices, touch screens (i.e. touching the screen for input rather than using the keyboard), sound generators, speech synthesis, simulation and linking the microcomputer to other systems (telesoftware) will make Computer Assisted Language Learning more exciting and individualized. We have to learn how to adapt our knowledge of the hardware to the needs of the learner. One way of making exercises even more individual or user – specific is to use more computer generated materials. In programs, which instruct the computer to generate adequate questions on the basis of interaction with the user, there is also a chance of making the user more active and creative.

2. Classroom Techniques with Audio/Visual Elements

2.1 Story in the Classroom

Use of stories and contexts that students have experienced with their L1 could help the young learners. Teachers could take a favorite story in the L1 and translate it into English for students. They could even teach the language based on situations that are found in the native country, that are unfamiliar to students. Certainly one goal of foreign language instruction is to expose students to new languages and new cultures in order to prepare them to become global citizens in the future. However, teachers should not be afraid to use familiar contexts in students' L1 in the L2 classroom.

2.2 Drama in the Class Room

Using dramatic activities as an instructional tool in the language classroom is highly interesting. Drama is an effective medium for literacy development. First, students' development is affected through drama. Drama creates motivation for students to participate in reading instruction. Dramatization leads students to develop symbolic representation. New vocabularies presented in the context provide students with opportunities to acquire the meanings visually, aurally, and kinesthetically. Drama helps

students acquire the knowledge of word order, phrasing, and punctuation that contribute to the meaning of a written sentence. Teachers can use drama as an assessment tool, since it provides immediate feedback about students' understanding of new reading materials.

2.3 Slides/OHP in the Class Room

Filmstrips provide the best material for language conversation. We should choose slides as more flexible than filmstrips, accompanied by recordings, as in this way we could achieve both the visual and the auditory impact. Photographs can be used instead of drawings. Photographs are more suited for the purpose of conveying a realistic impression of the topically connected episodes that form the text of our recordings.

2.4 PowerPoint Presentations

PowerPoint is a high – powered, user-friendly software tool used for presenting information in a dynamic slide show format. PowerPoint can create quick interactive classroom aids in the form of slide-show presentations. These classrooms can be both virtual and traditional. PowerPoint content, can be easily exchanged, edited and evolved to enliven a collaborative environment.

It is found that more than 68% of the higher secondary school and college teachers lack the fundamental working knowledge of computers. Among the remaining 32% of teachers, 12% of teachers are fluent in utilizing the computers in preparing and projecting the PowerPoint presentations and these teachers further utilize the system in preparing self-learning materials using Internet; 20% of the teachers possess good skills in utilizing the computers but complain that the school and administrative authorities do not provide the facilities to them when they are needed; hence they stay afar without committing themselves to use such aids in classroom teaching learning. Many teachers use the PowerPoint presentation in the classroom as a teaching and learning tool. PowerPoint provides opportunities for teachers and students to incorporate multimedia to enliven their presentations. PowerPoint

bestows the ability to bring in many different kinds of media, including graphic images, colored backgrounds, photographs, sound files, video clips, animations, and of course, text.

2.5 Language Lab

The language lab has been expanding its historical focus on audio, in order to take advantage of the new technologies and to respond to the needs of today's teachers and learners. Thus, the lab systems, being marketed today by companies such as ASC, Tandberg, and Sony allow incorporation of multiple media resources such as CD-audio, satellite, and video into the lab, with the potential for several groups of users. The use of digital labs in language learning plays a vital role. Labs are being used to achieve specific learning aims. Students develop strategies to improve their listening comprehension and become better listeners. Moreover, with the purposeful sessions in the lab, students become more confident in their listening skills and take greater pleasure in practicing their English. Lab sessions have different purposes. A motivational session is intended for the first-year engineering students who are excited about using the equipment in the lab but are unfamiliar with native speaker voices. We need to encourage the students to get confidence in listening to English by reminding them not to try to understand every word and to concentrate on the message. This first session can help to reduce the students' worries and anxieties and get them accustomed to working in the language lab.

2.6 Networked Multimedia

Audio and video can now be digitized and placed along with software on video-capable file servers, such as the Cheetah Multimedia Network Server by TNCi (The Network Connection). In this system, different segments of video or audio clip may be accessed by multiple users simultaneously from their computers. Another advantage is that it is no longer necessary for single computer stations to have a dedicated videodisc player or other peripherals;

students at any networked station in the lab may access multimedia resources directly on the server. This server-based setup means that teachers and learners in remote locations with network access can use instructional materials. Smart classrooms, which are set up to display video, videodisc, and computer output to a room full of students, allow faculty to incorporate networked lab resources into their regular instruction.

3. Internet in the Classrooms

When technology-enhanced learning tends to be associated with Internet-based applications like the World Wide Web, non-Internet technology tools remain very useful aids for the language teachers and student. Language software for the personal computer or lab network is becoming more flexible and powerful. Authoring programs continue to allow teachers to create customized materials for their classrooms. Language lab systems are being upgraded to allow the incorporation of multiple media resources. Advances in computer networking have increased the power, flexibility, and interconnectivity of desktop computer systems and the equipments available for usage in the lab or resource center setting, and has also made possible the use of networked software in the classroom.

Internet users can employ various tools to make their way around the internet to extract useful information. Having a better understanding of how the internet works and how various programs can be used for specific FL teaching purposes will enable FL educators to venture confidently into the net and make it an extension of their classroom. It will enhance their ability to conceive Internet-based projects and to solve the inevitable problems that appear.

4. Online Discussions

Online discussions can be transformative teaching tools since they provide students with an out-of-class, informal publishing arena where they can reflectively practice, presenting various ideas, arguments, types of

evidence, use of language, style, and so forth. Online education is shallow and quick. But online discussion groups are well developed by teachers. They can lead to more thoughtful, reflective, and engaging student comments and writing because they allow for more time and less of the performance anxiety of the live classroom. In the traditional classroom, many discussion prompts are interpreted by students. Online discussions are serving teaching and learning goals. One has to work with these practical tools that must be built, managed, and fine-tuned. The value of online discussions as a supplement to traditional teaching, however, will continue to draw new users and inspire innovations in online teaching. Many traditional instructors are afraid to try online discussions because they have heard that they are time and labor intensive. To ensure that online discussions are productive and worthy investments of a teacher's time, one needs to develop wise management strategies and become comfortable reading, responding, and manipulating student messages. In some situations a teacher might want to search, print, quote, highlight, grade, evaluate, or archive messages. These are all simple tasks that require some experience. The more teachers and students work with online discussions, the more comfortable and productive they become with the tools.

5. Teacher and Technology

A teacher is always the first and most important role model in any online environment. In many situations the "best and brightest" students will be the role models as well, but it will take the teacher to point out which students and which responses are outstanding and which are not so. Teachers using online discussions should validate students' success, red flag problems or confusions, provide guidelines, examples, offer feedback, and annotate and critique complicated resources and materials. Teachers can incorporate students' works into their own lectures. Teachers can expose the student learning (and not learning) process. Teachers using online discussions will achieve more frequent, extensive, and detailed student feedback. Online discussions provide

teachers with a time and place for modeling, observing, and coaching student processes and performance; the online environment is different from the real world that a smart combination of the two can create the best possible learning environment.

6. Virtual Classroom

The classroom, which supports its educational, evaluative and administrative activities that leap over the boundaries of time and space, can be termed as virtual. This ideal virtual classroom is created with the support of infra information systems.

7. Conclusion

The virtual classroom is the learning environment could give appropriate tasks to the learners. Teachers have an opportunity now, to learn and ensure the use of virtual reality effectively and to deal with the issues that will inevitably arise from this new medium. Teachers in training should be encouraged to join the research effort and seek to identify a range of activities, which could be made more enjoyable by the use of virtual activity. Technology is not a proxy for time and money - it needs to work effectively. While software and hardware may be in place, the 'humanware' (Warschauer and Meskill, 2000) must be in position too. In this respect, introducing and integrating multimedia technology gradually in the English language classroom and considering teachers' attitudes and knowledge are essential to achieve the maximum potentials of CALL. And this requires time, concentration and support, involving long term viable efforts of the teachers and student community.

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