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# Research Innovator

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**Virtual Learning: An e-Learning Experience****Dr. R. Bhuvaneshwari***VIT University, Chennai, India***Abstract**

Digital revolution has brought about multiple ways of learning. Everything is just a click away. Students can carry the whole universe of knowledge in their pockets. With the boom in smart phone production and internet usage, there are several apps and software for virtual classrooms. Virtual classrooms and e-Learning are based on technology. Virtual classrooms are classrooms where the students learn through video lectures, online tutorials, online practice test and exams. The students work outside the classroom and submit their assignment, project works online. In this technology driven world, human existence without these varied wonders of technology seems to be a question out of context. This paper will mainly focus on virtual classrooms and integrating technology in English language teaching.

**Key Words:** English Language Teaching (ELT), Virtual Classrooms, e-Learning, Digital revolution.

**1. Introduction**

The world is but spinning with technology. In today's world, technology is everything and almost anything is possible with technology. In ancient times, education pattern and learning were different from today. Digital revolution has brought about multiple ways of learning. "Modern technologies such as the Internet present new opportunities for teaching and learning at all educational levels. Today, many universities strive to integrate appropriate technologies into campus classrooms". (Brill 95) In this context, teaching English to engineering students is challenging. On a regular basis, new metaphors emerge in the field of learning technologies. Are they "old wine in a new bottle" or do they convey a novel idea?(Dillenbourg and Patrick525)

**2. English for Engineers**

Engineering English is a compulsory course for all the first and second year students of Engineering and technology.

The students in technical institutions wonder

- If at all English should be included in their syllabi
- If so English classes are sometimes boring
- Having completed their schooling in English and English language as one of the subjects, it is a sheer waste of time mastering the language.

The reasons are the methodology of teaching and language teaching materials. An informal interaction with the engineering students confirms the view that English Language Teaching lacks the touch of technology. "A number of other educational thinkers also state that learning approaches need to change radically to suit this digital age". (Gee)The engineering and technology students are more into technology, technical topics and digital learning. An English language teacher has a crucial role to play. Technology has flexed its muscles into the field of teaching

and have come up with innovative methodologies and learning processes. "While debate rages over the advantages and shortcomings of using technology in a myriad of ways in all walks of life, language teachers struggle to catch up or keep up with the heap of newly invented digital gadgets to effectively adopt them for their own agenda of language pedagogy". (Smith) The primary objective of the teacher is to encourage and motivate the students by adopting new strategies and modern digital technology in English Language teaching.

### 3. Virtual Classrooms

According to a well known American psychologist William Glasser, 'We learn 10% of what we read; 20% of what we hear; 30% of what we see; 50% of what we see and hear; 70% of what we discuss; 80% of what we experience and 95% of what we teach others'. In keeping with his inference, virtual learning helps students to improve communication skills.

Technology has drastically changed our lives from smart phones to humanoid robots. Technology is the ubiquitous part of students' life. It has taken the art of teaching to the next techno level. The explosion of knowledge age has changed the context of what is learnt and how it is learnt- the concept of virtual classrooms is a manifestation of this knowledge. (Jain 3) Virtual classrooms are student driven. It is easier, quicker, effective and comfortable. Virtual labs and classrooms create a comfortable learning zone for the students. Virtual classrooms are classrooms where the students work outside the classroom and submit their assignment, project works online.

A virtual classroom is an advanced learning environment created using internet, computers, supplicated video conferencing devices in which either teacher is not physically present (for remote learning) or students are not present (distance education) in the classroom. (Jain 3) After a long battle to introduce technology into our education system, a few institutions have integrated technology in classrooms. Universities offer various e-learning applications such as TOFSIS App, MOODLE, where teachers and students share and learn the study materials. It helps both the students and the teachers for an effective interaction. The use of e-Mails and SMS (Short Message Service) in English Language Teaching helps the teacher to share information in a short time. Internet, a milestone in technology helps to learn English language more efficiently. Especially pages like google allow students to create groups and share information online. 'Google and Learn' is the mantra of 21<sup>st</sup> century students. Gen Y use Social Networking Sites as the medium of communication. It is easy for the teachers and students to communicate online even if they are miles away. It is always believed that a student who is home tutored or on networking sites is moody, gloomy and socially unfit. Technology has broken all these barriers. Technology is a boon; it must be harnessed and cultivated to reach greater heights.

### 4. Integrating Technology in English Language Teaching

Mastery of the English language is the key to all great success. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are considered as the core areas of learning English language. Computers and communication

technologies have a central role to play in facilitating the rapid mastery over English language. Computers, laptops, mobile phones, tablets and internet, a milestone in technology help to learn English language better. Internet is self referential. Students can find a number of lectures, grammar worksheets and word pronunciation online. It makes the students creative enough to pass the hurdle of boredom. In earlier days vocabulary acquisition was done by rote learning. In this digital era, students learn new words through the aid of audio samples which even reduces the stress and anxiety associated with recitation in front of the class. Students learn English through various media but digital classrooms play a major role in language acquisition. The present scenario is –students cannot live without Facebook and WhatsApp. Gone are the days where students pass a chit of paper to teachers for finding solutions. But now it is more like click a button, Google it or send it to your teacher on any social networking sites. Internet's virtual world provides the perfect opportunity for students to learn English language. Collaborating with others in the dynamic environment provides an ideal communication scenario for practicing dialogues.

### 5. The Role of a Teacher

'Teacher and Technology' begins with the letter 'T'. According to Vedas and Scriptures, teachers are placed next to God. It cannot be denied that the bonding

between a teacher and student are real and eternal. A teacher not only guides a student with textual information but also with moral values. The presence of the teacher can never be ignored in virtual classrooms, they need to monitor and guide the students to reach their goal. On the other hand technology leads man's life. The influence of science and technology is enormous. Internet plays an important role in e-learning. Virtual classroom is the order of the day. The next big debate is 'Can virtual classrooms and e-learning replace teachers?' technology has both extremes. It depends on us to choose the way we need to go. Technology cannot replace the old fashioned school with amazing teachers to teach and guide. Even though virtual classrooms are liked by gen Y, it is expensive. The classrooms should be highly equipped to experience virtuality.

### 6. Conclusion

Technology is the key to a prosperous future in this competitive world. Even nature proclaims, 'the survival of fittest'. Those who adopt and update technology are the one who excel. In this digital era, one who updates and adopts technology becomes a prodigy. As said by a wise man, 'all it takes is a touch of genius and a lot of courage to simplify things'. Thus the role of teacher in facilitating this wondrous intrusion of technology and science in English Language teaching is manifold.

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