

Growth, Evolution and Challenges in English Language Teaching: A 21st Century Overview

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Abstract

It is an established fact that English is being taught as a second language in India. For most of the learners in India, English is still a foreign language or target language. The study of this language is important to fulfill different kinds of academic and professional requirements. But, still there is a big gap between demand and supply for which the failure of the system is largely responsible as its main emphasis is on to adhere to the foreign curriculum. The government tries to impose this curriculum on English teachers, but the reality is that the curriculum is outdated.

Keywords: Learner, language, curriculum, foreign, majority.

The rise and evolution of English as a global language has shifted the paradigms of the scope of transformation of the methods by which English is taught in the present technology-driven global world. With the increasing number of users, English has acquired the status of an international language of not only education but of commerce and every human existence. The seed of growth of this lingua franca was certainly sowed by the colonialism and grew with the assertive post-colonial approaches. However, as a result of the forces associated with 20th-century globalization, English materialized as a powerful global language. (Rose 2019) The role of English in education is changing from a language of study to language of instruction which is a trend that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. (Rose 2019) Computers started making a mark in the education sector in early nineties and in recent times its influence has multiplied with the fast evolution of technology and introduction of numerous didactic tools and web-based applications. The world is formulating the fourth industrial revolution called 'Industry 4.0.' The human involvement is getting minimized and 'Internet of the Things' and 'Data Analysis' and

“artificial intelligence” seems to be the future of human reality. “Digital tools are essential in the recognised field of computer assisted language learning (CALL), but also has become a core part of English language teaching (ELT) in general.” (Motteram 2013) The initial approach towards computer added English language teaching has diversified with real practice-based experiences. This paper is an attempt to study the scope of emerging computer added ELT trends in the present and probable post covid-19 scenario.

In the wake of globalization, English as a universal language is world's biggest population immovably setting up its ground-breaking status as the means of communication. It is the most widely used language in every walk of life today which is serving as the purpose of instruction to the trade and trade, science and technology, business, diversion, legislative issues, agribusiness, global and reciprocal relations and monetary undertakings. The scope and significance of English is all around recognized by everybody in the quick evolving world. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India, one can perceive a number of difficulties due to unsure policies, improper instructional method, multi-lingual foundations of learners, teacher strengthening

There is no doubt in denying the fact that advancement and growth in the field of ELT methodology in the foreign countries took a long time to come to India. Like other EFL countries, the growth and development of ELT in India is closely connected with the factors other than pedagogic. In the Indian scenario, English cannot be labeled as a foreign language as it was in the past when teaching was to take apprehension of all factors including pedagogic or others. Two components are vital and significant in observing the elaboration of ELT which are different in case of ELT in India and ELT in other countries.

As far as the question of developing the ELT pedagogy is concerned, it developed primarily in the Western countries where the social and political environment was entirely different as the status of English was fixed. But, in case of Indian context, the ELT pedagogy relies on the subtle and not so-subtle which the status of English keeps changing all the times. In case of position of English in Indian society, no diagrammatic manifestation can be complete without considering its fluid nature.

It is a well-known fact that behind learning English, there are some set objectives as it is learnt either as a foreign language or as a second language. It is very much clear that any language, except mother tongue, is learnt with specific purposes and aims. No doubt, the Indians learn English as a second language or target language from the professional or career point of view. It is preferred as a medium, rather than

a subject by a vast majority of parents in India. It is considered as somewhat a long term investment. It is because it determines their future prospective in India or abroad. It is also very unfortunate that there is a vast majority of illiterate in India who think English as a language of foreign countries.

This is the main reason why the whole ELT paradigm also travelled the complete gamut at of modification is that the status of the language underwent constant re-invention. There is no doubt in denying the fact that Indian classroom was transformed because of the change in the environment of the learner in the last decades of the twentieth century when English started assuming true status of global Language.

English as a subject is taught from two angles: general English and English for specific purposes. In the Indian scenario, the general English is offered at the secondary level, while the English for Specific Purposes is at the territory level either as an optional course in arts stream and mandatory in the technical institutions. English for specific purpose (ESP) has a number of sub-division that depends upon the purpose, academic or professional.

The term, professional English, has been used as an umbrella term which is used for practical purposes. It includes varied purposes- oriented courses that comprise English for international business, for import and export, for banking and international trade, for science and technology, for internet and computers, nursing, pharmacy, International media and many more.

As far as English Language Teaching in the Indian context is concerned, no doubt, it started accidentally, but at present, it has become so vital and significant that it is impossible to continue without it. Once it was recognised as the official language, but now it is considered as the language of opportunity. People are ready to spend considerable amount of money as well as energy on coaching and material because of its practical usefulness that is definite and certain.

The beginning of liberalism in Indian economy is the first great factor for learning of English language in India. From the job point of view, the whole spectrum in the field of job opportunity has been changed. It can be perceived through those students who have specialised English even after joining civil services. The call centres in India need some trainers to equip their employees with better communication skills. Besides, there are some multinational companies that are busy in recruiting marketing staff who required to speak English.

In addition to it, the medical transcriptions centres are also in the need of translators and reporters. Those, who want to go abroad, are in the need of professional help for IELTS. This change was first perceived at various levels-social,

political and economic. Very soon, the idea that English is the passport to success in India and in abroad, is being observed by those Indians who want to opt for English. In the beginning, only a few groups were using English in their everyday life. On the other hand, the middle class people thought that it should be used only for official purposes. They also wished to use it to leave an impression upon the other classes. The lower classes found it beyond them. But, the government has been trying hard to educate the lower classes through the government school of India, but the lower classes did not have any exposure of this language.

During the 1990s, a change was witnessed in the whole paradigm which was possible only through the liberalism in the economy. It resulted into the beginning of some multinationals that was responsible for the varied development such as different jobs and opportunities that focused on fluency of English. The process was facilitated by a number of channels on the television, increase in the English publications and, moreover, for the Indians the international lifestyle was tempting in every way.

In the recent years, only the programmes like CELTA and other have been introduced by British council. But, the fact is that these programmes are costly and that teachers do not want to spend money on these. The other main reason is that the examination system lays emphasis on achievements rather than performance. This system does not strongly advocate its focus on the issue of fluency or proficiency, but the main concern is grading and positions. Consequently, the role of a teacher in the classroom has been reduced to merely of a facilitator of examination instead of linguistic or communicative proficiency.

It goes without saying that English Language Teaching in India, despite its slower rate of advancement, has been widened in its approach and methods. As a result of this, more and more are intend to reach the end of ELT. Despite the slow growth of ELT in India, it is now in step with the rest of the world today. ELT can be seen emerging in three transient stages as for as the question of methodology is concerned according to the different levels of Paradigms.

The first level refers to those situations which are run by the government, especially primary, secondary and high schools. The main aim of these is to impart education at reasonable and subsidised levels to the public, so ELT and learning cannot be kept at the widest end. The main reason behind it is that teachers do not have the latest facilities of research as well as the materials for economic and geography reasons. In the rural and remote areas, these institutions are the only sources to fulfill the basic requirements of people. There is a difference in the urban area as their institutions are many towards up gradation through teacher training, improved resources and syllabus modification. In a couple of decades, the level of

ELT is going to be more communicative in nature integrated fully with language and literature.

The semi-government institutions can be included at the second level as are assisted through government funding by private managing bodies. The undergraduate and postgraduate colleges, and universities can also be assimilated in the semi-government institutions. At this level, a number of teachers have reached the widest end of the cone which reflects growth and development. These teachers are conscious of what the learners want. They can use other methodology by a harmonious blending of interaction and communication in the classrooms. The lectures based on the talk-chalk are mostly teacher oriented. The main advantage of this is that the present teachers are seeking alternate methodology as they are trying to change their teaching practices because of the mixed bag of teaching practice, the institutions can be seen ranging from indifferent to private.

At the third level, we can include pure private sector where the students are charged a fixed amount of money to make them proficient in English learning in a particular period of time. As they have only particular tenure of time in which they complete the syllabus, they use the latest paraphernalia including multimedia, software and interactions. Since in these academic fields, the jobs are few, which compel an increasing number of qualified teachers to rush these places. As regarding the question of methodology, the teachers' profile gets younger and younger that result into the increasing amount of experimentation and innovations.

On the one hand, the teachers belonging to the first level are satisfied, whereas the teachers of the second level are considerably influenced by the third level in order to get clear IELTS, as they are in the need of employment. For this, they generally join academies in addition to their undergraduate classes.

The young teachers, after joining academies, try to make the full use of the latest teaching aids and materials in order to gain fluency as soon as possible. Their teaching methodology undergoes a change at their place of work. It is because they tend to use the interactive, task-based and communicative methods in comparison to the usual lecture methods. In India, parents of learners form a significant and vital part of the teaching paradigm. In the beginning, any kind of change in the teaching methodology would cause some opposition from them, but the age-old practices are recommended by the administrative body. The parents, in the midst of the changing winds, accept the global status of English. As a result of that, at present, parents encourage innovation and experimentation in the classroom.

After comparing the situation of ELT in past, the learners can be found in search of such stimulation while attending their regular classes. It is to be observed

after when they attend interactive classes at the academy. These are some sea-changes that one can perceive in the absence of the right context. The Communicative Language Teaching was an utter failure with its advent in India for the first time in 1980s.

But, at present, this context has gained momentum that has made all the learners receptive who are the source of inspiration for more and more learned-centred classes. Since 2000, socio-economic factors have played a significant and vital role. The result of this is that we find a big and drastic change full of dynamism. The mindset of the English learners has changed due to the liberalisation in the Indian economy. There is a dire necessity of English learning at call centers, shopping malls and trade fairs as their priority is of young and vibrant learners who are fluent in English language. The continuous emergence of the institutes and academics in the third category offer the whole-range of proficiency in English language from clearing IELTS to speak fluently. Moreover, by giving a wide-range of exposure to English, internet has played a significant and vital role.

The growth of information communication technology (ICT) in the early 21st century witnessed an overwhelming response with the incorporation of ICT in English language teaching methodology. Investment in ICT based teaching -learning tools initiated the invention and creation of digital learning content. However, computer added language learning remained a marginal interest in the language teaching community and there was insignificant indication of incorporation into traditional thinking, teaching, and practice. (Motteram 2013)

New Approaches in ELT English language is adaptive and has a capacity to grow, change and adopt influences of circumstances. The latest being the inevitable technological advances enforced due to covid-19 pandemic. Technology embedded teaching -learning or online mode has created new approaches to ELT to conduct learning activities and induces higher thinking capabilities, promotes communication skill, in-depth knowledge of grammar technicalities with a touch of market oriented professional English skills to achieve desired program outcome. CALL, e-learning or online learning; the terms may vary, these technological platforms provide an excellent opportunity because learners of English today have become more innovative with diverse learning strategies, opportunities, resources, and objectives (Cook, 2003). Online learning is a form of distance learning, assisted by electronic devices, for instance tablets, smartphones, laptops, and computers which require internet connection (Gonzalez & Louis, 2018)

It is the use of electronic content that include text, picture representation, graphics, animatronics, audio and video with the use of computer, mobile phones and

internet. Compared to conventional classroom CALL is learner centric and enables transfer of knowledge and skills to a large number of learners. Online exchange of knowledge and information through network or web-based applications is more effective than the traditional methods of ELT because audio-visual presentation of grammar rules with lively examples makes learning easy and effective. Power Point presentations in an online class involves extra attention of the learners. Online mode of ELT give access to didactic study materials in the form of ppt's, recorded presentations, YouTube videos and theoretical study content.

ELT through E-modes open increased opportunities of interaction with the instructors. Web-based online meeting platforms like zoom, google meet and social media are conducive to a friendly exchange of ideas. Language learning requirements differ according to specialised needs of an individual learner which can aptly be fulfilled through the use of various web-based language learning applications. Program oriented group assignments can be prepared and planned around individual and specialized requirements. A well-designed E-content can cater to the needs of different learner groups and offer learning material based on level of previous knowledge.

ELT through online mode is an alternative to physical presence as it provides a comfortable learning alternative (White 2008). It can instruct a slow and a shy learner to master the basic skills of language in the comfort of home and goes beyond mere instructing and improves the performance of the learners. A few vocabulary based-applications and portals are result oriented. Similarly, proper pronunciations can also be taught through the use of speaking software. Learning proper communicative English with the help of a software enhances the self-confidence of the learner.

Online ELT provide a number of teaching as well as learning styles by the means of language learning activities of quiz, questionnaires, puzzles, presentations of not only grammar but picturization of literary topics at the same time impart training and knowledge. During the covid-19 pandemic the concept of classroom has undergone dramatic shift from the teacher oriented physically interactive to the learner centric online mode of teaching-learning. Interest and participation of the learner is the key to the success of E-learning as ... learning needs to be more personalized than standardized (Gutierrez 2013) The conventional tools of ELT like lecture method and blackboard or even the limited utilization of multimedia-based activities is being replaced with the latest language learning applications and software in a virtual form.

Covid-19 has forced the classroom in a virtual form. The traditional English language learner is facing tremendous revolution with the increasing dimensions of the variety and specialised language learning requirements. In the era of globalisation English is taught as a medium of instruction, as a language of commerce, business communication, of technology and science. Social media has created a new genre of learners and also adult learners and professionals. All these learning requirements can be fruitfully complemented through the web-based E-teaching and learning of English.

Integration of online educational tools makes language learning appealing and dynamic. ELT tools develop the ability to learn and understand a topic thoroughly and enhance the aptitude to promptly relate the comprehension in practice in real life situations. While having access to study material of English in visual form, learners can interact with the content, teachers and peer members enhancing collaborative learning (Ally 2008).

This method certainly is more useful for English second language learners. Technology provides interest in ELT and it becomes more effective and livelier. Online ELT encourages self-learning of the study material which in consequence develops the ability to study and comprehend a topic methodically and augment the ability to instantly relate the knowledge in practice in real life situations. Self-motivation in using technology is vital for the successful implementation of ELT.

Gamification is one more advance ELT method. It involves well-designed digital game-based learning to inspire language abilities. Through the elements of game, it creates learning environment to boost participation. Now the question arises as to how and to what extent the instructors are prepared to fully adopt the virtual teaching and learning mode in the form of online classrooms. Internet and technical devices have become inevitable. Are these instructors fully ready to cope with the present situation? The real challenge lies in making the virtual classroom the new normal and a reality.

Now, one could argue that the communicative language approach continues to be the dominant ELT method and that print textbooks are still default learning materials in most learning institutions. But because the concept of communication itself has shifted and print media continues to decline as digital increases, the 21st-century demands change. For most, change brings up a mixture of negative and positive feelings. On the one hand, it tends to bring up fear, defiance, and even panic. On the other, it can excite and energize. For ELT professionals, change does all this and more.

English writing has a huge scope and significance in the process of teaching-learning English language. It is one of the old approaches to learn English through writing. Numerous hypothetical shifts are happened while teaching English through writing. In practically all Indian colleges and schools curriculum and prospectus depends on writing. Writing can be utilized as a successful vehicle of teaching-learning English. The main worry of the present paper is teaching writing to learn English language and it attempts to reformulate the process of learning English by utilizing writing.

Language has been viewed distinctively at various occasions by Linguists and Applied Linguists. It has been thought differently – as a framework, as an ability and as a methods for communication. In Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), "language teaching depends on a perspective on language as communication, that is, language is viewed as a social instrument which speakers use to make meaning; speakers communicate about something to somebody for some reason, either orally or recorded as a hard copy" (Berns, 1990).

It also highlighted the uniqueness and creativity of individual utterances. Around the same time, British Applied Linguists emphasized the functional and communicative potential of language. The result of this revolutionary idea was a shift from focus on language teaching from mastery of structure to developing communicative proficiency. The strong advocates of this view such as Christopher Candin and Henry Widdowson drew on the works of British functional linguistics like Halliday and the philosophical works of John Searle as well as John Austin provided the further impetus.

The process of changed thinking in language teaching provided basis to theorists like D.A. Wilkins to work out a functional or communicative definition of language and devise communicative syllabus for language teaching. All the developments were, later on, consolidated as Communicative Language Teaching. CLT starts from the theory of language as communication. As far as the goals of CLT are concerned, Richards says that the goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes referred to as Communicative Competence. The major function of language is communication. It is not enough to acquire the skill of putting words together to construct grammatically acceptable sentences. What is much more important is the acquisition of the linguistic competence to achieve results such as successfully 'arguing', 'persuading', 'inviting', 'agreeing' even disagreeing without being 'disagreeable', 'accepting', 'declining' an offer or gift without being impolite or arrogant describing, defining or reporting.

Widdowson has given a detailed exposition to the ideas underlying the concept of Communicative Language Teaching by manifesting the relationship between linguistic system and communicative value in text and discourse. More recently, Canale and Swain in their analysis of Communicative Competence have identified four dimensions of Communicative Competence. They consider these dimensions essential both for theoretical understanding of communication and its practical application to language teaching. These four components are as follow:

(a) Grammatical Competence: It includes Chomsky's concept of linguistics. (b) Sociological Competence: This refers to an understanding of social context in which communication takes place including roll relationship, the shared information of the participants and the communicative purpose for their interaction. (c) Discourse Competence: It refers to the interpretation of individual message event in terms of their interconnectedness and how meaning is represented in relationship with the entire discourse. (d) Strategic Competence: It generally refers to the copying strategy that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication.

In the beginning times of second language learning through CLT approach, the teachers and the students need to remember the goals of CLT. In CLT the teacher's pedagogic role was re-imagined. The roles of both the teachers and learners changed. The teacher changes the techniques for teaching remembering the setting of teaching and the requirements of the objective learners. The new methodology is certainly not a substitute to the study hall teaching however it supplements the qualitative lecture strategy.

Standards of syntax are instructed in relationship with the functions of the language. The role of a student is altogether different from the one found in traditional study halls. The person in question is no more a latent audience. The individual in question is a piece of the communicative activities in the study hall.

The teacher isn't just a facilitator offering the boost and experience that this language learning process requires, yet additionally in some cases should be a free member in the gathering. Indeed, even without the teacher any language learning condition can give the boosts and experience to Communicative Language Learning to happen. The majority of the need-based and task-based courses are student centered.

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