

## **Digital Learning as a new tool -Teaching English to the Hindi Medium Students of Chhattisgarh**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In our state there are approximately sixty thousand students who are pursuing engineering education and out of them, nearly 70 % come from Hindi medium. The classroom is thus divided into two groups, one small group is of students belonging to English medium and another large group is of the students coming from Hindi medium background. Engineering students in Chhattisgarh find it very hard to pass their exams and even more fail to get into job because of the lack of communication skills. The faculties and the institutions are struggling to cope with this huge challenge of teaching them to understand, read, speak and write in English. Although all the institutions have language laboratories that are based on the traditional CALL (Computer Aided Language Learning) method,. They are only equipped with non editable content that come along with the software. The lessons are very logically prepared and the course is also comprehensive. But this has failed to achieve the desired results. The students belonging to Hindi medium continue to lag behind their classmates who come from English medium. They not only fail to pass the exam in good grades but also fail to get placements, This paper attempts at implementing Digital Learning technology for language learning. This paper shall also describe how the digital learning is different from the traditional language laboratories tools and methods that are currently being adopted by the institution to teach English to the students of engineering in the region. The paper would also discuss the use of social networking sites in teaching of English. At the end it shall also discuss briefly about the limitations of this method.

**Key words-** Hindi Medium, Language Laboratories, Digital Language Learning, Social-Networking sites, CLL (Computer based Language Learning)

**Introduction-** *‘If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we are robbing our children of their tomorrow’* wrote John Dewey in his famous book Democracy and Education 1. He wrote this quotation way back in 1916, but it is still relevant and shall remain so forever. English language learning is a dynamic process and same is with Teaching of English. Various methodologies have had been evolved by English Language experts, teachers, researchers and organizations such as Cambridge English and the British Council to teach English to the second language learners. These methods were based on the approach and technique used the teachers to teach English. A few of them were:

- The Direct Method. The second language learner has to learn English (the target language) in English.. ...
- Grammar-translation. One of the most widely criticized and practiced method (especially in India) where the teaching is done through translation of the first language into English and Vice versa. Simultaneously teaching the rules of the grammar.
- Audio-lingual. – Use of Linguaphone, tape recorders, video clips and other audio-video devices to improve the understanding of English language. ...
- Communicative language teaching (CLT) .- this method has had been considered the most effective method as it allowed the learners to feel comfortable without being in pressure of grabbing the rules before speaking and took out the rigidity of situations and limitations in learning English.

- The Silent Way created by [Caleb Gattegno](#) 2.;that makes extensive use of silence as an effective tool to teach English.

With the improvement in technology and extensive use of computer leading to computer aided methodologies in teaching of English brought about a revolutionary change in ELT. It increased the 'reach' of the teachers to its students, and nullified the distance factor in the process of learning.

The current situation with special reference to students of Engineering college in Chhattisgarh In our state there are approximately sixty thousand students who are pursuing engineering education and out of them, nearly 70 % come from Hindi medium. Engineering students in Chhattisgarh find it very hard to pass their exams and even more fail to get into job because of the lack of communication skills. The organization faces this challenge every year to make the Hindi medium students 'learn' English. They thrive hard to at least prepare them to speak few lines correctly and draft letters, projects and present power point presentations in 'decent' English. The faculties and the institutions are struggling to cope with this huge challenge of teaching them to understand, read, speak and write in English..All the Engineering colleges are equipped with CLL (the computer aided language Learning) method in the form of Language Laboratories. The language laboratories have a Teacher console which is installed with the English Language learning software by private franchise and a specific number of computers that are controlled by the teacher console. The Language instructor chooses the 'lesson' floats the 'lesson' in the target systems where the language learner sits with a headphone and screen in the front.The student is asked to listen and watch the audio//video. Most of the content that these audio-video contain are situational videos that are in British and American accent and also

depicting western situations using American or British formal and informal jargons. For example- 'Hello! My name is Peter.

How do you do?

I am yet to notice a cab,

It costs a fortune!

Could you pass the bill please!!

The teacher assigns the situational videos of specific conversation to the students and the students struggle through the entire video. The period gets over and the student goes back to the situation where he/she actually belong to- complete Hindi. So, even this method proved to be useless despite more and more advancement in the content. The gap between what the teacher intends and what reaches to the student remains large, because student doesn't connect to what is being spoken, nor these method does any help to remove or reduce the hesitation of public speaking . The hesitation stems from the fact that they are shy and too conscious of being ridiculed by the peer and they are scared of the teacher. What can be done to reduce the hesitation that the Hindi medium student have while they speak English.? How will the gap between the teacher and the student bridge?

### **Understanding Digital Literacy and it's use to teach English language to the Hindi Medium students:**

A term born of the marriage of two words 'Digital' and 'Literacy', Digital Literacy is to being literate or understanding and comprehending information that is available in the digital format, that is in and through computers and mobiles. The term digital literacy was simplified by Paul Gilster in his 1997 book *Digital Literacy*. According to Gilster digital literacy is all about comprehension of information in the modern times using digital technology. He calls this ability

to comprehension as essential life skill. How it is different from CLL then? CLL is a one way method. The student doesn't interact. Hence, there is not usage of the information that is being taken from the computer. With the advent of plethora of software and mobile applications available leaning language has become easy. With practically every student carrying a smart phone the task of digital teaching not only becomes easy but also is available anywhere anytime. The student and the teacher are not tied down by the organizational time table or a fixed schedule to learn the language. The student who feels hesitant to ask a question in the presence of everyone or for that matter who could not attend a particular session can easily access to the session by approaching the teacher using modern digital literacy method. Digital literacy empowers them as the learning is not teacher centered by student centered. Here are some examples of how to use Digital Literacy to make English learning effective :

1. **By using E-mail.** Electronic mail or email is one of the fastest and more reliable source of exchange of information. The teacher provides an assignment to the Hindi medium student in clear understandable language. Lets for example, the teacher gives the task to make a project on collection of 50 words of regular and irregular verbs to the Hindi medium student. Then the teacher provides useful links to the student where he/she can find the inputs. Or gives names of the books in the library that can provide this information. The student goes through the mail and then completes the tasks. In this process he/she browses the internet for information and while it finds the desired information, it also comes across other useful information that it gathers while surfing. This opens new avenues of leaning and generates new interest.

2. **By using You-Tube-** The present generation does not rely too much on movie theaters or television. All the entertainment that they seek is available in the You-tube. The teacher can use You-tube as a powerful tool to teach English. The teacher can post his/her personal video of a session that he/she wants the student to learn. In the comfort of his/her room, or study, the student can watch the teacher explaining the usage of a particular phrase or word or set of sentences. One may ask, why can't this be done by any video for that matter? The answer to this question lies in the fact the student is attached to the teacher of the institution whom he/she sees in flesh and blood. But because of time constraint and hesitation, they are too nervous to clarify the doubt and ask question. While they watch the video presented by the teacher, has a personal touch and moreover the student can pause, play, play, stop, start the video as much as he/she wishes, without being scolded for disturbing the teacher by asking question or interrupting the teacher. This shall boost the confidence and after some day the teacher can ask the student to post a video of his/her own little speech or dialogue and send to him/her for evaluation. The student shall not be conscious of the peer comment or fear of being laughed at. This shall improve the language.
  
3. **Using Social-Networking sites like What's app and Face book-** Every second student of the present day classroom has a Face book account and if not they must by having a what's app number. Both these social networking applications can be used a powerful tool to teach English to the Hindi medium students. The teacher can identify such student and form a group in this site. When everyone is at the same platform then the sense of superiority or inferiority goes off. Then the real learning begins. The teacher can make it

a point to float a new word every day and ask the group to find out the synonym of the word, following up with small rewarding challenges to every member of the group. Then the group can be asked to contribute one word on a daily basis. The student who has never bothered about learning vocabulary in the classroom, that same student shall be the first one to respond to the meaning of the word. Gradually the teacher can ask the group to move to make family of words and then moving onto sentences. The teacher can also ask the student to post a blog or write their heart out in the facebook without being bothered about the 'like' or dislike' comment. The sense of anonymity gives them confidence and the language learning takes place.

4. **Using video editing tools-** Using video editing tools the students can make their own videos in their own desired background and post it to the group or the teacher for comments. Standing in front of a rolling camera and speaking itself would boost the confidence.

Apart from that regular Power Point making sessions with interesting topics would make the teaching easy and hesitation free.

**Conclusion-**Digital literacy cannot be taken as a complete replacement to traditional forms of literacy ,rather it takes the teaching beyond the classroom. The primary aim of the English teacher now is to teach the Hindi medium student basic communication skills and enable them to get a good job , learn to express themselves.Digital literacy builds upon the foundation of traditional forms of literacy.<sup>[3]</sup>Digital literacy gives an individual freedom to communicate and learn in through a plethora of ways.The Hindi medium

students feel more empowered and confident and that solves the ultimate aim. The English teachers can now use the latest technology to make their most needy student to learn language respectfully and confidently.

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