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As 'foreword' to this quarter's newsletter 'Edvantage', an adage by Wilhelm von Humboldt comes to mind: **Language is "the infinite use of finite means."** Remember, it is possible to communicate big ideas with relatively limited language; but it needs to be a language the world understands. Why is learning a language important? We all know the answer. This skill, when acquired, opens a plethora of opportunities, be it in the personal or professional domain. A language is not just learning how to read, write, listen and speak, in whatever order, but to understand the culture that the language stems from. One of the most common languages, English, has seen a paradigm shift in teaching and learning experiences over the years. In fact, this holds true for most of the subjects taught or learnt. I remember when I learnt the language, the most common practice was to delve into different types of stories, understand contexts, and capture nuances thereof; grammar played a major role too, as did the core understanding of the language. That remains still the case, by and largely; however, the approach has changed.

With the introduction of technology in almost every domain, the domain of language learning has also been impacted. At IL&FS Education, we can safely say that many years of expertise has led to the development of English language learning solutions rather than just tools – be it solutions for rural, semi-urban or urban India, be it for educational institutions or employability, be it for the language as a core or as part of a curriculum, there are always customized, creative and innovative solutions available.

Our main solutions, under the Englobe umbrella of English language learning, English Relay or English for schools, E squared or English for Employability, and EnglishBolo, are based on the principle of customization, interaction and innovation. While English Relay empowers the participants by building their receptive skills (listening and reading) as well

as productive skills (speaking and writing) simultaneously, and comprises of English language learning programmes for schools aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the latter, English for Employability, empowers professionals to enhance English conversation skills, helping, thereby, in expressing themselves, fluently and grammatically correctly. It is a comprehensive programme that teaches the language as it is spoken in the contemporary world, making the learning interesting, varied and contextualized. In other words, this pedagogical solution for English language learning has been developed with the objective of raising the employability quotient of youth, and includes modules for functional English, applicable to specific TVET trades. On the other hand, EnglishBolo is a blended learning solution that helps improve English speaking skills, anytime and anywhere. Launched by IL&FS Education, in collaboration with US based Ed-Tech company English Helper, it is targeted at employed youth across hierarchy, who would like to improve their English and excel in their personal and professional lives.

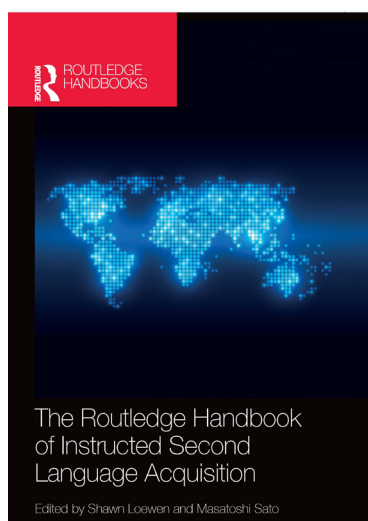
Having said the above, teaching or learning a language requires a certain repertoire of pedagogical methodologies that makes the experiences of imparting and acquiring the language interesting and interactive, facilitating long-term recall and application. Acquiring a skill like a language is not only being able to master the four abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing, but also the essence of the same, its origin, and all that it brings with it.

So, with this edition of 'Edvantage', which focusses on English learning/teaching, among other interesting peripheral aspects, I wish you all, a happy reading!

RCM Reddy, MD & CEO

How students learn language efficiently: some new trajectory?

To say that learning English language is perhaps the most dominant aspiration in India, or elsewhere, sounds clichéd. To most Indians it sounds unbelievable or bizarre that English is not the most spoken language in the world. Learning English has become a 'must' because it has emerged as the international language of education, and for business. English is the most common second language in the world. The process and method of learning a second language has been a key concern within schools and even otherwise.



There are several approaches to teaching and learning languages. The systematic approach to learn a second language is better known as Instructed Second Language Acquisition (ISLA). The Routledge Handbook of Instructed Second Language Acquisition, Edited by Shawn Loewen and Masatoshi Sato, (Routledge, New York and London, 2017) is one of the recent anthologies on this subject. It presents a

vast range of theoretical and empirical studies to understand the methods and conditions that enable or facilitate the acquisition of the second language.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is another important approach to language learning, which is emerging as a favoured method world over. It uses day to day tasks as a peg for effective language learning. TBLT presents a very effective way of learning English and traces its origin in a landmark study conducted in India earlier.

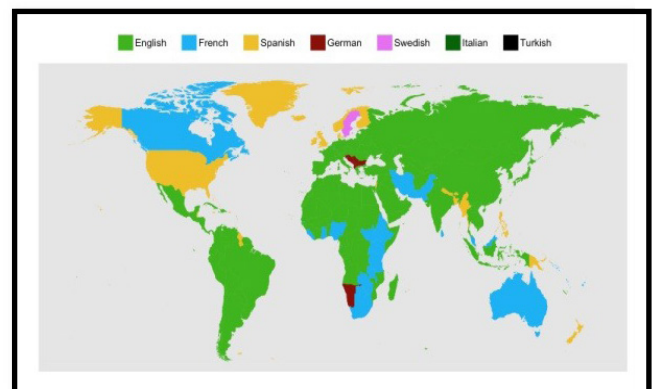
The basic idea is that the use of language is closely related to the things children do. The actions and experiences create the need for language, and language helps them to access the experience, once it is done.

In other words, with the help of language, children enrich their relationship with the actions and tasks they do.

Before we outline the features of TBLT, it would be pertinent to refer to the latest research reported in the online edition of the journal Cognition, which has conclusively found that the window for language learning is open until the age of 17.4 years of age. Based on a study of nearly 700,000 English speakers, researchers from Boston College, MIT and Harvard have discovered that the optimal years to learn a second language extend to the cusp of adulthood.

It has been common knowledge that children learn languages more easily than adults. But to know exactly as to when the ability for knowledge acquisition declines remained a mystery until now. "What we've found gives us a dramatically different understanding about why children learn a new language more efficiently and completely than adults," said Boston College Assistant Professor of Psychology Joshua K. Hartshorne, a co-author of the study with MIT Professor Joshua B. Tenenbaum and Harvard Professor Steven Pinker.

Figure 1. The most popular language studied on Duolingo in each country.



Coming back to methods of language learning, most of the schools in India, and elsewhere, practice communicative language teaching (CLT). CLT is based on an inventory of the structural properties of the target language and a methodology more popularly known as presentation-practice-production (PPP). In the PPP model, the first P is where the teacher presents an item of language in a clear context to get across its meaning. It is followed by a controlled practice stage where students must repeat target items through collective or individual drilling - fill the gaps or match halves of sentences etc. to ensure that student uses the language correctly, and helps them to become more comfortable with it.

And finally comes the practice stage where students are expected to produce the target language and use any other language that has already been learnt and is suitable for

completing it. Task-based language teaching (TBLT), which is a development of communicative language teaching (CLT), has emerged as one of most favoured methods of learning English in various parts of the world today. TBLT is a learner-centred approach in which learners perform tasks interactively in small groups. In this method, language learning is integrated with the practical experience of doing. It aims to promote language learning by means of tasks that create interactionally authentic contexts for the use of language.

The language learning is task-based, not text-based. In contrast to a text-based language learning involving listening to, or reading, a “dead” script of someone else’s effort or writing with reference to the ‘text’ which may be out of their immediate context, in TBLT learners need to learn how to do a task themselves. It is interesting to underline here that what is known as TBLT today has had its roots in an innovative project initiated in India in the 1970s. Better known as the “Bangalore–Madras Project” or the Communicational Teaching Project led by N.S. Prabhu.

It was an initiative combining theoretical rigour and conceptual clarity with a commitment to evolve a classroom methodology suited to local conditions. Located in eight classes of seven regional-medium schools (including three Corporation or Government schools) in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over a five-year period, its aim was to provide learners with “deployable” language. The project sought to create in the classroom “conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication”, i.e. “understanding, arriving at, or conveying meaning”. A “task-based” methodology, argued Prabhu, leads to the “negotiation of meaning” and “meaning-focused activity” in the classroom.

The project convincingly demonstrated efficacy of language learning methods not just in terms of target-language resources, but all the other resources learners have at their disposal including conjecture, gesture, knowledge of conventions, numeracy, and the mother tongue. Thus, as the methodology evolved out of classroom practice, teaching passed from the hands of “specialists” to regular classroom teachers.

The core understanding of TBLT is that language is acquired when attention is focused not on language form, but on the meaning of messages.

Thus, in a task-based lesson, the teacher doesn’t pre-determine what language will be studied. The lesson is based around the completion of a central task. The language, then, studied is determined by what happens as the students complete it. Tasks are the real-world activities students think of when planning, conducting, or recalling their day. That can mean things like brushing their teeth, preparing breakfast, reading a newspaper, taking a child to school, responding to e-mail messages, making a sales call and so on. Some tasks could be mundane, some complex. Some may require language use, some may not. Tasks are used as the content of a ‘task syllabus’. The learning is guided by a sequence of pedagogic tasks of progressively increasing complexity. In short, TBLT aims to help learners acquire new language incidentally from both the input and interactions that tasks create. It draws attention of the learner to the form of language that arises naturally during the performance of a task.

It is high time schools teaching a second language took serious cognizance of the Task Based Language Teaching method.

Further Readings

1. ‘The Routledge Handbook of Instructed Second Language Acquisition’, Edited by Shawn Loewen and Masatoshi Sato, Routledge, New York and London, 2017
2. Second Language Pedagogy, N.S. Prabhu, Oxford University Press, 1987
3. Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching, Mike Long, Wiley Blackwell, 2015

‘ENGLISHBOLO’: Success Stories

BOTTOM LINE



Mohammad Mujtaba Taqi,
from Lucknow

EnglishBolo teacher, Mohammad Mujtaba Taqi has taken over 1000 live classes and has helped over 5000 learners improve their spoken English! He completed his M. Comm. and is currently based in Lucknow.



Bindiya,
from Gujarat

Bindiya from Gujarat was placed at Level 2 and enjoyed learning with EnglishBolo™. Her confidence to speak in English also increased. She loved the programme so much that she got more than 20 of her family members and friends to sign up!



Abhishek Srivastav,
from Jharkhand

Abhishek Srivastav from Jharkhand really enjoyed the opportunity of learning with EnglishBolo. He found the confidence to face interviews and has now got a job with Axis Bank!

FACE TO FACE



In this issue of Face to Face **Sarah Berry** talks to **Principal Manju Rana**, an accomplished academican, is the Principal cum Director of Seth Anandram Jaipuria School, Vasundhara, Ghaziabad.

Recipient of the prestigious 'Lord Baden Powell National Award', she has been adjudged 'The Best Principal' in the International Category by SOF & Helpage India. Honouring her supervision, Education World & Digital Learning placed the school among the top leaders in Delhi / NCR.

Sarah Berry

A good practice, adopted in school, helps to enhance teaching/learning experiences. Could you please enlist two, adopted at your school? One by for teachers, and one pertaining to students in the field of English language learning.

Manju Rana

Utilizing best practices in a classroom positively impacts students by providing motivation to learn, and promoting success in a global world. A balanced and integrated curriculum, along with an active learning process, in which students are engaged in hands-on activities, rather than passively receiving knowledge, is the prime requisite in a classroom. Thus, especially in the field of teaching and learning English Language, myriad practices are adopted. Therefore, students are discouraged from doing rote learning; more emphasis is laid on activity based learning; technology is incorporated into teaching methodology, curriculum is planned according to the changing needs of the students, integrated learning encouraged, and focus is laid on interaction of assessment with teaching and learning.

Similarly, the school has multiple good practices for a teachers' personal and professional teaching/

learning experiences. Sagaciously conceived workshops are organized for teachers to constantly update them with the current changes in English language. Teachers are trained to be tech savvy, and also be facilitators for students and colleagues. They are also encouraged to be a part of local, national and international communities in order to share and benefit from teaching/learning practices prevalent in different institutions, across the world.

Sarah Berry

What are the major changes you have noticed, pertaining to language teaching/learning, especially English?

Manju Rana

English language teaching is evolving all the time, particularly alongside advances in technology. There is a major shift in teaching English as a skill rather than a subject. More focus is laid on acquisition of the four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing. A switch over to Communicative English is encouraged; this includes the introduction of practical topics in writing skills namely formal letters, invitations, advertisements, etc, the basic knowledge of which is of practical importance.

Optimum use of technology is made to make teaching interesting. Technology has brought in blended learning in English learning, as teachers combine digital media with more traditional forms of teaching, and their course material reflects this trend. Project-based learning has also enhanced the efficacy of the English teaching/learning process, whereby students are encouraged to create and share content. While there is much online content already present for learners, some programmes and apps allow learners to produce their own content and share what they have created with others. Popular online sites like Quizizz and Socrative allow students to create their own content and thus simplify learning. Peer teaching and activity based learning eliminate the monotony of the class and help students to retain concepts for a longer time. In context, the 'gamification' of the English language has assisted students in the school.

Sarah Berry

Could you enlist any two challenges, according to you, that students face while learning English, accompanied by solutions you have adopted?

Manju Rana

Teaching English, according to me, is an enjoyable experience, and helping our students is rewarding. However, the English language classroom also presents challenges that can test our patience and ability to be effective. The foremost problem is lack of reading habits among the students that often results in poor written expression, lack of ideas and below-par vocabulary. For overcoming this barrier, the school has set a designated half to one hour only for reading, that too beyond the curriculum, and this is ensured through proper library time for all classes. Literary Week and book review sessions (could be verbal also) are held often. Parents are also encouraged to read and be role models.

Secondly, lack of effective communication skills among students poses to be another challenge. In order to bring them at par, various workshops are conducted to encourage students to speak effectively. Teachers conduct multiple conversation sessions with students to raise their spirits in order to speak without hesitation. Parents are emboldened to be role models by always conversing in English. Listening and reading skills have a direct impact on communication skills. Therefore students are encouraged to read English newspapers and listen to English news regularly in the classrooms.

Sarah Berry

To what extent, do you feel, English is needed for future employability?

Manju Rana

In today's scenario, the world has shriveled into a small global village. No one can survive in isolation. Good communication skills are a pre-requisite for most of the jobs in private or public sectors, and English serves as a common medium in this respect. Thus, it is rightfully said that English is the most commonly used language in the corporate world; its knowledge is, hence, most sought after. Corporate English does not mean only the ability to make grammatically correct sentences; it includes other related skills for effective communication like presentation skills, negotiation skills and interpersonal skills, among others, using that language. Furthermore, as we have a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic workforce in companies, English is the language which connects people, by default. It is the language used for official communication.

Sarah Berry

How has technology impacted language learning?

Manju Rana

Technology's role in learning is astonishing, and it has dramatically affected the way we communicate in English. To be more specific, the way we speak today is, by and large, the way we spoke before the internet came into being, though with an enriched vocabulary. Conventions of telephone conversations have changed little. What is hugely different, however, is the way we write today. That is the area where technology has had the biggest impact. Example, E-mails altered the structure of the letter as a communicative tool. It brought with it a whole new etiquette, as well as new conventions and new abbreviations, such as IMO (in my opinion), PFA (please find attached), et cetera; yet technology has made the teaching learning process interesting. It supports 'Multiple Intelligence'. Students can be catered to according to their different learning abilities; it provides access to various online activities and quizzes related to English language learning; difficult and abstract concepts can be explained innovatively; it aids in research work for project based learning; above all English Language labs are an outcome of technology; they help in enhancing the four skills of English Language learning.

THE NEWSROOM



IL&FS Education wins big at the 53rd Skoch awards

IL&FS Education & Technology Services Ltd won the prestigious Skoch Award (bronze) for Corporate Excellence during the 53rd Skoch Summit, 2018 held on 18th September at the Constitution Club of India, New Delhi. The award was presented by Sameer Kochhar, Chairman, Skoch Group and other senior management of the organization. The awards serve not only as a motivational boost, but also as recognition for the collaborative and dedicated efforts made by each team member of the organization.

Read more - <https://bit.ly/2xXM4hW>

Fun with Whiteboard!

The two atria and two ventricles of a pumping heart are projected on a plain wall, with a calm and clear voice explaining the circulatory system of the human body. The instructor intersperses with verbal comments, and scribbles important points on the wall, albeit 'virtually'. Visuals are loaded with options pertaining to customised assignments, multimedia content, graphics and what not. Welcome to the world of the K-Yan or the knowledge vehicle; Sarah Berry explores.

Read more - <https://bit.ly/2O57ynb>

THE HINDU



EVENTS

Eldrok India K-12 Summit, 2018

IL&FS Education presented an array of EdTech solutions that can transform the teaching/learning experiences; at the Eldrok India K-12 Summit, Leela Ambience, Gurgaon. During the summit, CEO, SDC, Jharkhand, and Former Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, Shri Anil Swarup provided insights and shared his views on K-12 Education in India. We were also awarded the Best Choice of Technology Incubators in Education for our innovative EdTech solutions, at the summit.



Wheeling past Digital Literacy's Potholes in India

Low attendance rates, lack of infrastructure and outdated pedagogy deprive masses of underprivileged children in India of a solid education. Oil India Limited's "Dikhya" programme, in collaboration with IL&FS Education, attempts to override these hurdles in an innovative manner. It is a leading example of how nuanced education strategies can impart quality mass education to children.

Read more - <https://bit.ly/2RsghqK>



A Bridge Between the Worlds!

English language has gone beyond being a means of communication. Several factors are now associated with it - global education, jobs and as a key that opens several doors. Along with the knowledge of this language, the teaching method has evolved over the years.

Read more - <https://bit.ly/2xXM4hW>

To view more coverages, visit - <https://www.ilfseducation.com/news/>

Envision, 2018

IL&FS Education and Google for Education participated as education partners in ENVISION, 2018 held between the 24th September to the 26th September, 2018 at Novotel Resort, Goa. We showcased smart educational solutions for smart cities that will transform the learning experience of students. Bani P. Dhawan, Head, Education, Google Cloud India Pvt. Ltd. shared her views on our solution "Future Class" during the event.



ENGLOBE

Learning English the right way

The world of teaching has seen a paradigm shift; technology, which has spiralled change in most of the domains, has also impacted the domain of education. The requirement of the day, as we move away from the chalk and talk method, is for blended learning, and this does not only apply to learning a language, but to almost every subject under the sun. The idea is not to blindly follow a trend, but to understand the features and impact of the same, before its adoption. However, when we look around, it is easy to gather that technology is being adopted at a rather fast pace, and sometimes solely because “others are doing it, so why not us; we do not want to be left behind?” or because “since it is easily accessible/available/cost effective, why not make the best use of it?” The point

I wish to make is that technology is a boon as long as it is a facilitator, and not a substitute for human connect, expertise or impact, at least as far as teaching is concerned.

Learning a language with the help of technology makes sense to me, as it enhances teaching/learning solutions, empowers stakeholders involved, and ensures better learning outcomes. At IL&FS Education, our solutions for learning the English language focus on the learner, as we strongly believe in the fact that no solution can be a ‘one solution for all’; the “why?” to this is not difficult to understand. Questions like: who is our target audience? What are their demands, needs and expectations? Challenges faced by all stakeholders involved? The latter includes even issues like availability of electricity (tech-support is futile without this), or the proficiency of trainers in remote areas, or the logistics available for implementation of EdTech solutions, among so many other considerations. At IL&FS Education, our solutions like English for Employability and EnglishBolo



have been designed keeping the above in mind, besides other parameters. And then, there is another important aspect of value addition to the learning of the language. Is just learning a language sufficient? Is there anything, in addition, we need to impart? And so on. Well, the answer to these questions lies in numerous factors.

However, learning a language is not just about learning its grammar, vocabulary, the structure of sentences, and so on, but about its very essence – the culture from which it stems; besides, life skills add to the learning of a language, as both enhance personality, vision, and perspective. Besides, multilingualism holds the key, even when teaching a language like English. I have always felt that one language can be used as a ‘prop’ to support the learning

of another language, especially if the former is a native language; however, the proper implementation of this ‘prop’ is based on the discretion of the concerned teacher. Having said the above, I, during my long journey of an English language teacher, have always felt that learning a language is like learning about an entirely new world; hence, doing it right counts!

- Dr Vandana Singh
Head - English Learning Initiatives
IL&FS Education

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