# TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH CYBERSPACE

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## Abstract

Language teaching has been changing with the evolution of technological resources. Learning a foreign language is a challenging task and teaching a foreign language can be just as daunting. Formal and informal language learning and teaching is taking place in cyberspace. Teaching in cyberspace involves more than taking traditional teaching models and transferring them to a different medium. The use of online learning is creating changes in the delivery of education in general. Cyberspace media like Face book, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and Blackboard are being increasingly embraced by institutions of all sizes. Academic institutions have implemented cyberspace as a tool to make teaching by instructors and learning by students more efficient and effective. In spite of the fact that most students regularly use popular cyberspace media like Face book, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube etc., their use for teaching and learning remains limited. This paper explores the opportunities available to use these media over and beyond Blackboard.
Keyword: Cyberspace, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Technology, LinkedIn, Student, Professor.

## Introduction

English has become an integral part of India .After the advent of Globalization of economy; the parental demand for English has sky rocketed. Teachers are expected to train students not only in numbers and letters but also in soft skills that would increase their employability lately when they enter the employment market. English reaches children through various ways other than the teacher. Language teaching has been changing with the evolution in technological resources. With the advent of internet, people are increasingly spending more time in front of the computer screen, performing all sorts of tasks. It has the potential to connect a user to millions of people throughout the world.

## Learning a second language

Learning a second language helps students to develop the possibility of making new friends, enhances the access to employment and, in some cases, allows for new business opportunities, because with the language comes from some of the foreign country's culture. It is important to note that language training goes beyond decoding the language. In addition to understanding the concept, it is also necessary to grasp the culture behind it. For that to happen it is necessary to teach how to think in the foreign language, i.e. communicate and interact. In the case of the English language, as in others, training is based on the following skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. In that context, language training using the virtual model should find effective ways of checking all four skills with the same level of quality. With that in mind, an exploratory research of qualitative nature was conducted in order to examine the contrasts between the traditional and virtual models and to raise the paradigms that guide resources and strategies for the English language training in both systems, under the guidance to pursue.

## A revolution in the land of education

We used to be educated in the classroom or the lecture hall. All pupils or students come together in a certain room at a certain point of time. In that same room the teacher takes his place in front of the class and talks about a subject. The pupils are expected to pay attention and to take notes. We have know for years that 'class teaching' of 'formal lecturing' is one of the least effective forms of transfering knowledge.

By using modern Internet technology it is possible to change the complete educational system radically. The chances of high-quality cyberspace education have increased considerably. Mutual communication, which is essential between teachers and students and among students, doesn't necessarily imply a simultaneous presence in one physical room. The era in which being educated was identical to paying visits to lecture halls and lecture rooms is coming to an end. 'Cyberspace learning' brings education to the student; the student no longer needs to go to the educational institute. Teaching (instructing) and exchanging opinions (discussing) can nowadays also be realized via videoconference-techniques, which do not require the physical mutual distance between teachers and student and among students.

## Cyberspace

Cyberspace is the notional environment in which communication over computer networks occurs. This word has stormed into our language and invaded our collective consciousness like no other and it became popular in the 1990s when the uses of the Internet, networking, and digital communication were all growing dramatically and the term cyberspace was able to represent the many new ideas and phenomena that were emerging. As the technology improves and ownership of home computers increases, we competently navigate our way around cyberspace, downloading information, reading and writing to newsgroups, and receiving and sending emails.

Cyberspace represents the new medium of communication, electronic communication, which is fast outmoding, or even replacing, more traditional methods of communication. We often send emails in place of paper letters, we leave electronic messages on bulletin boards rather than pinning slips of card to wooden notice boards, and more and more frequently we are able to read texts on-line—in e-journals, for instance—rather than on good old-fashioned wood pulp. The physical objects of traditional communication (letters, books and so on) are being superseded by new electronic objects. And, just as physical objects exist in physical space, so these cyber objects exist in cyberspace.

## Cyber Space in Education

Using cyberspace nowadays is a tool very useful for students and for teachers. The possibilities for using this kind of technology are easier every day. Is almost impossible works or teaches without using this tool. The students have the opportunity for being update about the new uses of technology like a way for learning, specially a new language. The students will be more motivated to learn and in the same time while they are learning the information prepared for the teacher, they are also learning how to use technology. Is very important that both students and teacher can look for information and share information that will help them. Is important that the people that use this tool can in a easy way change the information that they considered incorrect or change information just by using a click.

## Cyberspace in classroom

Cyberspace media that can be used in classroom include blackboard, twitter chats private or public Facebook groups, LinkedIn groups. These can be exclusive to a class or open to alumni. Students can get endorsements from Professors on LinkedIn. Graduating students must note that almost eighty percent of the employers are sourcing candidates from cyberspace media networks – 74% use LinkedIn, 55% use Facebook, 45% use Twitter. In this context, it is important that students do acquire adequate skills in utilizing these networks effectively in the classroom.

Facebook is a social networking site that must be managed and utilized properly to be effective. This includes:

- not posting unprofessional pictures of oneself or others,
- asking friends to remove any inappropriate pictures,
- being careful about what a person writes and what others write about and to that person,
- using appropriate profile privacy securities features,
- making multiple friends lists with different permissions, and being aware of who a person is "friending".

LinkedIn is for professional networking where one can establish expertise by:

- posting professional profile,
- gathering and posting endorsements and recommendations,
- using Q&A to answer questions and post questions to get answers,
- be appropriately visible,
- staying in touch with one's network professionally,
- helping others,
- sending invitations to connect to people relevant to one's field,
- growing the network online and offline,
- joining and starting groups to share information.

Twitter is more conversational networking site than Facebook or LinkedIn. Seventy five percent messages relate to engaging one's followers, replying and re-tweets; while about twenty five percent are promotional. On Twitter, either one follows other people or are is followed by other people. People one follows can be potential employers, career professionals, business and industry leaders, publications. For job seeking on Twitter, hash tags that can be followed include #jobs, #jobseekers, #careers, #jobsearch.

In the context of teaching and learning, Blackboard is a popular cyberspace media that is popular in several institutions. Blackboard tools include Announcements, Tasks, My Grades, Send Email, User Directory, Address Book, Calendar, Browse NBA Archives, Goals, NBA

Archives Playlist. Within a course, syllabus, additional readings, Lectures, PowerPoint Slides, Homework Assignments can be posted. Within a course, one can also use Discussion Boards, Groups, Tools, Grade Center besides others.

- Discussion Boards are forums that are made up of individual discussion threads that can be organized around a particular subject. Create Forums to organize discussions.
- Groups allow Instructors to organize Students into Groups of any size. Instructors can provide communication and collaboration tools that only Group members can access. Groups can be created one at a time or in sets. Groups can be designated as Self-Enroll, allowing students to add themselves to a Group, or Manual Enroll, or have the Instructor assign students to a Group.
- Tools allow students to access Announcements, Blackboard Help, Blogs (create and manage), Calendar, Collaboration (Virtual Classroom & Chat sessions), Contacts, Course Portfolios, Discussion Board, Glossary, Groups, Journal, Live-Text-SSO, McGraw Hill Products, Messages, My Grades, Net Tutor, Portfolios Homepage, Roster, Send Email, Tasks, Turning Point Registration, White Board, Wikis, Wimba Pronto, and Worldwide Whiteboard.
- Grade Center allows Professors to post and manage grades.

Learning and teaching styles

Internet offers opportunities to introduce new learning styles for students and new teaching styles. It is naive to believe that by the extension of Internet connections with schools and universities the quality of education will increase automatically. This will only happen when we shift the accent from accumulating knowledge to new ways of communicating and to supporting the learning processes of students. The main changes are:

1. A shift of class education to computer-mediated access to educational resources.
2. A shift of the student as a passive recipient of education to a learning process which is directed by students themselves.
3. A shift of individual learning to group learning and group discussions.
4. A shift of a homogenous and balanced curriculum to a rapidly changing curriculum that is offered in greatly diverging shapes and formats.

It is all about a switch to a student-focused approach of education, generating a greater amount of learning autonomy. Students who learn via Internet have the opportunity to make a connection with educational resources, and to explore these resources in an order which meets their needs. In open learning environments teachers don't act as 'guardians of knowledge', but as tutors, helping students to facilitate their learning process.

Net Students learn better

Students learn as fast as or faster via Internet than in the traditional schoolroom. The Internet students performed 20 percent better than those who were taught in class. The netstudents appeared to be more co-operative and have a better understanding of the subject matter.

Teaching through Cyberspace

Teaching through cyberspace is a little like gardening. Like plants, students need a healthy and fertile environment if they are going to mature and thrive in their online courses. It takes planning, preparation, hard work, and enough knowledge to know what to do (and what not to do) for your labor to yield an abundant harvest. Online instruction is new to many instructors in higher education, and for good reason. In just a few years, it has grown from an academic experiment to a recognized alternative to traditional classroom learning. In fact, even traditional classes have embraced many of the teaching methods popularized by online education.

Because this instructional methodology is relatively new, many online instructors feel a bit like a novice gardener. They understand the basic concepts, but are eager to discover new tips or tricks from their colleagues. If two or more online instructors are together in a social situation, discussion will shift to war stories and proudly offered pieces of advice. This paper offers many of those tips and tricks, gathered not from the Sunday afternoon garden club, but from conversations and interviews with online instructors, current literature, conferences, email and listservs, along with personal experiences.

Teaching cyberspace shares similarities to teaching in the classroom; however, even the best traditional instructors may still find that teaching in an online environment can lead to feelings of inadequacy and being ill-prepared. Providing training and tools for ePedagogy is a way to build confidence and create successful outcomes in the online classroom. Even experienced online instructors can glean helpful and timesaving ideas from tips shared by other instructors.

Strategies to Improve Teaching and Learning

Lead by Example

The teachers must be familiar with the technological innovations, be it social media or educational tools, in order to understand how the students operate them. Teachers can act as a role model for their students by monitoring their own digital footprint and maintain a professional decorum and dignity while communicating with students via these technologies

Create Opportunities

In order to increase student awareness about safe, ethical and legal use of online information and tools, educators must include technology in the classroom tutorials and lessons where they use online technology and learn under supervision and guidance. These best practices and skills taught in class by creating opportunities, through discussions and practiced online will consequently help them become good citizens in life.

Advantages of Online Learning

Advantages to online teaching and learning include flexibility to attend classes, study, and interact when it is convenient. This flexibility is often a necessity rather than a luxury for adult students who are often managing a job, a marriage, and raising children. The flexibility makes it possible for many adults to attend class that would otherwise be unable to do so. Another important advantage results from the fact that the classes take place in cyberspace. Students can attend during their lunch hour, at night, or virtually any other time without worrying about needing to park or make it to a specific location in bad weather. This is a tremendous advantage that is important for both the instructor and the student.

One of the most important advantages comes as a result of class structures. Online learning can be impersonal, but, unlike auditorium classes, the student has the ability to interact directly with the instructor. Students read and react to comments made by the instructor and pose questions directly to the instructor. This means that the quality of instruction necessarily increases as students are able to get their specific questions answered.

Disadvantages of Online Learning

Disadvantages to online teaching and learning include factors that result from the impersonal nature that is afforded by a class that exists only in cyberspace. This can cause students to feel disconnected from the rest of the students and from the instructor. Without the traditional human to human interaction, the technology can impose a barrier that has an inhibitory effect on the learning process.

Overcoming Online Learning Challenges

To overcome the challenges and make the most out of the advantages, online instructors should be visible in the classroom and let students know that they are aware of what the students are doing. Students that are not participating should be contacted by the instructor to help reestablish a sense of personal connection. When students are missing assignments, an effort should be made on the part of the instructor to find out why and to offer assistance. Instructors should remember why the student signed up in the first place and work to help the student achieve his/her goals.

Conclusion

Numerous affordances of social media are amenable to both formal language teaching and informal language learning in cyberspace.

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