

SOWMYA K.N. “ SCOPE, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF BLENDED METHOD IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS.” THESIS. DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH ST. THOMAS’ COLLEGE, THRISSUR, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2019.

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

The selected teaching technique to carry out the research was blended method in which online learning and face to face learning were the components to teach. A range of schemes and approaches are in practice to learn a language and variety of classroom techniques are employed to familiarise the linguistic items. Reasons behind learning a foreign language are diverse and the task of language learning puts forward various challenges for the learner. There is no ultimate way to learn a language or to teach it and after many researches and experiments, an optimal condition for language learning was suggested than a decisive distinct method or approach. Here optimal condition means an atmosphere with minimal distractions or hindrances and maximum opportunity to practice language skills. In a formal situation, classroom is the setting for learning and the suitable environment has to be created within the four walls. Learners have to involve in authentic tasks and interact in the target language as far as possible. Teachers' role is to guide the learners to attend the learning process efficiently. Considering the language learning atmosphere in engineering college, online teaching and direct classroom teaching were chosen as the ingredients of the blend.

In every classroom, individual learning preferences will be there as they come from different backgrounds and have diverse goals behind language learning. Each student may have altered abilities and learning style, some will be highly intelligent; a few with average intellect and others may be very dull. While assigning a task, the teacher has to consider all types of students and the activity has to trigger the learner's interest and learning style. Motivating the learner to interact in the target medium is

an important part in language learning. In engineering colleges, teaching time for communication skills is limited and there was a necessity to provide the students with opportunity to practice the target language in varied contexts. Creating an environment that closely resembles the definite usage of the target language is extremely important and several resources are available to create such an ambiance. In the present research, using online learning platform Moodle, atmosphere similar to classroom was created and added the 50 students from different engineering colleges to the learning group. Language laboratory, newspaper and video players cater access to the content. Activities like group work, pair work, individual learning and collaborative learning encouraged the learner to practice the language and had incorporated in the study.

Use of ICT tools in the teaching process has modified the role of teacher and learner and the learning environment has also changed tremendously. E-learning, web based learning, blended learning, distance and open learning are the recent trends. Research over the past few years have indicated that students learn successfully in online environments as in traditional face to face classroom settings (Donnelly 21). On the other hand, researchers have found that online learning with a single course delivery mode may not provide most advantageous condition for successful learning. At this instance educators have started combining online materials along with face to face teaching objects. “Blended learning, which brings together traditional physical classes with elements of virtual learning” (Finn and Bucci 24). This combination of e-learning and traditional learning is termed as blended learning. The objective is to complement each other to bring out the best aspects of both the methods and create a favourable learning environment.

Proper awareness of the term ‘Blended Learning’ (BL), facilitates teachers to mix different types of approaches and methods to create the finest environment for learners. BL is not a novel concept in the field of education. The novelty is the range of different learning opportunities, and environment made possible with the advent of technology to support teaching and learning. Learners of the present use technology in and out of the classroom as part of the learning process. The traditional tools like blackboard and charts are replaced by whiteboards and projectors to create more visual impact. Apart from higher grades even in the primary classes, teacher uses technology to enhance their coaching. Students are given computer education in the primary classes itself to make them familiar with recent technology based learning trends. Along with subject knowledge teachers should learn to use all these latest gadgets. Technology has proved as an effective tool in capturing student’s attention quickly and even small children are familiar with mobile phones and computer. Teaching with the assistance of technology will be more enthusiastic for the present generation.

In a broad sense BL can be considered as a mixing of different learning environments. Face to face teaching is considered as the building block of any teaching environment. To enhance direct teaching, when internet or other technologies are integrated, it can be termed as Blended Learning. This type of education can be undertaken both inside and outside the classroom and the possibilities of it have been exploited in the research. The limited teaching hours for communication skills in engineering curriculum was extended through Moodle group and there was mediation of teachers aiming to achieve the needs of the learners. Maintaining the classroom instructor as admin of the online group helped to monitor the learning procedure as in classroom. The term ‘blending’ means fusing or mixing and the concept of assimilating different approaches, methods and strategies are not new. The effective teaching

methods have always fused different learning strategies as per the demand of learners to maximise knowledge acquisition and skill development. Teaching methods like guided individual study, self-paced learning, project based learning and computer based study can be fused together to form a blend. Excellent teachers always use different methods and brilliant learners will follow various strategies for learning. The best learning programme combines lectures, seminars, group and individual assignments. The trend of BL may be considered as a type of eclectic method which is a mixture of different methods.

The term BL was initially used to denote the concept of supplementing traditional classroom activities with e-learning. It became popular around 2000 when the technology was advancing tremendously. Since 1960s computers have been used in language teaching extensively. Initially there was scarcity of technology needed for language learners and this drawback was modified by internet which makes possible immediate access of information. Worldwide community provided authentic resources through its interconnected network. Emergence of web 2.0 was a turning point in the history of internet. This allowed users to interact and collaborate with each other in social media in contrast to websites where people are limited to the passive viewing of content. Social networking sites, blogs, wikis, video sharing sites and web applications are examples of web 2.0. Although, majority of the language teaching activities can be carried out in classrooms, growth of technology and internet have persuaded teachers to use web based communication to explore new learning styles.

Network mediated learning have attracted many learners recently and it has become an important component in the learning process. Role of computer is generally considered as a complement to classroom activities. Integrating technology into classroom based teaching and learning is the implication associated with the term BL.

It provides more individualised learning environment and personalised support. BL encourages both collaborative and individualised learning. Blended method endows with an opportunity to practice target language items beyond the classroom and accommodates a variety of learning styles. This method offers more flexible study environment anytime and anywhere as per the learner's requirements. It helps to learn language skills in a less stressed atmosphere. Rather than traditional tools learners will be more enthusiastic with technology. Approximate implementation of BL will definitely improve the learning experience.

Richness of resources, pedagogical innovations, cost effectiveness, higher possibility of interaction, learner control, ease of revision are some of the factors behind the allegiance for BL. In higher education, BL is defined as "a combination of technology and classroom instruction in a flexible approach to learning that recognises the benefits of delivering some training and assessment through online but also uses other modes to make up a complete training programme which can improve learning outcomes and/or save costs" (Banados 98). In such a method the different modes can be classroom instruction, technology and self study. The innovations of technology have shrunken the vast world into a global village where distance is not a barrier for communication. The spatial distance has been overcome by technology and brings users more close to access information or to interact.

BL leads to an excellent new approach in teaching and learning. Internet can be used in different levels of training process; assignments, notes, and projects are shared quickly with the help of internet. In the research, as an application level students were given orientation and performed activities like extempore and group discussion in classroom and written assignments and interactive sessions were conducted in Moodle. This type of arrangement provided longer learning hours. Institutions or different

batches formed their own website or social networking forum to share their ideas and could act together. All the members in the Moodle group got connected through the forum whenever or wherever they are across the globe and it helped to fulfil the purpose of the research. Such kind of learning environment complemented or supplemented traditional face to face learning atmosphere which had time and space restrictions. While designing a blend, the aim has to find the most effective and efficient combination of learning modes for learning. The focus should not be on to choose the most innovative items as opposed to traditional items but to create a learning environment which acts as a whole unit. There is immense range of possible components for a blend. Mixing information and technology items with face to face learning will not be sufficient to exploit the potential of BL. A detailed background study and understanding each component are very essential before blending.

To formulate the objectives of blending, it is essential to consider the needs and understanding level of students. The ingredients of the blend have to complement each other. A disparity between elements will confuse and frustrate the learners; moreover it will create adverse effect. Bringing together matching elements helps to construct a coherent learning experience. To form an effective blend, the instructor should possess good knowledge in both subject and technology and needs to identify the learning outcome, student's requirements and availability of materials. After securing job also there is necessity to update knowledge and create an attitude for lifelong learning. Considering this fact, IT has included in teacher training programmes for the last few years. The choice of learning material is crucial in the training session and within the language learning framework to offer the best result. The elements have to be methodologically sound to evocate the learners.

Participation of learners in peer to peer and group interaction is ensured by forming different online forums. The academic time can be extended to anytime by using blended method is one of the estimable advantages. Inside the classroom, the teacher is there to clarify doubts and to motivate learning, but after school time learners lack this boosting. By adopting blended method students can be in touch with teachers later school time also. Students who are shy to perform in front of others also can participate actively in online discussions. Thus they will be encouraged and empowered. E-mails are generally used for teacher and student interaction. Video conferencing, online chatting, social networking sites, e-mails are some of the platforms which enable regular communication. During the intervention learning management system in Moodle enabled the teacher to have an overview of the students' progress as the learners who did not show progress were easily identified through this system and the teacher exhibited special attention to improve them. Conducting test papers for each and every topic in classroom was a tedious task and this part was done in online to save teaching time.

Tools that promote communicative aspect of technology are vital in supporting learning community. Over the years the learning trend is shifting from teacher centred classroom to student centred classroom. The role of the teacher in a learner centred class is to hold up and motivate the learning process and the teacher has the responsibility of a guide or mentor. Teacher's role is not relinquished in the present context but the student became more active and started participating as per the recent classroom trend. In blended method also teacher plays an indispensable role and it is the instructor who provides a structured and interactive learning environment. Teacher acts as an organising force for the integration of learners' online and classroom learning. Many roles of the instructor in a traditional classroom like, to

motivate, to give feedback and to boost confidence for the learners remained unchanged in a BL classroom also. The same person who is handling classes in direct teaching continued to monitor online activities and this created more coordination between instructor and learner and helped to continue learning process without bothering time or space.

Learning becomes meaningful when the topics are relevant to the students' needs or interests and they actively engage themselves in learning process. The learners should be able to correlate the imbibed knowledge with their daily life. In BL there has to be active participation of students and should take initiative for learning outside the classroom to fulfil the requirements. The students may have good computer skills and integrating technology in teaching will not be a challenge for them. The teacher's role in BL cannot be underestimated. They often need training and support to implement technology in learning. In BL there is more opportunity for students to self directed learning and teachers have to motivate them for individual learning and to employ technology.

BL encourages autonomous and collaborative learning. It allows students to decide when and where they would like to study. Extraneous freedom may create some difficulty to students who have poor time management and are not familiar with learner autonomy. It is the teacher's responsibility to prepare and motivate the students to learn independently. In the early stages of the research, classroom time was allocated to develop learning skills and to suggest tips to improve learning habits. The created online forum used for discussion, queries and suggestion. Encouraging students to work in pair and in peer group in online was proved to be beneficial. Language tasks were created to work in group, either online or inside the classroom. Allocating deadline for both online and offline assignments will make the learners

realise the importance of time management. Helping the students to identify their strengths and weaknesses will give them an idea on how to improve. Autonomous learning does not indicate students learning their own; a friendly social environment is essential for successful learning. Creating different forums will be helpful for regular interaction and by this way classroom time can be extended.

One of the basic tools for online communication is forum or bulletin board. The teacher can manage and facilitate meaningful interaction through these forums. The teacher's role is as an e-moderator. Creating individual profile for students helped them to know each other quickly. Students were allotted to initiate discussions on various topics. Discussion on topic unit as per their interest instigated active participation of learners. Assigning a different student to monitor activities on weekly basis to assist the admin will provide opportunity for each student. Apart from the topic members can initiate relevant discussions. Both students and teacher get adequate time in online discussion. In classroom, teacher may not have time to encourage the dull student and to control the outspoken. This limitation can be overcome by sending personal mails to learner as per the situation demands. Unlike classroom situation, in online forum each student will get chance to raise questions, opinions and doubts.

To carryout BL activities students should be provided time to adapt and develop as per the new learning environment. A clear course plan including the starting and ending date of each unit, workload, and dates of unit test were provided during the initial stage of the study for more clarity and then students were aware, how to prepare and manage their study time. When compared to classroom studies, students could have flexible schedule and study time in online and were able to overcome the constraints of fixed classroom hours. Students were reminded that

flexibility does not mean keeping all the work for the last minute and in blended method at the same time there is deadline for online activities to make it time bound. Reviewing study plan regularly will help to check whether it is realistic and progressive. Students can take complete advantage of online community if it is being carried out in a well planned manner under proper guidance.

Working collaboratively will encourage team spirit among learners. Conducting group work regularly in class time has plenty of practical difficulties. Short duration of teaching hours and physical structure of classroom may act as barriers for such activities. Online forums offer space for frequent discussions. Through such interface students will get confidence and assurance that their peer group is there to help and give suggestions. Along with online forums online study materials are also functional. There are thousands of video and audio lessons prepared by subject experts on various topics. Learners can download and exercise it. Moreover online assignments provide opportunity for self correction. Most of the questions need just a click to answer and students will come to know the right response immediately. Achieving correct response will provide a sense of progress. The wrong response can be corrected after practice. Monitoring self progress will provide a clear idea on individual strengths and weaknesses. List of reference materials are provided in most of the websites to review and practice. Doing activities again after thorough preparation will help them to have consolidated learning.

In BL, both online and classroom tasks are mixed together. These two elements are not contradictory to each other but are complementary. The aim is to expose the utility of online and offline teaching to its limit. A number of ways are there to blend different components and it offers immense learning opportunities. There has to be a balance between number of classroom teaching hours and

independent activity in online. The teacher has to monitor and give guidelines for both types of learning. Detailed planning will help to manage online and offline time effectively. Areas which need face to face interaction can be done during classroom teaching and discussions of various aspects can be arranged through online platform. Dividing learning hours will enable the students to have a deep understanding of the topic. Teachers can encourage students to find more resources in internet and setting a collaborative online area helps to share the resources they found.

Several academicians have suggested different ways to form a blend effectively. The selected components can be used in innovative manners. According to Mei-Ya Liang and Curtis J. Bonk steps in constructing a new blend are;

- 1) Setting course objectives: - It can be decided based on the needs of the students. If the aim is to learn second language (L2), the course objectives can be; a) To improve L2 ability through uses of online tools and resources. b) To enhance strategy by communicating in different formats of texts with peers online. c) To develop text comprehension and production by constructing online content.
- 2) Selecting media and tools: - Selection of media and tools depend on the availability and practical environment of the course. Online news sites, text chat rooms, wikis, blogs, digital story books are some of the media and tools.
- 3) Formulating techniques and strategies: - Based on the objectives, using the media and tools instructional techniques and strategies are employed to blend online components into face to face learning.
- 4) Organising activities and technologies: - Different learning activities and supporting technologies are organised into a sequence of three phases, the first

phase involves with student interaction with somewhat familiar and relatively easy to use technologies under teacher guidance. The next level of interaction incorporates more elements of social and technological interactions. In the final stage various networked activities and media types are integrated in BL.

- 5) Evaluating student learning: - In the last stage formative evaluation is used to understand student's perceived learning and affective outcomes (23-24).

Following proper steps gives scientific outlook for the method. The five stages make easy to identify the progress or change by adopting blended method.

Scope of technology in teaching is enormous and the possibilities have been explored widely. ICT will not replace classroom teacher, however technology may assist the teacher in the teaching process. Teaching will be more productive by combining technology with classroom teaching. Students can interact with teacher both online and offline. A language is best learnt by using it. Getting more opportunities to interact in the target language will definitely improve the communication skills. Teacher can dedicate the classroom time to introduce the lesson. Conducting assignments and discussions in online will help to save teaching time. Uploading reference materials and notes will be useful for the students. They can download and save the materials for future purpose. Arranging video conference with subject experts will help to know different perspectives of the subject. This method can be utilised effectively if implemented with a clear planning.

Blended method has many aspects conversely it is not used widely for language teaching. The major reason is the anxiety of teacher to experiment with a new method. Lack of computer literacy also hinders the teacher to depend on technology for teaching. When they completed teacher training course they might not

have learnt computer or got familiarised with any technology. Moreover incorporating technology needs lots of preparation. The teacher has to assist, monitor and encourage for online and classroom learning. There are pros and cons for each and every teaching method. As technology is developing every day, it will be beneficial if the subject being taught with the assistance of technology. Scientific and technological development has made digital technology an effective learning device. The teacher and learners have to realise the importance of technology in the current situation and make use of it along with classroom teaching and learning.

Factors to be considered to accomplish an effective blend are the strategy of learning, identified outcomes, constraints which may occur and number of hours allotted for classroom learning and hours for teacher assisted online activities. In this method, as there is enough time for interaction outside the classroom, classroom time can be used for other efficient activities. Maximum opportunity for review is possible in blended method. Teachers can introduce grammatical items and vocabulary before class itself. This can be done through online. Some students may need more time to understand new vocabulary. Such kind of students can practice the items in online till they become confident. Learners can directly interact with native speakers of the target language and that will give them direct experience of accent and usages.

Acquiring native like fluency will help the candidate to achieve career goals globally.

Possibilities of online learning are revealed in the study as students made use of the wide range of resources available in internet. The materials are available in text, audio and video. Users can rely on the authenticity of sources by downloading contents from recognised official websites. In an efficient teaching pattern, teachers have to motivate students and check their previous knowledge. By doing such portions in online, instructor could save classroom time. Students can work together

in a forum and can formulate a collaborative vocabulary notebook. In addition to knowledge gain from the classroom, students can search for notes in internet and can share it in groups, so that each student will get a variety of notes on the same topic. An online document sharing area will be useful to upload and share all the resources. Before and after the direct classroom teaching, students can discuss the topic in online and can depend on texting and audio or video conferencing for interaction.

Along with several advantages BL has some disadvantages like the teacher needs thorough knowledge of the topic and technology, if the instructor is not available or is in offline, the learner has to wait for clarification and feedback. Sitting alone and learning may cause emotional insecurity for the student. Some students may need motivation for active participation in learning process. This is not possible in e-learning. In direct classroom teaching, teachers can check the previous knowledge of learners and can introduce a new topic based on that. In e-learning sessions this is not an effective procedure. A high level of self discipline is necessary for the learner to be successful in blended method. The above mentioned drawbacks can be minimised if the learner and instructor is well executing the method.

During class hours teachers can focus on activities through pair and group works that encourage using real life language. Student's speaking skill will be developed through such activities. This enhances skill to communicate in real life and motivate them to learn. While the study, a survey was conducted to identify the topics on which students had interest and they gave a list of topics after discussion among peer groups. Learners were allotted to facilitate discussion to boost their leadership skills and it gave an opportunity to monitor how they were conducting the session. Along with discussion, other activities like debate, individual presentation and self introduction were organised in classrooms. As all these are necessary in their future

career, students were enthusiastic. To improve writing skill the teacher assigned a topic to write an essay or to elaborate an incident as per their interest or imagination. Direct feedback was given for classroom activities.

Incorporating technology will create a new impact in teaching and learning and communication activities must not end in classroom. Stephan Krashen views that, language is acquired through meaningful activities and not by deliberate instructions. These activities can be continued outside the class with the help of various internet tools. Students are familiar with technology and they can improve language skills by using different applications available in internet. Active participation in blogs will improve writing skill and vocabulary. Software is available to improve specific skills; some of it focuses on grammar, some on vocabulary, and other on idioms or phrases. Learners can select a specific programme as per their need and interest. These applications are available for beginners and in higher levels. The usages may be well explained for learner's clear understanding and exercises will be there to check the progress of learning and students will be given immediate feedback.

BL is an outstanding pedagogical innovation and a new habit to mix any kind of teaching and learning methods. The goal is to provide the most efficient and effective instructional experience by combining different delivery modalities. Face to face learning is enhanced through BL by making use of relevant ICT tools. Instructors can make use of the possibilities of social networking sites, websites and other online platforms and can post notes and lectures in Facebook, Twitter or Blog in which students have account. The links of informative resources, audio or video lectures also can be upload in these sites and learners will find it more interesting as they visit online forums frequently. The teacher or the institution can form special groups including the learners or website for their own activities.

Use of virtual world, simulation, augmented reality and multiplayer gaming technology for learning are expected to increase in the next few years. Great challenge has been brought into education in the ICT age. Blended method is growing every day and refusing to include it in the learning process will be futile. Students are no longer the generation of the past education system and it has to be upgraded as per the needs and trends. Tomorrow's world map may be designed not according to the world mass but according to the internet users. Learners have to compete with this situation. Gaining subject knowledge and technological skills simultaneously will open new career vistas for them.

Blended method can be implemented effectively with preplanning. In the present experiment classroom hours are preserved to motivate the students and to give awareness about the relevance of acquiring English communication skills in the nearby situation. Activities like group discussion, individual presentation, and different writing assignments are arranged inside the class. Facility of language lab is also well explored. Development of all the four language skills is achievable by using language lab. Teacher can assign various segments based on the level of students. There is option to assign the same segment for every student or each one can be assigned different sections. In addition to this, instructor can create online forums class wise or for the whole institution. Even during holidays and after class time, teacher and students can interact through this forum. Including members who could accomplish successful career will be a motivating factor for other members. Teacher can follow several innovative tactics to make the forum interactive and boosting for the learners. Language games, new vocabulary, current social issues, career opportunities and other relevant items were shared through online platform with such intention.

Social Constructivism

Theoretical background gives framework for educational concepts and it is relevant to validate research on the basis of a theory. A paradigmatic shift has been marked regarding the educational theories during the last few decades. The change was from Behaviourism, Cognitivism and to Constructivism. The most influential learning theory at the end of 20th century was Constructivism. “Constructivist perspectives on learning have become increasingly influential in the past twenty years and can be said to represent a paradigm shift in the epistemology of knowledge and theory of learning.” (Applefield and Huber 21). The term Constructivism might have been derived from Piaget’s reference to his views as ‘constructivist’ and Bruner’s description of discovery learning as ‘constructionist’. Social Constructivism is otherwise known as Dialectical Constructivism. In contrast to Individual Cognitivism, Social Constructivism focuses on collaborative social interaction. Through this highly interactive process learner defines meaning and helps others to find meaning in the learning process. Thus knowledge is mutually built and this concept is a reflection of Vygotsky’s Socio Cultural Theory of Learning. This study aimed at improving communication skills through relations by following blended method and which will lead to effective social interaction.

Social Constructivism is a sociological theory which applies the general philosophical Constructivism in social settings. It focuses on the individual’s learning as a result of interaction in a group. This concept had been emphasised in the study and encouraged communication throughout learning. This theory was propounded by Lev Vygotsky, who was a cognitive psychologist and shared many ideas of Piaget’s

children's learning, but Vygotsky gave importance to social context of learning. Social constructivists give importance to both the context in which learning occurs and the social contexts that learners bring to their learning environment. It stresses interaction over observation. An active research area in Social Constructivism is computer supported collaborative learning. One recent branch of social constructivist perspectives focuses on the role of social technologies and social media in facilitating the generation of socially-constructed knowledge and understanding in online environments. Telecommunication tools such as e-mail and internet provide an opportunity for dialogue, discussion and debate; interactivity that leads to the social construction of meaning. Students can talk with other students, teachers, and professionals in communities even when they are far from the classroom. These elements are incorporated to carry out the experiment.

Social Constructivism stresses the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding. This concept has close association with theories like developmental theories of Vygotsky and Bruner, and Bandura's social cognitive theory. The basic ideology of Social Constructivism is that meaning is not created but constructed by the interaction with the society. For social constructivists, reality is constructed through human activity. Knowledge is also a human product which is constructed socially or culturally. Learning is also a social process and meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities. This theory focuses on the collaborative nature of learning. Vygotsky was against the assumptions of other cognitivists like Piaget and Perry. They believed that learning can be separated from social context. Vygotsky considered that (1978), every function in the child's cultural development appears twice, first on the social level and later on the individual level;

first between people (inter psychological) and then within the child (intra psychological).

Constructivism believes on the idea that humans generate meaning by the interaction between experiences and ideas. During infancy, it is an interaction between their experiences and their reflexes or behaviour-patterns. Piaget called these systems as knowledge schemata. His theory created wide impact on learning theories and teaching methods of education and is an underlying theme of many educational movements. Earlier, constructivist ideas were not valued and children's play was seen aimless and less important. Piaget did not agree with this and he viewed playing is an integral part for cognitive development. Involving in games will improve interactivity and good social relationships. Thus learners will be encouraged to learn themselves. Theoreticians who influenced Constructivism were John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner and Herbert Simon.

Social constructivists consider both the context in which learning occurs and the social contexts that learners bring to their learning environment as crucial. Within the framework of Social Constructivism, there are four general perspectives which make learning possible (Gredler). Firstly, cognitive tools perspective which focuses on the learning of cognitive skills and strategies. Students engage in social learning activities and together they produce a product as a group. Secondly, idea-based Social Constructivism gives education's priority on important concepts in the various disciplines; part-whole relations in mathematics, photosynthesis in science, and point of view in literature. These basic ideas expand learner's vision and become important foundations for learners' thinking and on construction of social meaning. Next is, Pragmatic or emergent approach, it asserts that the implementation of Social Constructivism in class should be emergent as the need arises. Knowledge, meaning,

and understanding of the world can be addressed in the classroom from the individual learner's view and the collective view of the entire class. Fourthly, Transactional or situated cognitive perspectives: This perspective focuses on the relationship between the people and their environment. Human beings are part of the constructed environment including social relationships. Human mind is functioning when it is interacting with the environment. The tasks of each individual changes if the environment and social relationships among group members change. Learning does not take place in isolation from the environment.

Computer supported collaborative learning is an instructional strategy based on Social Constructivism. In the blended method based learning experiment, traditional classroom teaching has been augmented by internet and online teaching. In such manner the research explored the possibilities of Social Constructivism. This strategy gave opportunities to students to practice 21st century skills in communication, knowledge sharing, critical thinking and use of relevant technologies. Student discussion in the classroom was also based on Social Constructivism. Conducting discussion results a wide range of advantages like participation in group discussion helps students to generalize and transfer their knowledge, it also builds a strong foundation for communicating ideas. Discussion plays a vital role in increasing student ability to test their ideas, synthesise the idea of others, and build deeper understanding of what they are learning. Tele communication simplifies the interaction process. Contacting someone or gathering information became an easy task for the learner with the advancement of technology and internet.

The use of technology to connect rather than to separate is very appropriate based on social constructivist theory. Vygotsky believed that children develop in social or group settings. To substantiate Vygotsky's assumption that a context was

created for learning in which students could get engaged in interesting activities that promotes and facilitates learning. The students were encouraged to work in groups and to think about issues and tackle problems. Thus cognitive power of students would be developed. Technology provides essential tools with which we can accomplish the goals of Social Constructivism. Telecommunication tools such as e-mail and internet provided means for dialogue, discussion and debate. Using these tools learners could interact with people even far from them and helped to access to different types of resources.

Social Constructivism views each learner as a unique individual with unique needs and backgrounds. The learner is also seen as complex and multidimensional. Wertsch considered that Social Constructivism not only acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of the learner, but encourages, utilizes and rewards it as an integral part of the learning process. This theory gives importance to the background and culture of the learner. It encourages the learner to draw out his own conclusion influenced by the background, culture and embedded world view. Language and logic are inherited by the learner as a member of particular society and culture. Learner's interaction with knowledgeable persons of the society also helps to improve ideology. Young children develop thinking capacity by interacting with other children and elders. It is important to consider the background and culture of the learner as social background helps to shape the knowledge and truth the learner creates, discovers and attains in the learning process. At the initial stages of the research a questionnaire was given to the students to analyse their background.

Social Constructivism emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding about what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding. Social constructivists believed that reality and knowledge are

constructed as a human product and they view learning as a social process. It does not take place within an individual, nor is it a passive development of behaviours that are shaped by external forces. Meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities. “For the learner to construct meaning, he must actively strive to make sense of new experiences and in so doing must relate it to what is already known or believed about a topic. Students develop knowledge through an active construction process, not through the passive reception of information” (Brophy 1992). Learner must build his own understanding and bringing pre-existing knowledge to the understanding process is also important. Current understanding may provide immediate context for interpreting any new learning. To validate this concept during the online session, students were asked to reinforce the knowledge they gained in classroom activities.

In Social Constructivism, the role of a teacher is that of a facilitator who helps to understand learner’s own meaning of the content. The design of learning environment should also support and challenge the learner's thinking. Vygotsky in his work suggests that knowledge is initially constructed in social context and is then appropriated by individuals. There should be dynamic interaction among task, instructor and learner. This means that the learning experience is both subjective and objective; culture, values and background become an essential part of the interplay between learners and tasks in the shaping of meaning. Collaborating learners with different background and skills help to arrive at a shared understanding of the content. Contradictory to traditional approaches, most social constructivists stresses on collaboration among learners. The social constructivist model emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the student and the instructor in the learning process. Reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeship, problem-

based instruction, web quests, anchored instruction and other approaches that involve learning with others stress on interactive learning.

Reality is constructed through human activity, members of a society together invent the properties of the world are the essential concepts in Social Constructivism. Social constructivists believe that people create meaning through their interactions with each other and the objects in the environment. They consider learning as a social process and it occurs when people are engaged in social activities. Social Constructivism and Social Constructionism are confused with each other. According to Social Constructionism meaning is constructed and there is no inherent meaning. Constructivism is a branch of Social Constructionism. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism has the idea that social learning precedes development and social interaction helps cognition. Social Constructivism is closely related to Social Constructionism in the sense that people are working together to construct artefact. However, there is an important difference: the former focuses on the the work of art that are created through the social interactions of a group, while the latter focuses on an individual's learning that takes place because of their interactions in a group artefacts.

The Social Constructivist paradigm views the context in which the learning occurs as central to the learning itself. The central notion is that, authentic or situated learning occurs when the learner's activities are relevant to the application of learning and that takes place within a culture similar to the applied setting. Activities like mock interview and role play were included in the research to give real life experience for learners. The concept of dynamic assessment is a way of assessing the true potential of learners that differs significantly from conventional tests. Interactive nature of learning is extended to the assessment process. General notion of assessment

is a process carried out by an instructor. Here, it is seen as an interaction between instructor and learner. The instructor gave suggestions to improve the learner's subsequent performances. Assessment is viewed as a continuous and interactive process that measures the achievement of the learner, the quality of the learning experience and course materials. The feedback created by the assessment process serves as a direct foundation for further development.

Several cognitive psychologists and educators have challenged the central concepts of Constructivism. As per the neo-Piagetian cognitive development theory, in mathematics and science, learning is considered as; if the requirements of the concept to be understood exceed the available processing efficiency and working memory then the concept is not learnable. Therefore, no matter how active the child during learning process, to be effective the learner must overcome the developmental and individual learning constraints. Some critics questioned the 'learning by doing' theory. According to them everything cannot be studied by experimenting, a few concepts have to be memorised and sometimes assume certain conditions. Kirschner, described Constructivism as unguided instruction and according to him it will be effective only for highly intelligent students. Mayer (2004) argues that not all teaching techniques based on Constructivism are efficient or effective for all learners, suggesting that many educators misapply Constructivism to use teaching techniques that require learners to be behaviourally active. He describes this inappropriate use of Constructivism as the "constructivist teaching fallacy". Mayer suggests learners should be cognitively active during learning and instructors should follow guided practice. Above all these criticisms, Constructivism has created its impact in educational theories.

In recent decades, constructivist theorists have extended the traditional focus on individual learning to address collaborative and social dimensions of learning. This theory promotes social skills and learning in group. The students' role is to construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. It means that the students construct the meaning of certain things by assimilating and accommodating it to their own experience. This tends to create active students. Based on this idea, activities are given due importance in both classroom and online sessions. The constructivist teacher encourages and guides the students in order to assess the activities which help them to get the understanding. Language plays an important role in this process as it is the tool to represent thinking in communication.

Cognitive Constructivism and Social Constructivism are the two types of Constructivism. The former theory was developed by Piaget and he conceptualizes learning as the result of constructing meaning based on the individual's experience and prior knowledge. The Socio Cultural Constructivism was developed by Vygotsky. He assumed that constructing meaning is through understanding and interaction with others in the social environment in which knowledge is to be applied. Although there is difference in the assumption between them, there is a similarity also, both create the learners to construct the meaning of thing by their own sense by building the connection through experiencing.

In traditional classroom there was emphasis on basic skills and adherence to fixed curriculum. Study materials were primarily textbooks or workbooks and learning was based on repetition. Teachers were considered as those who disseminate knowledge and students as the recipients of knowledge. Instructor's role was directive and rooted in authority. In constructivist classroom, curriculum emphasises on large

concepts beginning with the whole and expanding it into parts. Student's interest and pursuit of questions are valued. Study materials include primary sources of material and manipulative materials. Learning is interactive, building on what the student already knows. Teacher's role is active, rooted on negotiation and they have active interaction with students to construct their own knowledge and inferences.

Knowledge is seen as dynamic, and changing with our experiences. Students work primarily in groups and learning process is considered as important as the product.

Constructivism helps to create active students by building the connection between what is being learned and reflecting it through experience. Moreover, Constructivism promotes social and communication skills by creating a classroom environment that emphasizes collaboration and exchange of ideas. Major premises of the theory rightly fit into the study. Blended method had been adopted to create more exposure for learners to work together. The Social Constructivism theory is applied in the present research as peer interaction and increasing opportunities to communicate and enhancing linguistic skills are the objectives of the study.

Connectivism

Learning theories are changing over the years along with the progress in technology. Connectivism is a learning theory for the digital age. In the current blended method the components are online learning and classroom learning and online teaching exploits the best possibilities digital technology. This far-reaching theory of learning was developed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes. They have analysed the limitations of Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism to explain the effect of technology on our learning, communication and life style (Siemens 2004). Siemens has published a book titled *Connectivism: Learning as Network Creation* and Downes' book is named *An Introduction to Connective Knowledge* and both the books elaborate their concepts regarding Connectivism. Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism were developed when the use of technology was not in widespread use. Differing to other theories, Connectivism includes the scope of learning by human beings, organisms, organisations, machines, systems and networks. This theory represents the modern learning environment in which internet plays an important role.

Use of ICT has caused a substantial and qualitative change in the learning environment. Learning and knowledge rests on the diversity of opinions is the principle of Connectivism and it is a process of connecting specialised nodes or information sources and it may reside non-human appliances. Learning that is known but not necessarily actuated may rest in a community, network and on a database. Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning. Capacity to know more critical than what is currently known is important. Ability to see connections between fields, ideas and concepts is a core skill. Currency (accurate up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all Connectivist learning activities. Decision

making is in itself a learning process. Integration of cognition and emotions in making meaning is important as these two elements influence each other. Learning has an end goal - namely the increased ability to implement in application level. This increased competence can be in practical sense to develop the skill to use a new software tool or learning how to skate or the ability to function more effectively in a knowledge era; self-awareness or personal information management.

Different approaches and personal skills are needed to learn effectively in the present world. Learning happens through different ways like courses, communities, e-mails, conversations, reading and blogs. Organisational and personal learning are integrated tasks. To assert this view all the four communication skills were highlighted throughout the learning programme to enhance learners' interactive ability. Personal knowledge comprises of a network which includes organisations and network and it gives feedback into the network and continues to provide learning for the individual. Connectivism tries to provide an understanding of how learners and organisations learn. Decision making is also a learning process. Choosing what to learn is important and learners have to be careful while selecting materials from the website. Authenticity of the materials has to be verified before downloading it. The correct response or information may get altered due to later innovations and the learners have to update materials every now and then and should check the date of online contents. Learning means not only consumption, it is a creative process.

Connectivism emphasises the role of social and cultural context in learning. This theory proposes a concept similar to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), an idea later transposed to Engeströme's Activity Theory. As the name suggests, the idea of connectivity is central to Connectivism. It has assimilation with Bandura's Social Learning Theory which proposes that people learn through contact.

Knowledge can exist outside us and this can be learnt by connecting to specialised information sets. The central aspect of Connectivism is the network with nodes and connections. In this, a node can be a network, data, information, feelings and images. Connectivism sees learning as a process of creating connections and expending network complexity. This theory has similarity with Connectionism, as per which cognitive sciences see mental or behavioural phenomena as the emergent processes of interconnected networks of simple units.

Online courses are a trend setter in the later 21st century. Downes states that, at its heart, Connectivism is the notion that knowledge is distributed across a network of connections, and therefore that learning consists of the ability to construct and traverse those networks (46). He commends on the teaching and learning procedure as; to teach is to model and demonstrate, to learn is to practice and reflect. In 2008, Siemens and Downes delivered an online course called ‘Connectivism and Connective Knowledge’. It was an attempt to implement their ideas about learning. The course was free for candidates and around 2000 students were enrolled worldwide. It was following the model of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). Learners had the freedom to select synchronous or asynchronous tools as per their convenience. The course was repeated in 2009 and 2011. One of the MOOC platforms Moodle has been used elaborately for online learning in the research. The researcher created a learning platform in Moodle and added students in the experimental group as members of the group.

The general trend of previous generation was completing education and entering to a secure career and settle down being content in the same profession for life long. This concept has been altered and knowledge is growing exponentially nowadays. The growth of technology happened over the decades and not in a short

span of time. In many fields, the life of knowledge is measured in months and years. According to American Society of Training and Documentation the amount of knowledge has doubled in the last ten years and is increasing every year. Based on this, organisations and institutions are developing new methods to deploy information and new strategies for instruction. Earlier, the system was of stopping learning or upgrading knowledge after getting a job. Now the trend has changed and everyone has to update themselves to improve career. As part of this, different methods have been followed to continue learning. Learning has become a continual process, lasting for the lifetime. Learning and work related activities cannot be separated to each other in the present competent world.

Behaviourism and Cognitivism view knowledge as external to the learner and learning as the process of internalising knowledge. Behaviourism views learning as unknowable and observable behaviour which is important than internal activities. In Cognitivism knowledge is viewed as symbolic mental constructs in the learner's mind and learning as the process of imbibing these constructs into memory. Constructivists believe that learners create knowledge as they try to understand their experiences. Constructivism emphasises learner's meaningful activities to pursue learning. Most of the learning theories consider learning as a process which happens inside the person. These theories do not address learning that occurs outside individuals which stored and manipulated by technology. They also failed to describe learning which happens within organisations. Learning theories are concerned with learning process and not with value of what is being learned.

Learning theories get revised as the conditions of learning change. Sometimes, revising the existing theories may become difficult and modification will not be sensible. At this point an entirely new approach has to be introduced. Acquiring

knowledge is not just restricted to linear manner; learners can imbibe information from varieties of resources. Technology is playing an inevitable role which was performed by learners earlier; like storing and retrieving information. In this rapidly evolving atmosphere students have to update themselves. Learning environment is full of interconnections and networks. In the digital age, learning is inclusive of technology and connection making activities. Karen Stephenson observes that, experience has long been considered the best teacher of knowledge. Since we cannot experience everything, other people's experiences, and hence other people, become the surrogate for knowledge. Learning is focused on connecting specialized information sets, and the connections that enable us to learn more are more important than our current state of knowing.

Connectivism addresses the challenges faced by knowledge management activities of corporations. For effective learning knowledge in database has to be connected to the learner in the right context. Information flow within an organisation is important for organisational effectiveness. An additional element in understanding the learning models of digital era is analysis of social networking sites. The preliminary point of Connectivism is the individual; personal knowledge is comprised of a network, which feeds into organizations and institutions, which in turn feed back into the network, and then continue to provide learning to individual. This cycle of knowledge development (personal to network to organization) allows learners to remain up to date in their field through the connections they have formed. Creating new nodes will help the learners to manage learning in a more flexible manner. Amplification of learning, knowledge and understanding through the extension of a personal network is the epitome of Connectivism.

In Connectivism, the starting point for learning occurs when knowledge is actuated through the process of a learner connecting to and feeding information into a learning community. Siemens (2004) states, “A community is the clustering of similar areas of interest that allows for interaction, sharing, dialoguing, and thinking together” (6). A learning community is represented as a node and always connected to a larger network. A network is connected of two or more nodes to share resources. Nodes may be of varying size and strength, depending on the concentration of information and the number of individuals who are navigating through a particular node (Downes 36). Knowledge is distributed among these networks and can be stored in a variety of digital formats.

Information is constantly changing its validity and accuracy may also change over the period. Connectivism points out that, two important skills which contribute to learning are the ability to seek current information, and the ability to filter secondary and extraneous information. Siemens observes that, the capacity to know is more critical than what is actually known and the learner has to develop an ability to take decisions on the basis of information that has been acquired during learning process. Learning is a cyclical process and learners will connect to a network to share their knowledge and to acquire new information. Learners may transverse networks through multiple knowledge domains and they may create interdisciplinary networks. Connectivism believes that knowledge does not reside in one location, but rather that it is a confluence of information arising out of multiple individuals seeking inquiry related to a common interest and providing feedback to one another.

Three predominant factors are influencing and instigating change in the dissemination and retrieval of information and each of it fundamentally alters the

formal educational landscape. Learners' needs are not sufficiently being met by traditional training models of instruction, information growth has necessitated new means by which to navigate and filter the information that is available, and advancing technologies are increasingly enabling learners to connect to one another and to knowledge networks of their own making (Siemens 2008). In the changing technological era, Connectivism fits as learning theory. Increased influence of internet and online connectedness has created implications over educational practice also. Internet, along with Web 2.0 and mobile developments, makes new and different educational structures, organisations, and settings. The online and face-to face networks that people build-up throughout their lives will provide expertise knowledge, in addition to the guidance that local or online tutors can offer. Learners will be at the centre of the learning experience, rather than the instructor and the institution. Learners will be instrumental in determining the content of the learning in addition to decide the nature and levels of communication.

Connectivism involves in making connections with others, and building upon the work that has come before. In short it is return to the basics which emphasises learning from one another and a strong sense of mentorship between each other. Active participation of all the learners involved in the learning process was required for the successful implementation. Each member of the Moodle group formed as part of the research helped to ensure individual involvement. This theory is an integration of instructional technology and digital technology. The classroom session has been considered as instructional technology and online teaching as digital technology and both have been fused to get the best output. It is a model for life-long learning. As per the theory, individuals co-create knowledge in a global society. A real challenge for any learning theory is to actuate known knowledge at the point of application. As

knowledge continues to grow, access to learner's need is more important than what the learner currently possesses. Connectivism presents a model of learning that acknowledges the tectonic shifts in society where learning is no longer an internal or individualistic activity. How people work and function is altered when innovative tools are used. Connectivism provides insight into learning skills and tasks needed for learners to flourish in a digital era. This study which fuses technology with traditional teaching to instil communication skills is an application level of Connectivist theory. Blended method promotes collaborative learning and self learning with the assistance of modern tools and digital technology.

Language Across the Curriculum Approach

Improving linguistic skills will definitely enhance student's learning and outcomes. In institutions, along with English teacher all other faculties can take effort to improve the linguistic ability of learners. English can be the regular medium for communication and instruction. Every subject has its own terms and way of expressions; scientific report and review to a literary work require different style. Only by proper training and practice learners can get acquainted with these dissimilar modes. Learning every subject in English will help the learner to get acquainted with the corresponding terms and methods. Thus, extending language learning process to all classes will be more beneficial. Along with English teaching faculties, all the instructors can take effort to improve communication skills and linguistic abilities of students. This aspect is emphasised in the research. LAC is an abbreviation for the term Language Across the Curriculum. It is an innovative approach as it integrates language learning and content learning. LAC holds the view that the process of language learning is not restricted to English classrooms alone but it takes place in each and every subject, in every learning activity and across the whole curriculum (Quong and Linder 61). Institutions can form a teaching plan based on this concept. As part of the intervention of experiment, along with subject teacher, instructors from other streams are also given orientation regarding the relevance of improving communication skills.

Language Across the Curriculum is a recent trend in language teaching and it was developed in the late 1970s and earlier 1980s. It originated in Great Britain and received wide acceptance along with the publication of Bullock Report entitled "A Language For Life". Communicative Approach and communicative competence was the most discussed terms among socio linguists. Language is for the purpose of

communication is the basic concept of this approach. Some of the notions of Communicative Approach have relevance for LAC; procedure rather than product, message rather than medium, learner's potential rather than teacher input, and language learning through tasks. Bullock Report of 1975 focused on three elements mainly; 1) Language crosses the curriculum 2) Every teacher is a language teacher 3) Every school should have a language policy. Though the report was made in the context of mother tongue it is also applicable in foreign language learning context. Foreign language acquisition or second language learning can be while learning each and every subjects and activity. The development of language skills and competencies has to be integrated into subject specific teaching also. Activities like group discussion and debate were encouraged in classes of other subject also. Most of the instructors gave positive response to this gesture.

LAC acknowledges that language learning not only takes place in English class rooms but it can happen in each and every subject and learning activities. This approach emphasises that linguistic development is the responsibility of all faculties across the school and all the subject areas. Language plays an important role in every learning process; whatever may be the subject, the concept is explained with the help of language. Students assimilate new ideas when they listen, read, write and speak about what they are learning. Speaking and writing is the representation of their thought. So improving language will lead to better expression. Learners were made aware of the relevance of enhancing communication skills at the personal interaction stage itself.

In examination point of view also LAC plays an important role as each subject requires different styles of representation. Along with teaching the subject the teacher explained how to use particular terms and how to answer questions which are likely to

appear in exams. If every educator is ready to take this effort obviously the student will be competent in all the areas. Initially, students have to acquire good reading and writing skill. Along with adequate vocabulary, thorough practice will make them confident, mock exams and quiz were conducted for practice. LAC demands a structured, monitored and assessed approach to teaching. Training on subject specific terms, subject specific word formation, forms of expression, competency and skill required for comprehending and integrating information were given.

LAC holds the view that language is not a passive medium for instruction but it takes the foremost role in forming and handling new concepts. Whether the subject is mathematics, science, history or music, language is the tool for learning and it makes the learning process in a meaningful context. Normally language teaching will be focused only on linguistic aspects but LAC concentrates on both language and knowledge. Language is used as tool in inculcating knowledge among learners. The learner, teacher and the institution play significant role in LAC. Learners use listening, speaking, reading and writing to view, analyse and represent thoughts. Subject teachers have to integrate language and content by introducing relevant language items and English teachers have to reinforce language skills from time to time.

Different forms and aspects of language learning within the curriculum are brought together in LAC and it emphasises the importance of language in non-linguistic subjects and in a broader sense it suggests the importance of whole language policy in the curriculum. The latter includes mother tongue and foreign language (as second language or third language) and the language dimension in all other subjects. As a concept, LAC acknowledges that language learning occurs while mother tongue learning and foreign or second language learning and in the classes of

other subjects. In a subject specific context, language is viewed as a tool to comprehend and analyse the corresponding content. As an extension to this concept, new linguistic forms can be learned while handling every subject. For instance, the following table exemplifies this approach, as the students learn new vocabulary while comprehending the specific details in their syllabus.

Table 2.1

| Topic | Linguistic Terms |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Subject specific vocabulary | Balance sheet, Emulsifier, Steriliser |
| Word formation | Prefix, Suffix, Word root |
| Forms of expression | Justify, Elucidate, Substantiate |
| Comprehension | Identify, Select, Analyse |

Accordingly, in all the subjects, new forms of language usages are being introduced. There emerges the need of central educational experience which will have marked effect on learner's understanding and learning experience. Non-linguistic subjects require slightly different skills and competency. This should lead to specific ways of proceeding new insights in topics and integrating it with previous or existing knowledge. Sometimes there will be requirement of overlap in competences in subjects like the association between basic language items and specific discourse components. Academic language skills do not develop by themselves or by merely using it in subject specific contexts alone, the learner has to be stimulated and trained through systematic development and language improvement measures.

The primary goal of LAC is to support the language development in each and every learner; in all domains of language usage and in each learning activity in the institution. This approach proclaims that each educational institution should possess its own language policy. The field of language teaching have witnessed several methods and approaches. Similar to other development in the field of foreign language learning, LAC cannot be the ultimate explication; instead, it is an exciting new way of looking at language learning. Like in all areas of foreign language teaching there should be an eclectic and well balanced approach which is a combination of different approaches based on the needs of learner and circumstances. In order to implement this, essential preparations on progressive curricula and appropriate teaching materials are mandatory. Every teacher has to be a language teacher by inculcating academic language related to the contents in students, such an approach will result in enhanced linguistic competency. In order to validate LAC, one faculty from engineering stream started using Moodle to teach his subject and included plenty of activities to engage learners. In the present research, LAC has been given importance and along with communication skill classes faculties of different streams have been motivated to concentrate on linguistic elements along with corresponding subjects.

Communicative Approach

Communication is the prime function of language and several approaches have been formulated based on this premise. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has made major changes in the history of language teaching in the twentieth century. Situational language teaching and Structural approach were prominent before this movement. Linguists felt the call for a change and focus on mere mastery of structures has to be shifted to communicative proficiency in target language. Scholars who advocated this view were Christopher Candlin and Henry Widdowson. The main concepts of Communicative approach are that the goal of language teaching is to make communicative competence and to develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. This notion was the key objective of the research. Finocchiaro and Brumfit observes that in CLT meaning is paramount and contextualisation is the basic premise (116). Dialogues used in teaching are centred on communicative functions and are not normally memorised.

The prerogative of the current research is to promote language learning through its use in meaningful contexts and not by memorising language items. Drilling occurs peripherally and any device which helps the learning procedure is accepted varying according to their age, interest and need. Instructor has encouraged learner's attempt to communicate from the beginning onwards. Judicious use of native language and translations are allowed if students benefit out of it. Reading and writing skills can be started from the first day onwards if desired. Supporters of communicative approach consider that the target linguistic system will be best learned through the process of struggling to communicate. They did not consider 'language is habit', for them language is created by the individual often through trial and error. By

communicative competence they meant, ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately. Fluency is not measured in the abstract form but in context.

Teachers are supposed to motivate learners to work with the language. The intention to include more activities in both online and classroom sessions was to offer more opportunities to communicate and get acquainted with the language.

A linguistic structure is best acquired when the learner's attention is on meaning and is preoccupied with understanding, working out, relating or conveying messages in the language (Wah Kam). There is logical distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence. Communicative competence is related to real life communication purpose of language. Patrik C. Kameen names constructive components of this approach as participants (speaker, hearer, sender, and receiver), setting (psychological or cultural setting), the actual form of a message or a linguistic description of the message, topic; what is the message about. Purpose, goal or intention about communication, channel; whether oral or written, code (language or variety within a language), norms of interpretation (how different norms of interaction or violation of them interpreted), genre (casual speed, poem, prayer, form, letter). Attention to grammar is accidental as per this approach and incorrect utterances are rectified by the teacher.

Communicative method includes communication through conversation, reading, listening comprehension and writing. One can use contemporary elements of tele-communication, radio, visual communication which are usual in the world of exchanging information. These elements are incorporated in the study as part of online teaching. While selecting a textbook the teacher should keep in mind that it should be interesting and accessible to students. Even the most attractive textbook will not give any results, if its contents (drills, exercises, rules) are separated from the

communicative learning. The teacher must be aware of the laws according to which language functions. Generally communication is exchange of ideas, information, concepts or facts. It has close association with written and oral discourse.

Communication also includes a gesture, a poster, movement, sometimes even silence.

The wide aspects of communication were tried to inculcate in students of the experimental group and they were divided into small groups and prepared them to practice conversations in different situations.

Testing is an integral part of any learning process. As per communicative approach testing must be done in terms of communication. Teacher can follow different strategies to measure student's communication skills. Testing part of the research was to check all the aspects of language; listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking and writing abilities. Communicative system tests attempts to check what students know but it does not test what students do not know. The examination can be taken according to the students' level. Student's active participation in class conversation helps to improve communication skill naturally. Communicative method determines communication without preliminary preparation. Teacher has not only to teach how to use language but should give awareness about how to avoid colloquial usage and interference of mother tongue. In lower levels it will be difficult to teach communication skill as their vocabulary will be limited and they may find it difficult to identify with the created situations.

In the initial level, communication is more focused on fluency than accuracy. Accuracy is emphasised when they want to deal with students getting things right, take an opportunity for correction, or gauge the success of their teaching. Liberated interaction involves more choice, therefore more ambiguity, and less teacher intervention but this does not mean they are un-structured. The teacher plays an

important role in the process, to set up activities when communication actually takes place as a lot of preparation is essential for equipping students with vocabulary, structures and functions, as well as strategies, to enable them to interact successfully. Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence, referred to by Guangwei Hu, includes four sub-categories, namely grammatical, sociolinguistic discourse and strategic. They consider someone competent in English should demonstrate both rules of grammar and use.

Several academicians have made observations about communicative approach. The famous linguist David Nunan classifies the five features of CLT as- an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation, the provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself, an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning and an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom (148). Practitioners claim that communicative approach is designed to give importance to learner's needs as well as emphasising the connection between language inside the classroom and its real use outside the classroom. Any teaching practice which helps to improve the communicative competence in an authentic context is considered as acceptable and authentic form of instruction. Teacher can organise pair and group work, fluency based activities, and grammar based activities to develop the confidence level of learners.

There are linguists who disagree with some of the aspects in CLT. Noam Chomsky opines that, the then linguistic theories focused on linguistic competence that enables speaker to produce grammatically correct sentences as the aim of learning

a language. Such a concept was unsatisfactory as it failed to picture all the aspects of language. He advocated for a theory which incorporate communication competence. The four dimensions of communication competence are; grammatical competence- refers to what Chomsky calls linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence which means an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place. Discourse competence indicates the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. Strategic competence refers to the coping strategies that participants use to initiate terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication.

The communicative approach focuses on the use of language in day to day life or the functional aspects of language, and less on the formal structures. To validate these concept different kinds of activities to enhance various communication skills were adopted in the research and blended method was followed to ensure maximum opportunity for learning linguistic skills. There should be balance between the functional and structural aspects. It gives priority to meanings and rules of use rather than to grammar and rules of structure. A major principle underlying this approach is its emphasis on learners' needs and interests. This implies a heavy responsibility for teacher as she should modify the syllabus to fit the needs of the learners. Several requirements of learners may be difficult to accomplish as not all classrooms can afford group work activities and providing teaching aids and materials also sometimes may not be easy. In spite of all these criticisms communicative approach received wide acceptance around the world as the basic purpose of language is to communicate.

Language Lab



Fig. 2.1

Possibilities of technology are exploited in teaching and learning immensely and it is relevant to analyse some of it in application level. One of the components of blended method in the study is online learning and language lab is made a part of it. Regarding mother tongue learning, involuntarily we follow the order of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). The child listens to elders and naturally starts speaking and in each stages of growth their communication level improves further. In foreign language learning class room, this order is reversed. Initially the student will be taught alphabets, then words and sentences. The next stage is to speak without any exposure to auditory sources other than the instructor who is also a non native speaker and might have learned language in the same manner. Thus learners lack opportunity to listen native accent and diction. Inhibition to effective communication, learning incorrect pronunciation and inability to comprehend native

accent are the disadvantages of learning through this system. To overcome these shortcomings of learning, language laboratories were introduced in language teaching. Through lab, students can listen to recorded voice of native speakers and they can repeat and record the same. It is possible to compare accent and pronunciation and learner can identify both weak and strong area in own utterance. In the experiment students were assigned practice hours in language lab along with classroom teaching to enhance their listening and speaking skill.

Language laboratory is a modern tool used in language teaching. It comprises of audio and video lessons to enhance linguistic skills. Nowadays it is commonly encouraged in schools and colleges. The first known lab was at the University of Grenoble in 1908. Until 1990s, language labs used tape based systems or cassettes. Current installations are commonly multimedia based personal computers. Though student centred approach is followed in language lab training it is the teacher who assigns lessons to practice. The students' systems will be connected to the administrator's system and each computer will have a head phone and a microphone. Through the administrator's system teacher can observe all the learners' activities. Two way communication is possible through the intercom facility. The administrator's system can be operated only by inserting the master key (a gadget similar to a pen drive) and it prevents any kind of misuse of the software.

Acquiring fluency and right pronunciation will enhance oral communication and language lab enables such advancement. The learner has freedom to practice the assigned lesson as per expediency. There are options to play, pause, stop, repeat and compare the lessons. Learner can view the text or the video on the monitor and listen to the audio through the headphone simultaneously. They can listen to the audio and can repeat the same to record in his own voice to identify the accuracy in

pronunciation. It helps to compare the articulation and accent with that of a native speaker. This is known as an audio active-comparative system. From a technological point of view, this overdubbing is made possible by the use of a two-channel tape recorder. Repeating this drill helps to acquire native like accent. Aspects of language lab and advantages of regular practice were explained to the students who were the target group of the research. At the intervention stage, it was evident that students get bored by hearing only audios and to avoid this instructor assigned interesting video, conversations, plays and movies to listen and compare. In addition to this, students were asked to type words or phrases in the 'text to speech' area and they could listen to the typed text's pronunciation thus they were able to clarify doubts regarding pronunciation and accent of any words. Apart from the installed portions of the software, new contents were added to the lesson.

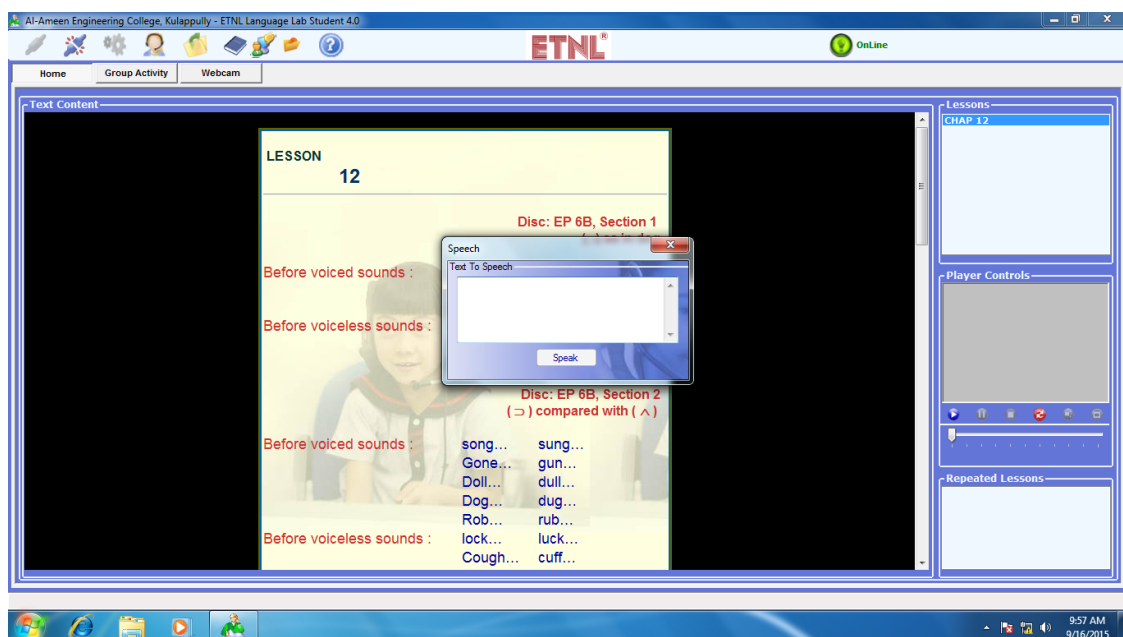


Fig. 2.2

During 1970s and 1980s reel to reel tape system was used in language laboratories and this was not much successful. The tape was difficult to handle and

data storage was also limited. As there was no electronic system the instructor could not control all the systems at a time. It had no option to rewind or forward wind of the running tape and it caused waste of time. In the later years tape recorders in language laboratory became more complex, being capable of multi tracking and electronic remote control. Repeated recording of audio during practice demanded regular replacement of control panel and this aspect created practical difficulty. The installation of language laboratory is usually done by some agencies or service engineers and they may have a wide area for service and it is not possible to get their assistance every now and then. Consequently if a system gets malfunctioned for a long time it will be out of utility. Language lab has some disadvantages like; the instructor can assign only preset lessons which demands preparation time. Moreover language laboratory is expensive to acquire and maintain. Installing a large number of systems and allotting trained faculties for lab may cause high expense for the institution. Subsequently self financing institutions maintained language lab comparatively well and govt. or aided institutions found it difficult to manage for economic reasons.

In the 1990s multimedia capable personal computers were installed in language laboratories and software and hard drives in place of analogue tape became popular. It allowed extended functionality, in terms of better administration of audio with some levels of internet and video formats. This offered more quality in experience for learners. Today manufacturers depend on proprietary networks or expensive sound cards to deliver their media successfully. Though technology has changed over the years, the principle behind language lab essentially has not changed. Language lab is a teacher-controlled system connected to a number of student booths, containing a student's control mechanism and a headset with a microphone. It is the

teacher who decides and assigns the lessons and student activities will be regularly monitored.

Language lab software can be installed and accessed on any networked personal computer anywhere in a school, college, or university campus. Software-only systems can be located in one room, from room-to-room or campus-to-campus. This helps to cross the barrier of space. In a software based language laboratory, teacher can correct simultaneously; instead of waiting to correct student recordings after they have been recorded and collected back. The next generation digital language labs allow teachers to monitor, control, deliver, group, display, review and collect, audio, video and web based multimedia content. The student player will be linked to the teacher console and they can play audio, video and web based formats. Learners can rewind, stop, start, go back to last sentence, record, fast forward, repeat phrase and bookmark. As the teaching system moved from teacher centred to student centred approach language lab also became more flexible for learner under teacher's surveillance.

In modern language labs the teaching contents of audio and video can easily be integrated and the instructor can alter the materials as per the requirements. Learners could interact with each other and with the teacher and this helped to have group activities or pair tasks. Traditional classroom learning does not offer much opportunity to speak for the learner. Teaching will be mostly monotonous and students will be inactive listeners. For them the only exposure to language is hearing. With the aid of language lab, along with listening, students could practice speaking skill also without distracting each other regardless of the class size. As they are sitting together and learning, it appeared to be more interesting than practising alone at home. For the teacher language lab was beneficial as large number of students can be

taught pronunciation and accent at a time and lessons were in the format of records which may be used for other batches of learners.

Language lab is a technology assisted system to improve LSRW skills. Accesses to different types of materials encourage the students for independent learning. The automated learning environment removes learner's fear and creates a comfortable learning atmosphere. Direct transmission of audio through headphone provides unambiguous clarity of lessons. In certain situations, the teacher will have doubt regarding the word's actual pronunciation or the voice may not be audible. The well scrutinised lessons facilitate to avoid such errors. Dissimilar to class room, it is possible for the teacher to pay individual attention to learners as each student will be accessing different systems. Even the shy student has the opportunity to practice linguistic activities without stage fear inside the lab and one can repeat the exercises as the number of attempts while practice is not a concern. The ultimate aim of language lab is to improve the quality of communication skills and enhance confidence level. Language laboratories represent the single largest investment and instalment of audio resources in education. The quality of the language proficiency will be more when students learn it from multimedia based, digital and computerised Language Lab. A well trained teacher can utilise all the possibilities of technology in language teaching for the benefit of learners. Majority of the engineering colleges have established language lab and it assists language training in a great manner.

MOODLE



Fig. 2.3.

In the current research, possibilities of Moodle have been explored and made as a part of blended method. Moodle is a free and open source software learning management system developed on pedagogical principles. It is widely incorporated for blended learning, distance education, flipped classroom and other e-learning projects in educational institutions, work places and other sectors. This platform is used to create private websites with online courses for educators and trainers to achieve learning goals and aids to extend learning environment through online communities. A forum including the students of the experimental group was created and used it widely for practicing communication skills. ‘Moodle’ is the acronym for Modular Object Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. The website was developed by Martin Dougiamas with an objective to help educators to create online courses with a focus on interaction and collaborative construction of content. The first

version was released on 20 August 2002. Now the project is led and coordinated by an Australian company Moodle HQ and which is financially supported by a network of sixty Moodle Partner service companies across the globe.

Moodle as a learning platform enhances existing learning environments by offering virtual learning setting and acts as e-learning tool with a wide range of innovative features. Plugins (flexible tool set) allow users to extend the features of the site. There are hundreds of plugins which extends the features of core functionality. Each plugin is maintained in the Moodle plugins directory. As of April 2015, there are over 1,000 plugins available for Moodle with over 7 million downloads. Moodle has been available over 100 languages to install and responsive web design allows it to be used in mobile devices. The mobile application is available in Google Play, App Store (iOS), and the Windows Phone Store. Users can download and install Moodle on web browser. Pre-built combinations of Moodle with a Web server and database are available for Microsoft Windows and Macintosh.

The pedagogical philosophy of Moodle includes a Constructionist and Social Constructivist approach to education which emphasises that learners along with teachers can contribute to learning experience. Based on this principle, Moodle provides opportunities for learning communities. Ideas of these two learning theories have been incorporated in the study. Institutions can install as many Moodle servers they need without paying license fees. Learners of the experiment were asked to download Moodle app in mobile phones or computer. MoodleMoot is a conference option for community members to learn about Moodle, to share learning experience using the platform and to discuss research in related educational technologies and contribute ideas to future development. Sometimes students may feel introvert to interact in these forums as it is viewed by all the members. In such cases, Moodle

allows users to create individual wiki private to each learner and teacher. This option helped to have collaborative document exclusively between the learner and instructor while the study.

As an aftermath of technological development, everyone has access to internet and familiar with various websites. Majority of the users are interested in chatting and spending time on social networking sites. When students need to locate information from internet, most of them fail to find the right links. Many of them are lethargic to use the internet facility for learning purpose. When the process of learning through internet is under the supervision of teacher, learners may feel more stern and active. Generally students have the tendency to communicate in English only when the situation demands and this restricts the use of language. Creating a discussion forum in Moodle under the control of instructor opens opportunity for meaningful interaction. Moreover it helps to carry out communication outside the classroom. Tools provided by Moodle can be used to integrate any level of course and to experience cooperative learning.

Moodle supports conventional classroom learning system as a courseware package and learning system. It can be exploited to do additional work outside the classroom and as a delivery system for course materials in blended learning, or as standalone online learning platform. These aspects had been used in the research and different assignments and activities were arranged through this forum and the teacher was able to evaluate each student's performance. The instructor can assign marks or credits based on the performance and such experience may contribute to support the use of innovative technologies in language learning to increase foreign language proficiency. The teacher has to prepare the platform and its parts before initiating the activities, considering that each language skill has to be exploited, and then the

students be invited to join the integration course. Interaction between learner and instructor has to ensure as a continuous process.

Students were assigned to answer the exercises and send it back for correction to the teacher via e-mail or through the chat forum in the platform. The teacher had the discretion to decide the type of assignments and had to regularly monitor students. Varieties of written assignments were given through Moodle while online teaching. Communication skill learning through Moodle was innovative experience for learners. Teachers who had several years of experience acknowledged that quiz making is one of the most effective functions of Moodle. Different types of quizzes like multiple choices, true/false, numerical, matching the correct option and description were organised as per the need and relevance to language teaching. The time limit and number of attempts were optional and were preset by the instructor. The intention of Moodle is not to exclude textbooks from learning procedure but to collaborate e-learning with conventional methods. Initially the teacher has to select the learning objects from textbooks which can be used and reused in various learning environments. Dividing the learning objects into small pieces will help for easy handling. Audio and video files are available to save in the directory as resource material. Many sites like BBC offer learning material which can be linked or downloaded to use in the platform. Teacher can prepare additional audio or video material to contribute to teach or to give assignments. Moodle proves to be an effective component for online teaching.

WORDPRESS.COM

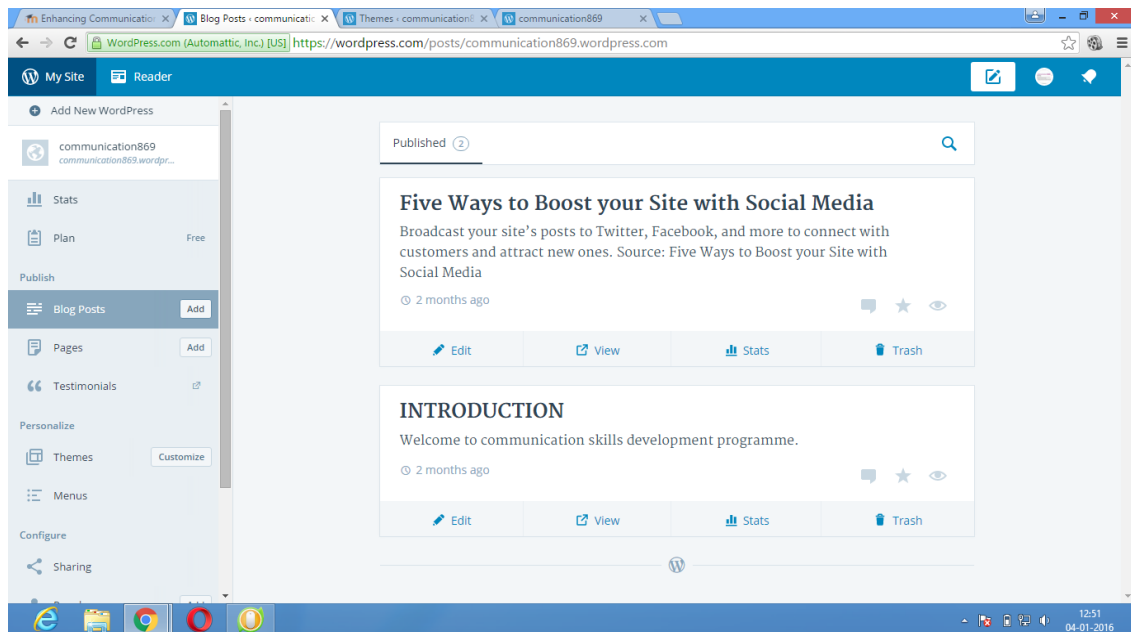


Fig. 2.4

Wordpress was used in the research to advertise and publish the communication programme organised as part of the study. Wordpress.com is a free website to create personal and business blog or site and using this platform one can showcase objects or market products easily. It is a powerful and versatile area to explore. Wordpress was started in 2003 and now it has grown to one of the largest self hosted blogging tools in the world. The website is an open source project and millions of users are visiting to this site every day. The user can download and install a software script called Wordpress and to execute this, user needs a web host. The site is completely customisable and can be used for any purpose. Those who do not want to download have to depend on wordpress.com. The hosting will help to publish and share links in the home page and other social networking areas. The available different themes allow users to change the look and functionality of the website. The plugin architecture allows users to extend the features of the blog. Increase in the

number of users is an evidence for the success of the website. The intention behind using this platform was to introduce new online forum for learners.

ONLINE LEARNING WEBSITES

Online learning is a technically advanced trend in education system. Online courses are advantageous for people who want to continue education at home or through non-traditional learning style. Generally learners of online courses are looking for career advancement, career changes or want to finish a degree course. There are hundreds of study programs and online schools and choose among the right one is the task of learner. Several universities and institutions conduct online courses along with regular programmes. Online websites offer multidisciplinary courses in art, literature, science, medicine, technology, philosophy and many other streams. While selecting the course, the learner has to be careful about the authenticity of institution which offers the course and the study materials.

Different universities offer varieties of degree programs and classes through online and the major attraction behind getting into online courses is lower expense compared to traditional schools as the student does not have to pay for travel or printed books. Usually students are able to download all the materials needed for their class including lectures and assignments and they do not have to worry about textbook price since all classes are online. As students are not expected to sit in the classroom they can save time to a great extent. In online courses, students have the freedom to choose study time and they can fix a time as per convenience. Schedules may not be as strict as in the traditional classroom and students can work and complete assignments at their own pace. Only criterion is to submit assignments before the deadline to ensure the course plan. Online courses help to stabilise career

and learning for working persons. People who enrol online degree programs are able to manage their time and learn the prescribed materials and complete assignments on their own schedules.

Along with several above mentioned advantages, online courses have some disadvantages also; learners with low motivation and weak study habits may fall behind, moreover students may feel isolated from instructor and classmates. Managing computer files and online learning software seem more complex for students with beginner level computer skills. As the students are accustomed to conventional learning style, they may take time to get familiarised with online courses and this may cause lag in learning process. When compared to the disadvantages the positive aspects of online courses are stronger as it encompasses more flexible learning environment. Thus the learning community is moving towards the latest trend. Technology is developing remarkably and learners must acquaint with the latest move. To cope with recent innovations even the students who are doing regular courses are also enrolling to online courses. The researcher gave general aspects of online courses and shared the experience of completing one course in Moodle to motivate the learners. In India the two famous universities which offer online courses are Pondicherry University and Manipal University and they conduct degree and post graduate level online courses in multiple areas like arts, literature and management.

MOOC

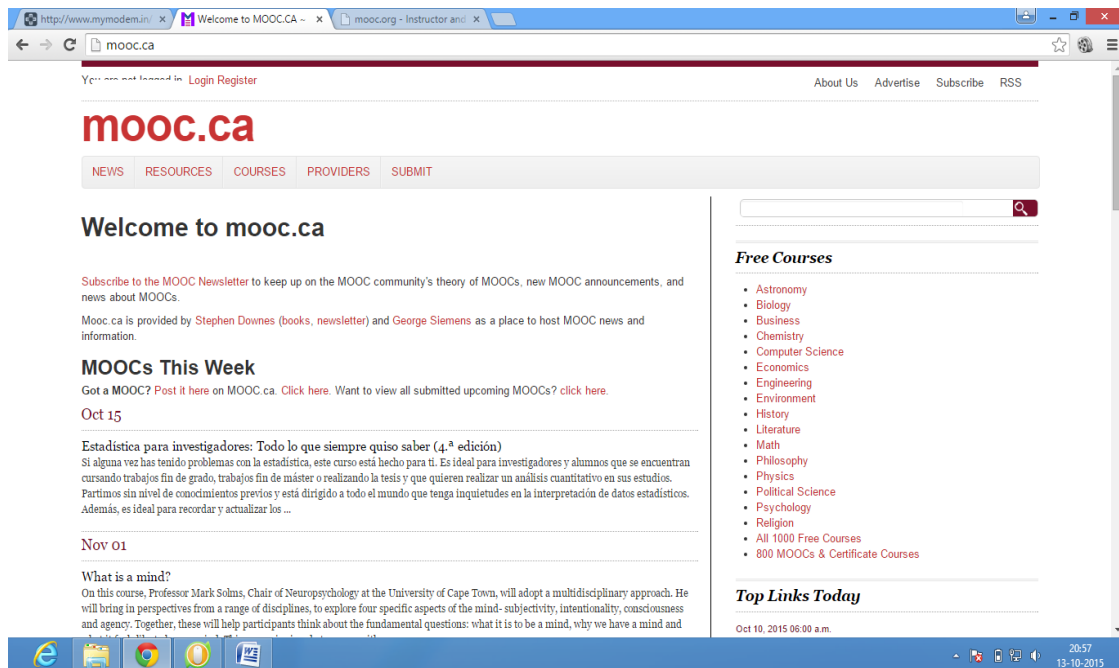


Fig. 2.5

It was relevant to introduce the well established online platforms to students as technology was an inexplicable ingredient in the experiment. MOOC is the acronym for Massive Open Online Courses. It is an online course platform aimed at large participation through web. Traditionally course materials were available in web in the form of videos, audios, readings, quizzes and problem sets. In addition to all these items MOOC provides interactive user forums which help to build online community for the students and the professors. It is a recent revolution in distant education. MOOC was originated in 2008 within the Open Educational Resources (OER) Movement. Many of the courses are based on Connectivist theory which holds the view that knowledge emerges from a network of connections. The term MOOC was coined by Dave Cornier of the University of Prince Edward Island, and one Senior Research Fellow, Bryan Alexander of the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education in response to the course designed and led by George Siemens of

Athabasca University and Stephen Downes of the National Research Council, Canada.

The New York Times observed 2012 as 'The year of the MOOC!' This became possible because of the emergence of several well-financed providers, associated with top universities, including Udacity, Coursera and edX. In the end of 2011 Stanford University launched three courses and each of which has an enrolment about 100,000. For the commercialisation of online education, MIT launched the MITX not for profit courses, but an effort to develop a free and open online platform. There are connectivist MOOCs and broadcast MOOCs. The former rely on crowd-sourced interaction and feedback through network in the form of peer-review or group collaboration. The latter rely on automated feedback through objective or online assignments like quizzes and exams. Coursera and Udacity are examples for broadcast MOOCs. There is another classification also, MOOCs that emphasise the Connectivist philosophy, and those that resemble more traditional and well-financed courses, such as programmes offered by edX and Coursera.

The openness of the programme is the advantage and demerit at a time. The number of students enrol to online courses may be high; still a large number of them are not completing the courses as the candidates having strong determination to focus on online learning may be low. Moreover the course completion will not provide a University valid certificate and students feel discouraged on this aspect. In addition to this, candidates should possess digital literacy to understand the procedures and it demands time and effort from the participants. The learner needs to be capable to regulate the learning procedure. These are certain disadvantages. As the course contents are free, some educators find it difficult to upload data. To avoid this, certain

institutions have started charging registration fee to enrol their courses and at the completion of course they are providing valid certificates to the participants.

Three types of activities are usually conducted in MOOC courses; direct presentation of information such as a lecture or video, interactive exploration of the material such like discussion boards, and assessment such as exams and quizzes. Two most common methods of MOOC assessment are machine graded multiple –choice quizzes or tests and peer reviewed written assignments. MOOCs typically do not offer academic credit or charge tuition Fees. The goal is to re-define the idea of a ‘course,’ creating an open network of learners with emergent and shared content and interactions. MOOC allows participants to form connections via autonomous, diverse, open, and interactive discourse. One can organise a MOOC in any setting that has connectivity. The learner can get connected across disciplines and learning happens in a more informal setting. Above all the demerits, MOOC has strong advantages and it is a fabulous platform for technology based learning environment. Engineering courses are offered by MOOC immensely and learners were attracted to know further prospects of it.

COURSERA

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Introduction to Computational Arts
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Fig 2.6

Coursera is a prominent online platform under MOOC which offers multi disciplinary courses. It was founded by Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller from Stanford University is an online educational website. The website launched in April 2012 and the users are about 2.7 million in the beginning of 2013. Coursera works with universities to make their online courses in various levels. The website provides free online courses in the fields of science, literature, history, medicine, finance and various other areas. Students who had interest in other fields apart from engineering could exploit this opportunity. Each course includes short video lectures on different topics and assignments have to be submitted usually on weekly basis. There are both audio and video lessons prepared by world class professors or subject experts and the study materials are downloadable. The learner has to login to the site and can attend

classes. To evaluate the understanding and progress regarding the content, students have to submit online assignments at the end of each course. At this instant the courses are not considered for University credits. Learners join to these courses to update their knowledge and to have world class exposure of the topic. Some critics raise the estimation that free online courses may diminish the value of traditional classrooms and institutions. Educationists who support online courses, as a reply declare that technology is not a substitute for the face to face learning system but it makes learning procedure easier. In this technology based era we cannot close our eyes to online courses or tech-assisted learning. Some of the courses related to engineering were modern robotics, digital manufacturing, structural engineering and designing. These topics are directly connected to the curriculum and learners were motivated to join.

edx

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Fig. 2.7

edx is Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform founded by Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University to offer free online university level courses in wide range of disciplines. This site launched in 2012 is a non profiting platform to offer best of higher education to the students around the world. In addition to educational offerings it can be used for research and distance education. At the successful completion of courses learners will be awarded certificates but not credits. Apart from MIT and Harvard partners of edx include universities of California, Berkeley, Toronto, Boston, Texas and leading institutions in Asia, Europe and Australia. Span of courses and variety of subjects vary in different ways. Courses include science and technology to humanities. Cyber security fundamentals, psychology for personal growth and science of happiness were some of

the courses. Edx offers interactive online courses by world class professors. The brief description included in the homepage about the website is useful for new visitors to understand the learning pattern. The website offers flexible schedules for learners and the viewers can go through the list of available courses and can select as per the demand. Before joining a course, learner can go through demo and understand in detail how rewarding the course will be. Apart from Moodle, edx also was introduced to students of the experimental group to learn online courses. In popular media interviews, founders of several start ups admitted that they have done courses in these online sites and it helped to update awareness of several affairs. Learners were eager to know this experience.

WizIQ

The screenshot shows the WizIQ website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Product Features, Case Studies, Blog, Courses, and Plans and Pricing. The main banner features the WizIQ logo and the tagline "Making online teaching and learning easier for everyone". Below this, it states "Over 200,000 teachers and 3 million learners use WizIQ". The central message is "Connect face to face with your students, anywhere in the world", followed by a description of the learning experience: "A true learning experience with clear, unlimited, echo-free audio and 6-way video in high quality." There are two prominent buttons: "Try it Free" and "Plans & Pricing". Below the banner, the page is organized into several sections: "For Teachers and Trainers", "For Organizations", and "Integrate WizIQ". There are also sections for "e-Learning Resources", "What Our Customers Say", and "Latest from Blog". The page includes social media sharing options on the right side.

Fig. 2.8

Multiple websites are open for learners in MOOC. WizIQ is an online learning platform launched in April 2007 by Harvnan Singh, an Indian. This website is designed to help students and teachers to find each other and to provide an online virtual classroom learning environment. WizIQ virtual classroom runs using a web browser and Adobe Flash. On the site, there are tutorials, online tests and recorded classes. It also serves as a social networking site to bring together educators and students around the world. For interaction, the site provides virtual class room with live audio, video, white board and text chat elements. WizIQ helps to initiate contacts between members, to exchange knowledge and content, and to help each other who work towards common goals such as preparing for an exam or assignment. Members can create content and either they can attach it to the forum or share the link on blog or other online platforms. The site gives exposure to learners and instructors; teachers

are able to upload their profiles for advertising their experiences and credential to have wide exposure in career. Students can find classes to watch or teachers to work with on the topic. WizIQ offers features like audio, video lessons and assignments which are provided by other online learning platforms. Differing to other online learning websites WizIQ pays attention to instructors and their career enhancement. Learners were more enthusiastic about online courses for exams such as IIT, AIEEE and various English tests.

The online learning websites mentioned in the study provide open, short term, multi disciplinary courses and preference to select study time offer convenience to learners. Regarding these aspects, online courses are more flexible than regular courses. It was evident that one cannot avoid direct teaching, though online learning is beneficiary. To carry out the research, blended method was found to be the suitable method as it encompasses both classroom learning and online learning. Blended learning incorporates the concepts of Connectivist theory and the theory of Social Constructivism. In this research, the components of the blend were classroom learning and online learning. During the learning process different activities like debate, group discussion and extempore were planned as part of classroom learning and websites like Moodle and Wordpress for online learning. Apart from this, several free online learning websites like Coursera, WizIQ and EdX were suggested for students to join and do several multi disciplinary courses. The students were more interested and active in social networking sites and considering this aspect the learning possibilities of social media or educational networking were also analysed in the study. Without delimiting into one area, the research has employed multi dimensions of teaching and learning. Improving communication skills through utilising the scope of technology and without neglecting classroom learning was the major objective of the research.