# Maximizing Learning Opportunities in the Teaching of ESL for PUC Students at RGUKT-Basar's Digital Classrooms: A Comparative Study of Conventional and Digital Classrooms

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#### Abstract

This paper discusses how the ICT enabled classrooms promote language competence with reference to the teaching of English as a second language to the students in the southern Asian countries like India. It is hypothesised that the use of ICT maximises the scope of learning opportunities in acquiring LSRW skills in an ESL context in comparison with the conventional mode of teaching. Moreover the conventional mode of teaching and learning has limitations owing to cultural, geographical, social, economic, and pragmatic usage of language. It is a hard nut to crack for teachers to teach LSRW skills effectively in such circumstances. It calls for the use of appropriate illustrations, use of suitable activities etc. As learning is primarily a complex process, the inventions of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology in teaching and learning especially in Indian ESL context, throw up several challenges for teachers in maximizing the learning opportunities with the growing demand. The present study attempts to maximise the learning opportunities in acquiring language skills using ICT. The target students are pursuing their Pre University Course (PUC) at RGUKT-Basar, one of the reputed institutes in the state of Telangana in India. The data has been collected from a diagnostic test conducted on role-play topics administered to 70 students. The students have been divided into two groups A) Conventional classroom learners (30) and B) Digital classroom learners (40). The classification was made based on their medium of instruction, and kind of classroom provided. The findings from the study show that digital classroom learners performed better in several speaking activities for both the group of learners based on the module selected from the prescribed syllabus by the Board of Intermediate.

## Key Words: Personal construct, ICT, maximizing learning opportunities, Web based technology, Conventional classroom v/s digital classroom etc.

## 1. Introduction

A language can not to be taught rather instructor can only provide or create contexts, situations and learning opportunities. An opportunity is a chance, an option, a trail and a cognitive activity through which the learner tries to establish him / her with the actual world (Salvin, 2003, pp. 257-258. According to Noam Chomsky "every child is gifted / born with Language Acquisition Device-LAD". Thus, the ultimate aim of teaching is to provide learning opportunities where learners would come up with their own interpretation in comprehending the learning constructs and construct procedures for their needs fulfilment

According to Daniels (2002) one of the researchers ESL says that ICTs have become indispensable within a very short time as one of the basic building blocks of the modern society. RGUKT-IIIT's are established with a motto of providing technical education to the rural talented gifted youth in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states since 2008. All the subjects' content including Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Telugu and English along with 6 Engineering branches' content digitalized and taught using ICT. Therefore, the present study draws

Mentor in English, Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies, India. Research Scholar, National Institute of Technology (NIT) Mizoram. its inputs based on a pilot study conducted across 15 to 20 junior college in Nalgonda and Suryapaet districts of Telangana State and IIITs located in the districts of Nirmal, Kirshna and Kadapa of united Andhra Pradesh.

#### 2. Review of Literature

In a conventional classroom teaching methods like; grammar translation, direct method, communicative approach and Learner centred approach etc.... are followed. The advent of technology has brought about a revolutionary change in the domain of education. The teaching of English as second language is highly influenced by the technological inventions and innovations in teaching. As change is inevitable, the innovations in science and technology have also indirectly impacted the present system of education. The advanced ICT with the use web 2.0 tools like; videoscribe tool, animation, HFS, Blogs, Wikis, Social networking, Multimedia archives, synchronous communication tools, 3-D virtual worlds, multiplayer games, has broadened the opportunities of teaching and learning to learners especially in the context of teaching/learning English as a second language. Interestingly, it has to be noted that curriculum became an open access to learner in the digital classrooms.

#### 3. The Purpose of the Study

The present study intends to find out the relationship and differences between conventional mode of teaching at Junior colleges and ICT enabled classrooms at RGUKT-Basar. The study also focuses on how learning opportunities are maximized with the aid of ICT at RGUKT-Basar. Therefore the present study throws a light on the creation of learning opportunities in digital classrooms.

Study addresses the following questions

- 1) What are the limitations of the conventional classrooms in providing / creating opportunities?
- 2) How ICT enabled classrooms create learning opportunity differently to that of conventional classrooms?
- 3) How do select Web 2.0 tools aid in maximise the learning opportunities?

#### 4. Limitations of Teaching in conventional classrooms:

- 1) Most often the lesson plans prepared by the lecturers emphatically focus on what is taught. Contrarily in reality, there seem to be a gap in the optimal utilisation of these materials effectively. From the classroom observations it was found that the lesson plan, and systematic teaching of a particular lesson, objectives, assumptions and notions of the teacher do not practically attribute to the process of learning.
- 2) **Teaching Materials:** Teaching materials are the product of careful selection, grading, analysis and creative planning on the part of textbook writers; however, they do not lead to appropriate interactive process in learning. At the end of the course, students only end up with knowledge in grammar and structures for the career. In this sense textbooks should function as source-books rather than course-books (N.S. Prabhu, 1987, p.94)
- 3) Syllabus Specifications: During the interactive process teachers and students inevitably convert the instructional materials into a learning syllabus. In the process of this conversation both teachers and learners will find themselves creating and utilizing a wide range of learning opportunities. The reason is simple: creating and utilization of learning opportunities in the classroom are ultimately in the hands of teacher and learner who are engaged in a joint-exploration of learning and teaching.

#### 5. Methodology

#### 5.1 Participants

Participants in this study are divided into two groups; a) Junior-college students in conventional mode and b) pre-university course (PUC) ICT / digital classrooms at RGUKT-IIITs. Among the participants, there were

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28 females and 42 males, with the age group between 16 to 19 years old. All the participants have studied English for a minimum of 6yrs during their schooling. The role play conducted as a part of the diagnostic test proved that only 10 students participated actively in the activities out of 35, whereas in digital classrooms 30 participated. Around 75 % of students from conventional mode insisted that they were ready to learn the language skills through activities but most of the times they were denied such opportunities and practices in the classrooms. On the other hand 95 % of students participated actively in learning language from digital classrooms.

### 5.2 Text

"ROBOT and PEOPLE" by Isaac Asimov a module / text has been taken from the prescribed syllabus of Board of Intermediate.

#### 5.3 Tools

The study has used several instruments required for the data collection such as: 1) self-prepared check list, 2) advanced ICT and web 2.0 tools kit: PPT, animation, hfs, blogs, wikis, social networking, and multimedia archives etc.

#### 5.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher conducted several activities on "ROBOT and PEOPLE" authored by Isaac Asimov for both groups of A and B. Teacher encouraged the students to participate in all activities. Each activity was administered with reference to the guidelines provided in advance. The purpose of the study is elucidated in maximising the learning opportunities. Finally the students in group A were enthusiastic and eager to participate but fewer opportunities were provided. Whereas students in group B emerged with several motivated and innovative activities such as; use of vedioscribe tool with animation, GIFs, pictures, and videos etc. 2) Description of human robot activity, 3) Robots in various professions and 4) Project on future robots. These are discussed in detail in (sections 6.1.1 to 6. 1. 7)

S.no	Speaking Activities	Conventional/ICT	Objectives
		Classrooms	
1	Brainstorming	do	Peer group discussion, exchange ideas, topic
			exploration and critical thinking
2	Presentations	do	Self-preparation, web tools application,
			building confidence, logical thinking
3	Human Robot	do	Creative thinking, work nature of robot, drafting
			skills, listening skills
4	Robots in Several	do	Different profession awareness, robot
	Professions		replacement, promotion of practical knowledge
5	Vocabulary Competition	do	Technical vocabulary, pragmatic usage, better
			comprehension
6	A project on Robots in	do	Innovative thinking, imagination skills, team
	Future		work, web tools

#### Table (1) List of the speaking activities conducted in both the classrooms.

#### 6.0 Results and discussion

#### 6.1 Group (B) (Learner Involvement in the digital classrooms)

"Learner involvement is nothing but learners' investment of time and energy" as stated by "Bonny Norton" (1989, p.171). Considering this notion in the context of the present study, it is evident that e learners are

actually in control of their learning, and they come to the class with varied notions about what constitutes learning. Any pre-planned assumptions about the learners or instructional materials carried by teachers to the classroom may found to be inadequate. The best way teachers could maximize learning opportunities is developing meaningful learners' involvement.

For instance: "ROBOTS AND PEOPLE" by Isaac Asimov, has been prescribed for PUC-I year in RGUKT-IIIT, Basar along with the Junior college students in united Andhra Pradesh. This module is taught by a teacher for both the groups. After teaching the module, it was found that there were differences in learning among the groups. An example is provided from digital or ICT enabled classes at RGUKT-Basar. With the aid of technology, students have come up with different practical activities and projects like; 1) PPT on Robotics, 2) Human Robot speaking activity, 3) Project on Robots in future, 4) Slide show on robots in various professions, 5) PPT on technology used in robots, 6) collection of various robots' video clips, 7) vocabulary competition 8) movie clips collection. 9) Career oriented PPT etc. The teacher has conducted various language learning activities for both the classroom set up students. The results are discussed below.

## 6.1.1 Activity 1) Brain storming.

**Objectives:** 1) Peer group discussion, 2) Exchanging the ideas, 3) Exploring the topic and 4) Critical thinking.

In this activity, the students of both the groups have been divided and encouraged to discuss about the topic. Students from the each group have shared orally their opinions on the robots. Through this activity students have developed the following characteristics; sharing of ideas, critical thinking, logical analysis, cross verifying the opinions, accepting the innovative ideas of the peer group, learn to appreciate, overcoming the short falls and building confidence levels.

## 6.1.2 Activity 2) PPT –Oral presentation followed by question and answers.

**Objectives:** 1) Individual preparation, 2) Logical thinking, 3) Technology usage, and 4) Building confidence.

Only group B students have participated actively in this activity. At the end of this activity, their confidence levels are appreciable. Students in digital classrooms have used several web 2.0 tools like; PPT, videoscribe and PowToon etc. Students also have learned surfing the internet and accumulate the right information among the group of open source blogs.

## 6.1.3 Activity 3) Human Robot.

**Objectives:** 1) Enhancing speaking skills, 2) Innovative thinking, 3) Work of Robot, 4) Drafting skills, and 5) Listening skills.

Students of both groups have participated, but group B students have participated more actively and enthusiastically. Because, group B students' activity was video recorded and shared with the students whereas group A no such recording was done. In this activity students have created real life situations in the classroom and used suitable vocabulary in the conversations. This activity generated very good fun and positive atmosphere among the students. Every student participated in this activity with different notions.

## 6.1.4 Activity 4) Robots in several professions.

**Objectives:** 1) Awareness on different professions, 2) Robots replacement with human labour, and 3) Promoting towards practical knowledge.

In this activity only group **B** students were provided ample scope for the presentations, whereas group **A** less scope to do. This activity supported digital class students to be aware of various fields and professions in which the robots are doing valuable services replacing the human labour. It also provided insights for their career and professional fields to choose.

## 6.1.5 Activity 5) Vocabulary competition.

**Objectives:** 1) Technical terminology, 2) Memorizing, and 3) Leading to comprehension.

A vocabulary quiz was conducted for both the groups. But group **B** could do well with the aid of ICT. Answering the quiz was at four levels; identifying the parts of speech, right spelling, meaning, and using the word contextually. Students of group **A** could not do at least two levels perfectly. Learning vocabulary is assisted by soft-copy dictionary installed in the computers for digital class learners, whereas conventional class students have to buy their own hard copies.

#### 6.1.6 Activity 6) A mini project on Robots in future.

**Objectives:** 1) Innovative thinking, 2) Imagination skills, 3) Team work, and 4) web 2.0.

In this activity students of group **B** came up with various future projects, which allowed them to have an idea on what CSE Engineering branch would be dealing with. As it is a project work more than one student involved and collaborated. Peer group learning is more productive than from a lecture by a teacher / instructor. Web 2.0 tools like; power points, animation, open sources, graphics, hfs, server, and blog spot have been used in this activity.

## 6.1.7 Activity 7) Creating Blogs:

**Objectives:** 1) Learn how to create blogs, 2) Strengthen the confidence levels of learning.

In this activity, only group  $\mathbf{B}$  had learned to create a blog and use it meaningfully. It assisted the learners' great impact on their learning, posting themselves as guiding roles for the generations to come.

7.0 All the above activities have been represented in tabular format using Anova tests

7.1 Anova: Two-Factor Without Replication				
	Never			
SUMMARY	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Conducting grammar practice sessions	2	14	7	50
Conducting real life activities based on the module	2	41	20.5	420.5
Developing listening skills and word pronunciation	2	43	21.5	684.5
Conducting speaking activities	2	48	24	882
Reading practices and exposing native readers model	2	30	15	338
Provision of online or off line resources	2	53	26.5	1104.5
Conventional	6	210	35	185.6
ICT enabled	6	19	3.166667	2.166667

The above table shows, different kinds of activities conducted in both the classroom set ups for learning. According to the above table the value 420.5 shows real life activities have been conducted more in ICT. The value 882 also represents the speaking activities conducted in the ICT enabled classrooms.

ANOVA							
Source	of	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Variation							
Rows		499.4167	5	99.88333	1.136545	0.445863	5.050329
Columns		3040.083	1	3040.083	34.59226	0.002018	6.607891

Error	439.4167	5	87.88333		
Total	3978.917	11			

F>F critical and p values suggests that there is no significant difference between different teaching methodology but a significant difference has been found in different teaching techniques

7.2 Aporto Two Factor Without Poplication				
7.2 Anova: 1 wo-Factor without Replication	Sometime			
SUMMARY	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Conducting grammar practice sessions	2	18	9	72
Conducting real life activities based on the module	2	37	18.5	144.5
Developing listening skills and word pronunciation	2	30	15	200
Conducting speaking activities	2	32	16	200
Reading practices and exposing native readers model	2	24	12	98
Provision of online or off line resources	2	16	8	32
Conventional	6	124	20.66667	39.46667
ICT enabled	6	33	5.5	5.9

The above table represents the information related how often the activities are conducted in both ICT enabled and Conventional classroom set ups.

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	170.4167	5	34.08333	3.020679	0.125171	5.050329
Columns	690.0833	1	690.0833	61.15953	0.000548	6.607891
Error	56.41667	5	11.28333			
Total	916.9167	11				

F>F critical and p values suggests that there is no significant difference between different teaching methodology but a significant difference has been found in different teaching techniques

7.3 Anova: Two-Factor Without Replication				
	Always			
SUMMARY	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Conducting grammar practice sessions	2	58	29	882
Conducting real life activities based on the module	2	58	29	882
Developing listening skills and word pronunciation	2	57	28.5	1404.5
Conducting speaking activities	2	59	29.5	1300.5

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Reading practices and exposing native readers model	2	62	31	1352
Provision of online or off line resources	2	60	30	800
Conventional	6	37	6.166667	8.966667
ICT enabled	6	317	52.83333	10.16667

The above table represents the information related how often the activities are conducted in both ICT enabled and Conventional classroom set ups.

ANOVA						
Source of	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Variation						
Rows	8	5	1.6	0.091255	0.989983	5.050329
Columns	6533.333	1	6533.333	372.6236	6.88E-06	6.607891
Error	87.66667	5	17.53333			
Total	6629	11				

F>F critical and p values suggests that there is no significant difference between different teaching methodology but a significant difference has been found in different teaching techniques.

Thus, all the above anova equations constantly and systematically bring out the learning opportunities between conventional classrooms and digital or ICT enabled classrooms. Despite learners' individual interest of acquiring communication skills in English, providing conducive learning environments also plays pivotal role. Comparatively more learning opportunities are provided in ICT enabled or modern digital classrooms than conventional classrooms.

#### 8.0 Conclusion

The notion of learner involvement "pre-supposes" that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they related to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (Norton, 2000, pp, 10-11). Recognizing the learners' voice also means recognizing their attempt to create learning opportunities for themselves and for other participants in class. When learners ask a question or say something, even if it appears to be far removed from the topic at hand, they might possibly be creating learning opportunities. So, let us create learning opportunities and maximize them through the digital classrooms.

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