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Teachers' perceptions on the use of technology in teaching English - A Case study

Case Study

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English Language has been crucial to learning in a country like India, where it is multilingual and looks for a common ground to make learning across people from all linguistic backgrounds practicable. English has been the link language of the Indians across all states and was picked up instantly by Indians quite eloquently post independence era. In the ever changing scenario of business, learning English is all the more crucial and important for sustainable growth in a globalized world scenario. In this context, a study was conducted among English teachers of Visakhapatnam across various institutions to find out whether, the use of technological aids has enhanced English learning and also explores the views of English language teaching and dissemination among the English teachers.

An attempt is made to review the available literature pertaining to the subject, co-relating their importance to the Indian context in particular. There is good number of studies in this area. While most of the studies pertain to the impact of E-technology on learning in general, studies related to its impact on English Language Learning are limited in number. However the researchers reviewed have related literature on the subject. Otto Jespersen(1968, cited in Pennycook 1994:7) gives insightful approximations of the number of English speakers since the 15th century. In the year 1500, they were estimated to be four million, in 1600 their numbers increased to six million, in 1700 their figure moved up to twenty and forty million and in 1900 it grew between 116 to 123 million.

Today, English speakers are estimated to range between 700 million and 1 billion (Crystal 2002:2).

The use of English is not uniform in the different countries where it is spoken. Kachru(1985) states that speakers of English fall into three categories that can be represented through three concentric circles. The inner circle includes countries such as the UK, the USA and Australia where English is the primary and most often the only language for a majority of the population.

Haythornthwaite and Kazmer (2004)¹, have expressed that there is a need for a holistic approach rather than concentrated one. They have gone on to suggest that today's technological advance requires more of multidisciplinary approach. They feel it is essential for understanding the complex interactive effects associated with e-learning.

Hernández-Ramos, P. (2005) has briefly explained the effects of technology² when faculties resorted to it. They went to explain the "students should not be merely defined as questions of access, but instead be further regarded as questions of (a) availability in terms of appropriateness of software and technical support, and (b) integration in terms of a person's training. In other words, the effect of technology use should support teachers' productivity and students' accomplishments with regard to language learning."

¹Haythornthwaite, C. & Wellman, B. (2002). Introduction: Internet in everyday life. In B. Wellman & C. Haythornthwaite (eds.), *The Internet in Everyday Life* (pp. 3-44). Oxford, UK: Blackwell. | 69

Learning, in 21st century, takes place in many forms. A person is now presented with host of options to learn from. In this regard Reeves, 1998³ has said that “Learners may have access to technology in educational settings in two distinct ways: learning from and learning with technology”. His study revealed that students learn both from and with media and technology. Instructional television, computer-based instruction, and integrated learning systems have all been demonstrated to be effective and efficient tutors.

Hill, Wiley et al (2004) have opined that the use of the Internet for learning was still in nascent stage, though the growth rate is very high. Teachers are still exploring and/or have moved into this arena to reach learners. As educators are exploring and implementing Internet-based learning environments, they are also exploring how to reach their learners. They have said that “[.] internet is a technology that has the potential for enabling the creation of learning-centered distance education environments—ones in which students, teachers, and experts are working together in the learning process.”⁴

Ringstaff & Kelley, 2002 have been quoted, “Learning from technology approach generally considers computers as tutors, and takes various forms to deliver the instructional material to the learner, such as computer-assisted instruction”.⁵

Parthasarathy (2001) observes that 50 million people were latching on to the world-wide web just four years after it became publicly accessible while it had taken 38 years for the radio and 13 years for TV to reach that figure.

Clark and Salomon (1996) point out that there is an historical precedence related to the adoption of technology for learning: “[...]there has been a pattern of adoption by schools in response to external pressures from commercial and community special interests rather than as a result of identified and expressed need”⁶.

Warschauer (1996) compared face-to-face and electronic discussion in the second language classroom on a group from advanced ESL class in Hawaii. His study revealed that students used language which is lexically and syntactically more formal and complex in electronic discussion than they did in face-to-face discussion, thus demonstrating another possible advantage of computer-mediated communication⁷.

Verma and Krishnaswamy(1989) “Within the limits of human cognition languages change because of their built-in tendency to change, the inventive faculty of the users; several other human factors like modesty, confusion, sloth, etc., and the passage of time”(p 19).

Crystal (2001) says, “We can never predict language change, only recognize it once it has happened” (p 22).

Some facts of the Case to enhance the understanding

The study was conducted among faculty and consisted of more female English teachers. Most of the teachers interviewed were young in the most productive age groups. The teachers had a huge work experience. Most of the teachers were holding masters degree and only a small percentage were holding tertiary education. Majority of the teachers interviewed had an experience of 6-10yrs and also a sizeable 32% with an experience of 1-5 yrs.

The teachers opined that having more students per class will decrease their efficiency in imparting knowledge. Effective training is carried out when the class strength is not exceeding thirty students. Trainers have better reach when the size is limited. An effort has been made to understand the strength of the class so that the effectiveness can be gauged.

²Hernández-Ramos, P. (2005). If not here, where? Understanding teachers' use of technology in Silicon Valley schools. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*.
³Reeves, T. C., "The Impact of media and technology in schools: a research report prepared for The Bertelsmann Foundation." The Bertelsmann Foundation, Feb 2, 1998
⁴Hill, J. R., Wiley, D., Miller Nelson, L., & Han, S. (2004). Exploring research on Internet-based learning: from infrastructure to interactions.
⁵Ringstaff, C., & Kelley, L. (2002). The learning return on our educational technology investment: a review of findings from research.
⁶Clark, R. E., & Salomon, G. (1996). Media in teaching. In M. C. Wittrock, (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rded.) (pp. 464–478). New York: Macmillan.
⁷Warschauer, M., "Comparing face-to-face and electronic discussion in the second language classroom". *Calico Journal*, Nov, 1996

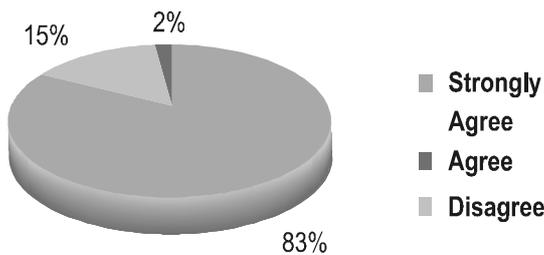
It is observed that school and college managements prefer to admit more number of students per class. There are different reasons for this.

1. Lack of space and infrastructure to accommodate more number of students per class.
2. Smaller classrooms would mean more teaching sessions for the teachers, mostly resulting in increased fixed costs.

The respondent teachers also felt that the English language learning has been relegated to the background in most institutions where they teach. They feel that this has just become a routine subject and not much importance is being given to the same.

It has been observed that English as a subject is not given much importance as it only forms a tertiary subject. It is only conducted as it is included in the course and students require to pass it to clear the course. English teachers were not happy with the time given for the completion of the syllabus, the syllabus content and also the overall importance given to the subject.

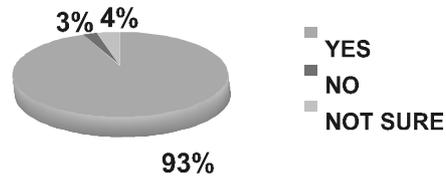
REASONS FOR DETERIORATING STANDARDS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE:



It has been observed that the manner in which English language is being used is deteriorating quite rapidly. Teachers have been asked to cite the reasons that they felt were responsible for such deterioration. This gives us further insight into the problem and enables us to understand the reasons. It is observed that the faculties have ranked texting messages as the most important reason that has

perpetrated in bringing down the standard whereas second rank was given to the ‘attitude of youngsters’ which has changed the way English language is spoken, while 3rd rank was given to ‘English prescribed for syllabus’. The teachers felt that the language used while messaging was the main reason for the deterioration of English language among students. The use of contractions in place of complete words has led to this state.

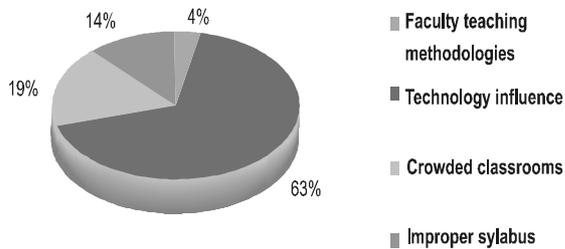
SHOULD TEACHERS UPDATE THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS



Learning is a continuous process. One cannot just stop learning. Teachers are also required to constantly update themselves so that their delivery methods are effective and efficient. This question gives an insight whether the faculties are updating their knowledge frequently or not. This will be useful in further analysis of measuring effectiveness of teaching methods.

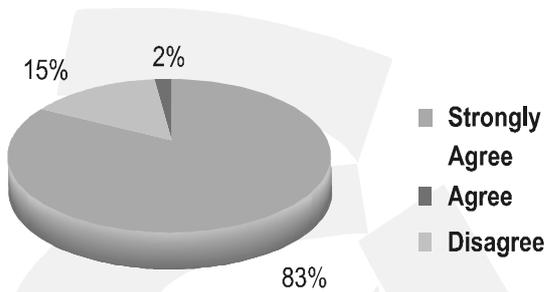
Majority of the faculty have agreed that it is imperative for teachers to constantly update their knowledge and skills. It has been observed that 4% (20) did not feel to update their skills. The reasons that have been cited were; that they lack time for such updation while few stated that they are content with their level of skills set and knowledge.

REASONS FOR POOR SPELLING, GRAMMAR



It has been observed that there are lot of spelling and grammatical mistakes committed by students, so the teachers were asked to cite out the main cause(s) which they felt were resulting in such errors. This would help in analysing the factors and their impact on deteriorating of English language usage. The faculties have ranked the factor 'technological influence' as the most influential reason while 'crowded classrooms' ranked second were the reasons for poor spelling and grammar. It can be once again observed here that technology has played its part in diminishing the quality among students of English language. Also, over-crowded classrooms also led to the diminishing standards. It was always believed that a size of 30~35 students per class is the optimal batch strength, but in most cases, as observed earlier, the size of the classroom ranged between 45~60. This has deteriorated the faculty attention towards students.

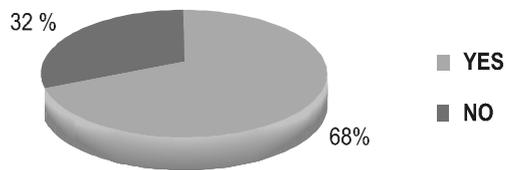
STUDENTS WRITE AS THEY SPEAK AND THIS HAS CHANGED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO A GREAT EXTENT



The teachers were asked whether there is any difference in the way students write their subject content to the way they speak and converse. This question's results will be helpful in establishing

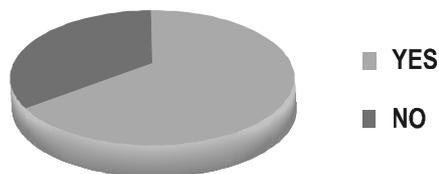
whether the deteriorating standards in communicating have also made its way into writing abilities. Teachers have stated that students write in the same manner as they would while using electronic messaging services. The contractions of simple words and shortening of sentences, the informal addressing have all found their way into the language while writing classroom and examination content. There seems to be a problem in delineating official and unofficial communicate.

COMPUTER LITERACY



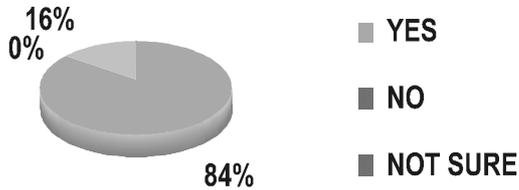
Technological advances have made their way into pedagogy. Innovative technologies and interactive software have simplified the way courses are delivered nowadays. An attempt has been made to understand the computer literacy of the faculty. It is observed that 32% of the faculty are not fully aware of the computer usability and they feel that they do not need to be. They remarked that the delivery in classroom is more than enough and that there is no need for technology in imparting English language.

EXISTENCE OF COMPUTER LABORATORY



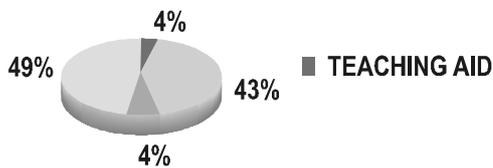
63 percent of the respondents reported that they have computer laboratory facility in their college, while 37% did not have any such facility.

ON USAGE OF TECHNOLOGY AS TEACHING AID

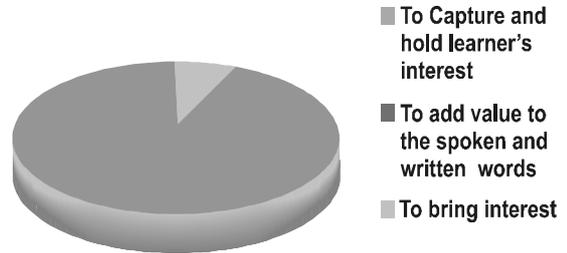


Technology, many have opined, is boon as well as a bane. It solely depends on how one utilises it and for what. Perspective of teachers is sought in this regard as to what they feel about technology making in-roads and providing aids to teaching methodology. It is found out that that 84 percent of the respondents felt that it was important to use technology as a teaching aid, while 16% of them were unsure about its importance. Majority of the faculty felt that it was important to utilise technology to enable teaching English. They opined that good visuals have an effect on learning and students are able to learn quickly.

SUGGESTED TECHNOLOGY FOR TEACHING AID

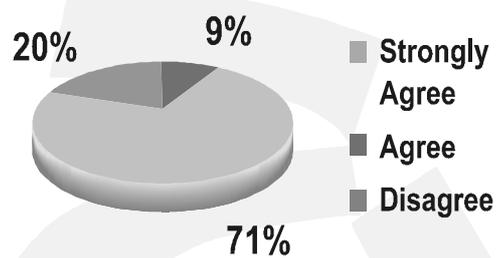


There are various technological mediums like televisions, computers etc. which can be used by faculty to impart education. It is important to know as to what are the preferred mediums of technology by the faculty as it gives an insight as to their pedagogy methods. From the analysis, it is found that the teachers have expressed that they would like to use a mix of available mediums instead of restricting to only one. While few have ranked use of computer to be a preferred medium as second. Teachers have said that they use a variety of technological aids depending upon the need. They prefer computers certain type of delivery while televisions for other.



Learning takes place through various methods. There are three ways through which learning takes place, Audio, video and kinaesthetic. There's a need to know the methods through which students best absorb the content. There are various visual representations and so are there many audio files, the objective is to know which is more effective and more popularly accepted. From the study, it is interpreted that 93 percent of the respondents suggested using e-technology to assist in English language learning to capture and hold learners interest as well as to add value to the spoken and written words in English. Teachers have reported that with the use of technology teaching has become easier as it helps in capturing the attention of the students. The students had, earlier, a tendency neglect the language class due to various reasons, but with technological aids, innovative and creative illustrations are helping the teachers to capture the attention of the students.

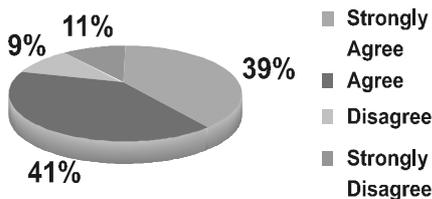
PERCEPTION ON TRADITIONAL TEACHING METHODS



It is observed that 71 percent of the respondents disagreed that traditional teaching methods were better for teaching English language when compared to using E-technological aids to assist

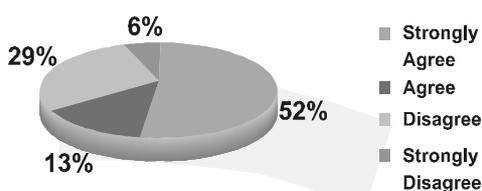
in the same, while 9 percent of the respondents agreed with the use of traditional teaching methods as being a better teaching methodology.

PROPER UTILIZATION OF TECHNOLOGICAL AIDS



It is found out that almost 80 percent of the teachers have agreed that proper utilization of technological aids helps students memorise and absorb the English language easily. Language delivery, as with any delivery of any other subject, requires the students to absorb the content and then put in to practice. One of the oldest methods has been to absorb the grammar rules and good vocabulary which is useful for the students to put language in practice correctly and devoid of errors. Teachers have felt that technological aids have helped in this regard to achieve the objective.

PERCEPTION ON COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

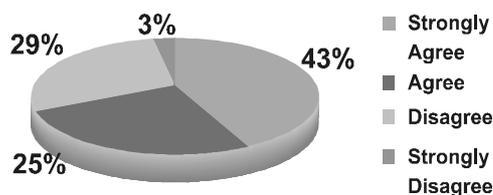


Technology has made its way into teaching and has been aiding in the delivery. One such program is the Computer Assisted English Language Learning. Most of the schools, colleges have installed. This question is intended to know the teachers' perception and acceptance levels of it. From the analysis, it is seen that 65 percent of

the faculty have strongly agreed that computer assisted language learning is the key to help learners communicate easily while 35 percent have opined that it should not be introduced in teaching English language. Majority of the teachers have shown a positive inclination towards embracing technology in their pedagogy. Though there are still few who have agreed otherwise, which might be attributed to their resistance to acceptance change, as introduction of technology involves updating their skill sets which the faculty might have an apprehension to carry out.

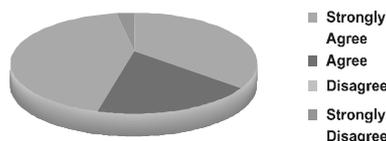
COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING MAY NOT SATISFY ALL LEVELS OF LEARNERS:

Dissatisfaction of Assisted Language Learning



It is interpreted that 68 percent of the respondents felt that Computer Assisted English Language learning will not satisfy all levels of learners. Only 32 percent of the respondents opined that it will satisfy all levels of learners. Though the teachers have agreed largely that CALL is an effective tool in imparting the course of English language, many still feel that the human component still plays an important role. They feel that the teachers have to still to impart the basic components of language training and also monitor the progress. Corrective measures, wherever required, can only be achieved by teachers. They opined that technology can only be a aid but not substitute for a teacher

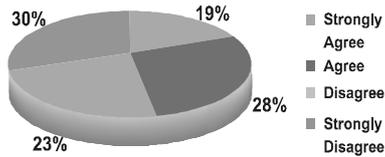
USE OF MEDIA (OHP, LCD, PPT)



From the analysis, it is clear that 46 percent of the respondents are against the use of media

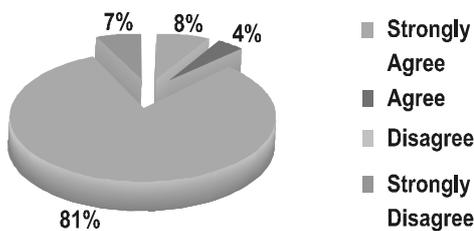
components to help language learning, while 54 percent of them felt that it was a useful tool to guide language learning.

PERCEPTION ON USAGE OF FILMS & CARTOONS TO AID LANGUAGE LEARNING



Visual representations play an important role in the learning process. They have an ability to concrete the content delivery into the learner’s mind which stays for longer periods. An effort has been made to understand the teacher’s perspective on this factor on using visual content during delivery. It is found that 53 percent of the respondents reported that films and cartoons will divert the learner’s attention towards action rather the intended learning, while an almost matching 47 percent reported that it is likely to promote and motivate the language learning process. It is interesting to note that the teachers have expressed that sometimes visual content diverts the attention of students. The seriousness is diluted and the attention shifts to fun and relaxing mode. Although many faculties have said that good visuals helps the students grasp the content more quickly.

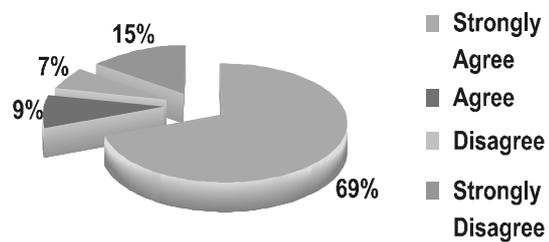
PERCEPTION ON SOCIAL NETWORKING IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS



It is interpreted from the study that 87 percent of the respondents did not agree that social networking sites improve oral and written communication skill. Teachers opined that students use short-cuts during interacting over social media. The new hip-hop culture where words are shortened and new words are used by students in order to prove their

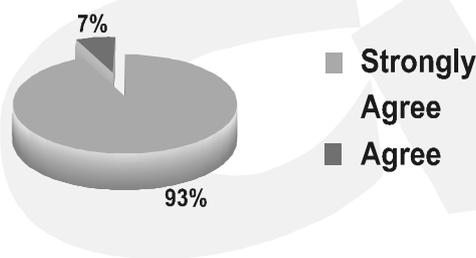
‘coolness’. The objective behind such communiqué is to be socially acceptable among friends. Also students use shortened words to communicate faster and quickly to match up the speed of conversation. Teachers have also stated that most students converse in their regional language but they type in English letters.

IS LANGUAGE USED TO CHAT ON SOCIAL NETWORKING



Earlier teachers have mentioned that conversations and interaction over social media does not improve the students’ language. A further effort has been made here to find out whether the language used during such interactions meets to the acceptable levels or not. It is observed that 78 percent of the respondents agreed that language used to chat on social networking sites is sub-standard and colloquial. Teachers have further asserted that the standard of language used during interaction over social media is of sub-standard nature. They felt that though the students are conversing and making an effort to speak in English but the direction is wrong as they are speaking wrong. They said that during the conversation the objective of the students is not to language skills English but rather to only converse.

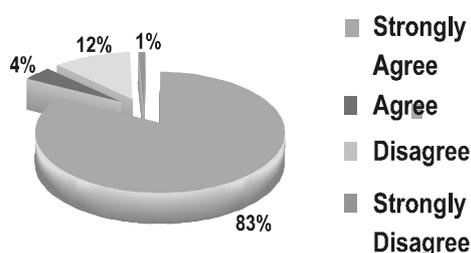
SENDING TEXT MESSAGE IS AS COMMON AS SPEAKING ON THE MOBILE PHONE



It is found that 93 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that sending text messages today is as common as speaking on the mobile phone.

OPINION THAT LANGUAGE USED IN TEXTING MESSAGES FINDS ITS WAY INTO THE ENGLISH CLASS ROOM:

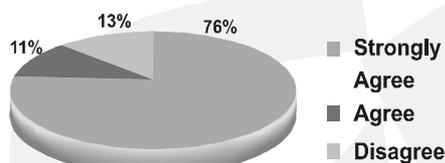
TEXT LANGUAGE USED IN SPOKEN ENGLISH



Over the last few years, with the emergence of sms services and online instant messages, various reports have shown that the use of contractions in regular words. In order to check whether students use the rules of writing in classrooms is the objective behind this question. From the study, it is interpreted that 87 percent of the respondents agreed that language used in text messages finds its way to spoken English used in the English class room.

Technology has always been looked as a dual edged sword all along. The fact that most of the people use short, contracted words during messaging and other ways of interactions these have also invariably found their way into classroom activities where these short-cuts are not appreciated.

EMAILS ALTERED THE STRUCTURE OF THE LETTER AS A COMMUNICATIVE TOOL:

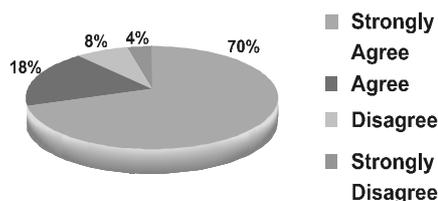


Letter writing has always been treated as an art and so is, now, e-mail. Of lately the e-mail writing

trend has shown a drastic change, with new formats and etiquettes. Students have, it's believed, carried over their messaging language into e-mail writing. The teachers' perspective on this sought. It is observed that 87 percent of the respondents agreed that e-mails altered the structure of formal letter. Teachers expressed that even for e-mail there certain rules and structure which are important to be followed. They felt that over the years e-mail structure of letter has deviated to large extent from the conventional formats and structures.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION DOES NOT ERADICATE TRADITIONAL MODE OF COMMUNICATION. IT ONLY ALTERS LANGUAGE USE:

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION



Though written communication has come along a long way, but still there's a belief that the process, structure and protocols never changed even though the medium through which it is carried out might change. Teachers were asked to comment on this view. It is observed that 87 percent of the respondents believed that Digital communication does not eradicate traditional modes of communication and that it only alters the way language is used. Teachers opined that no matter what the mode of communication and how much ever the advances might have taken place, but the language used and the way it is used never changes.

The salient observations of the teacher's responses are as follows:

- 46% of the teachers stated that they require about 14 to 16 hours of class in a week to finish the syllabus in scheduled time-frame. On further inquisition it was found that the current allocated hours is not sufficient for them to

finish the syllabus on time. They expressed that language is not given priority over other subjects and also the syllabus is too much.

- When the results are compared with that of results from question 6 and 7, it is clearly understood that most teachers focused mostly only on completion of university syllabus and were quite aware that the time given for completion of university prescribed syllabus was not sufficient to train students to speak English language fluently and that it required more time to do that.
- It has been observed that English as a subject is not given much importance as it only forms a tertiary subject. It is only conducted as it is included in the course and students concentrate only on passing the subject but not excelling in it.
- Majority of the faculty opined that they were not satisfied with the syllabus. They felt that it is not practical enough to enable the students learn the language.
- The teachers felt that the language used while messaging was the main reason for the deterioration of English language among students. The use of contractions in place of complete words has led to this state.
- Majority of the faculty have agreed that it is imperative for teachers to constantly update their knowledge and skills. It has been observed that 4% did not feel to update their skills. The reasons that have been cited were; that they lack time for such updation while few stated that they are content with their level of skills set and knowledge.
- It can be once again observed here that technology has played its part in diminishing the quality standards among students of English language. Also, over-crowded classrooms also led to the diminishing standards. It was always believed that a size of 30~35 students per class is the optimal batch strength, but in most cases, as observed earlier, the size of the classroom ranged between 45~60. This has deteriorated the faculty attention towards students.
- Teachers have stated that students write in the same manner as they would while using electronic messaging services. The contractions of simple words and shortening of sentences, the informal addressing have all found their way into the language while writing classroom and examination content. There seems to be a problem in delineating official and unofficial communiqué.
- It is observed that 32% of the faculty are not fully aware of the computer usability and they feel that they do not need to be. They remarked that the delivery in classroom is more than enough and that there is no need for technology in imparting English language.
- Majority of the faculty felt that it was important to utilise technology to enable teaching English. They opined that good visuals have an effect on learning and students are able to learn quickly.
- Teachers have said that they use a variety of technological aids depending upon the need. They prefer computers certain type of delivery while televisions for other.
- Teachers have reported that with the use of technology teaching has become easier as it helps in capturing the attention of the students. The students had, earlier, a tendency neglect the language class due to various reasons, but with technological aids, innovative and creative illustrations are helping the teachers to capture the attention of the students.
- Language delivery, as with any delivery of any other subject, requires the students to absorb the content and then put in to practice. One of the oldest methods has been to absorb the grammar rules and good vocabulary which is useful for the students to put language in practice correctly and devoid of errors. Teachers

have felt that technological aids have helped in this regard to achieve the objective.

- Majority of the teachers have shown a positive inclination towards embracing technology in their pedagogy. Though there are still few who have agreed otherwise, which might be attributed to their resistance to acceptance change, as introduction of technology involves updating their skill sets which the faculty might have an apprehension to carry out.
- Though the teachers have agreed largely that CALL is an effective tool in imparting the course of English language, many still feels that the human component still plays an important role. They feel that the teachers have to still impart the basic components of language training and also monitor the progress. Corrective measures, wherever required, can only be achieved by teachers. They opined that technology can only be an aid but not substitute for a teacher.
- It is interesting to note that the teachers have expressed that sometimes visual content diverts the attention of students. The seriousness is diluted and the attention shifts to fun and relaxing mode. Though many faculties have said that good visuals help the students grasp the content more quickly.
- Teachers opined that students use short-cuts during interacting over social media. The new hip-hop culture where words are shortened and new words are used by students in order to prove their 'coolness'. The objective behind such communication is to be socially acceptable among friends. Also students use shortened words to communicate faster and quickly to match up the speed of conversation. Teachers have also stated that most students converse in their regional language but they type in using English language.
- Teachers have further asserted that the standard of language used during interaction over social media is of sub-standard nature. They felt that though the students are conversing and making an effort to speak in English but the direction is

wrong as they are speaking wrong. They said that during the conversation the objective of the students is not to converse in proper and correct English but rather to only converse.

- Technology has always been looked as a dual edged sword all along. The fact that most of the people use short, contracted words during messaging and other ways of interactions these have also invariably found their way into classroom activities where these short-cuts are not appreciated.
- Teachers expressed that even for e-mail there are certain rules and structure which are important to be followed. They felt that over the years e-mail structure of letter has deviated to large extent from the conventional formats and structures.
- Teachers opined that no matter what the mode of communication be and how much ever the advances might have taken place, but the language used and the way it is used never alters. The rules of proper communication still, invariably, remain. In such contradicting messages coming in from the educators of English, the questions that plague the new millennium are
 - 1) Can the younger generation be better in their English given the lacunae's addressed?
 - 2) Can technology with all its deterrents be capitalised to improve the English language skills of young Indians?
 - 3) What are the issues that educators should address to improve the quality of the English language communication among students?
 - 4) Can the new generation of savvy Indians hold the edge in English language as held by the post independence Indian generations?