
Applications of Information Technology in the Study of English Literature - Its Pros & Cons

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There are two important and dominant events of the last decade of the 20th century - the Globalization and the Information Technology. These two have a wide implications on almost all the walks. In fact, revolutionized each and every aspect of the life in the modern world and changed a lot the life style of modern man. With Globalization the competent handling of information has become very important. It has become vital for the survival in today's highly competitive world. Knowledge, information and research in anyone part of globe is not the circumscribed possession of any particular area but the globalization it is shared by the world community as a whole. This has been facilitated by the revolution of information technology through its sophisticated methods and tools of quick communication. Methods and means of imparting education have also undergone considerable changes. Now there is a pressure on changing the traditional classroom teaching. Moreover, both English language and English literature is passing through the process of transformation in this phase of transition on the Wake of information technology revolution. Some three decades of our times of our school days teaching have been greatly modified in respect of the techniques, methods and concepts of learning.

In our times, there was very little application of technology in the domains of the subjects of philosophical, spiritualistic and metaphysical nature like philosophy, literature and anthropology. Shakespeare, Milton, Marlowe, Wordsworth, Shelly and Keats and the other giants and the stalwarts of literature were valued and viewed for their note of universality and speculative aspects of their theme and substance. Reading of literature and teaching of literature was based on the text and its associated criticism. Teacher used to be the prime source imparting knowledge in the classroom and encouraging the creative potential of the students. I remember that without the aid of technology students acquired skill and understanding of English grammar and English language. It was all the magic of assiduous, devoted and laborious efforts of the teachers at the primary and secondary school level that the solid foundation of the students was built in respect of their understanding, evaluative capacity and critical acumen. But change is the law of nature. Nothing is static and stationary in life. Time and tide waits for none. So today we have entered in an era of information technology and globalization. The spirit of the time require that we have to keep pace with fast galloping speed of time. Means and methods, tools and techniques, concepts and criterions have been greatly changed and transformed on the wake of this new dawn of Globalization and Information Technology which have to us both with some advantages and disadvantages. That we are bound to accept it both as a curse and a boon.

But before we could proceed with our subject matter, it is necessary that we will have to understand the nature of the change that has been brought by the introduction of this new phase in the modes of teaching and learning both in English language and literature. The impact of these new developments of Globalization and

information technology is worth studying both on English literature and language simultaneously because they both are the streams belonging to foreign sources - both are secondary to us, the Indian natives.

Information Technology (IT) exerts universal appeal in the world today. In many countries, it is the single important source of attainment economic, social and political ends. Information adds to our awareness and understanding of some topic, problem or event and as such it is a vital source of knowledge. It supplies facts, intelligence, data, news regarding any topic or matter and thus it is the life blood of education as it helps in creating material and methods of teaching and learning.

Globalization has produced an information rich society. It demands broader interaction of one part of the world to the other by means of multi-media and the devices associated with it like internet, T.V., computer, video-recording etc. in order to ensure global connectivity. This global connectivity has been ensured by Information technology - This global connectivity, the offshoot of modern Information Technology has converted the whole world into just one international fraternity - one component unit of humanity sharing mutually the various common problems faced by the modern world in the context of the present day industrialized civilization with its hazards of health, hygiene, impoverishment social and economic injustice. Infact because of this global connectivity ensured by this IT revolution a new atmosphere of mutual understanding, mutual co-ordination and cooperation have been created to come under one umbrella of awakened and enlightened humanity.

Now, we come straightway to the field of education and particularly to its implications in teaching and learning of English language and English literature. Most important in this context is that before the advent of I.T. revolution, the traditional methods of teaching and learning language and literature were based on two basic things - man and material. Man was the learner or teacher and material was in the forms of books and libraries. But now with the advent of I.T., there became three factors in the process of learning - Man, Material and Machine. I.T. added the third very important factor that of machine exhibited in its various modes of information technology like internet, computer, video-cassettes, T.V., radio and tape recorders and other forms of audio-video means of connectivity. All these opened an infinite means and methods of gathering information on any particular topic related to language and literature. It is a vital source of commanding information and knowledge of encyclopediac range on any topic of one's choice. For example, we can take computer. Through computer, we can have access to the libraries containing the material of the topic of our choice - take for example Frost - an American poet. If any research scholar needing critical and textual material - everybody knows how computer and internet can help in providing information regarding the source material and also on some websites one can get access to the books page by page where one can find out the relevant material. In that sense, IT is a boon as it supplies the material of our need in our homes and on our reading desk like our humble servant.

English is a foreign language. A teacher of English literature must be deeply grounded in language first and secondly the cultural and historical context of the literature which he is teaching.

The respect of priority language comes first. I have no shame in accepting the truth that barring few of the prestigious public schools and the convent schools of the cities and metropolitan towns, the teaching of English in remote corners of the towns and villages is in very deplorable condition. There the ignorant teachers further add to the ignorance of the students. Literature requires depth. Teachers lack the deep understanding of literary content owing to many reasons but the basic is their poor understanding of English language. Without proficiency in language a teacher can neither comprehend the substance of his subject nor can he has the sufficient expressive potential to convey the literary sensibility and thought and technique of the author he is teaching to his students.

To conclude, we can say that due to the advent of Globalization and IT Revolution, the scenario of teaching and learning have been greatly changed. The traditional methods of learning and teaching were based chiefly on Man and Material but now the third most important component of it - the Machine is added. Machine is represented in this process of learning and teachings by means of the various technical instruments and means discussed in here. However, there remain few other things to be stressed here in connection with this trio of Man, Material and Machine, the life blood of education is that however dazzling success of the modern inventions of IT may be they should never be taken of the substitute of the teacher. Even in this mechanical infrastructure of learning and education, the role of the teacher is central. He serves as guide and resource expert who circulates, supervises and monitors the technology assisted lessons and provides his students with authentic materials. However, in an age of advanced technology, teachers will have also to be technical minded and equip themselves adequate updated information and knowledge to keep pace with the spirit of time and space.