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Innovative Trends & Modern Methods in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

Change is the law of nature. A Trend is the general tendency towards change.

Karen Lamb

Change comes in many forms in our lives. It either comes forcefully like a tidal wave or creeps along gradually like a glacier. It might come in the form of devastating tragedy, difficult choices, or even give new opportunities. A Trend is a general tendency to change. And with the modernity and technology that affects our lives, it became important to add new trends in the field of education to develop the education system and to suit the modern way of thinking. By doing so, for sure it will have an entire change to the traditional system of education. The traditional system of education is still effective but not like the recent trends that can add a vital role to the educational system in general and to the learners of English language specifically. This paper presents the most important trends in the ELT (English Language Teaching), and presents how the e- learning is included as a tool in the English language learning. With technology and web, this new trend makes learning faster and easier. The paper presents the learning tools through using the web and how the teachers can make use of them to make the educational environment more entertaining. Yet the innovative trends are not based on e – learning and technology only, the paper presented new trends that a teacher can use without using technology in the class. Whether using high-tech learning or not, the teacher is always the dynamo and the powerful guide for his students.

Keywords: ELF, Trends, Cooperative learning, Direct Method, ELS, E-Learning, Innovative learning

Introduction:

Essentially, the teaching process includes two main parts sending and receiving information. Eventually, a teacher tries his best to give knowledge as the way he understood it. The use of innovative methods in educational institutions has a powerful effect not only to improve education but also to empower learners. Trends have come in the field of education, and it affected the traditional system of education. Modern trends add vital role to the education sector in which the stress on quality over quantity. Such types of methods are called GTM (grammar-translation method) and Communicative method. (Baviskar, 2016, p. 175)

Traditional curriculum, class planning and old teaching routines help students to learn grammar and vocabulary for ages. One cannot deny that sometimes old methods of teaching makes learners get tired of memorising verbs, answering worksheets, and concentrating on repeating all the time. Though traditional methods such as audio - lingual and direct methods still offer useful results, yet they are clearly outdated in modern classroom. For sure social media and the internet as a whole have changed the way people learn languages in a positive way, it is imperative for modern language teachers to address the needs and interests of nowadays students. (Zehr, 2008, p. 107)

There are current and modern trends in teaching English that can help a lot of modern classes in learning the language in an EFL or ESL, easier and more effectively. Some of these trends are really necessary, before applying it one have to put in mind:

1. Goal: It is important to make the goal clear for the learners that they do not need to be native speakers of English, for we are already native speakers of our own first language. And as Penny Ur (2009) puts it “to produce fully competent English-knowing bilinguals rather than imitation native speakers.” English is a means of communication and it is a mean to learn and ease other contents such as science and mathematics, it is important for the students to cross the curricular content. (p.21)
2. Culture: It is important to teach the English culture to master the language; most of the traditional teaching, there is no concern in the culture only if it is necessary.

3. Teacher effectiveness: To master the English language, it is not necessary to have a native speaker of English, for being qualified or effective depends on the teacher ability of intercultural competence.
4. E-Learning: It is important to make use of modern gadgets in teaching, they are more effective with the modern learners and the electronic tools have flexibility in communication. (Gomes, 2012, p. 46)
5. Teaching strategies: Including games in teaching can be really effective especially for young learners.
6. Teachers are the first learners: Being responsible of the learners' development, teachers should remain fresh and updated with the new strategies of teaching. Developing such skills and knowledge, teachers should engage in professional learning activities continuously. (Means & Olson, 1997, p.19)

One can conclude that it is important for teachers to know the goals, needs and objectives of the learners in order set the suitable method for teaching. Grammar, vocabulary and language skills are vehicles to master the language and to reach the final outcomes. Accordingly, it is important for teachers to know their learners' goals so as to avoid irrelevant programs.

How I could choose the suitable method?

If the students want to learn English for a specific purposes, like in their business or in their companies they need using English sometimes. In that case the teacher should put in mind that this class is a business English class, and they need certain vocabularies that suit their work. The teacher needs to listen to their problems and need to use a method suitable to the nature of their companies. Give the students different tasks and make the learners search for that topic and the different topics that concern their job should be discussed in their classes afterwards. A way helps to increase the vocabulary that is needed in their jobs, and to increase their ability in discussing and analysing general ideas concerning their work. In short, the method or approach should be based according to the need of the learners. At the end of their course, a project is to be delivered to their boss for approval; a strategy adds a positive feedback in their learning process.

If the learners are still young or teenagers, oral activities should be added more to them, videos of real world and many relevant course content to their material. Tests are also important in such cases, and the difficulty of the exam and the activities depends on the level of the learners. As for Evaluation it is so important; for the criteria of grading must be clear, the learners depend on it which leads afterwards to their goals. (Deelip & Faruk, 2016, p. 33)

Students are tired with rigid curriculum, that use the Grammar Translation Method in which communicative approach is applied and depending a lot on learning, courses and lectures; the need for a moulded ability to compete and survive in the global world is the demand nowadays. For this, one has to apply a new trend to suit the needs of the learners. Researchers based on their studies emphasis on the meaningful contextualised discourse. To encourage easy discourse, technology can be used. Using technology is considered a new trend in teaching which makes learners understand faster and easier. Enjoyment has to be added to teaching to make learning environment more effective to reach the goals specially in learning a foreign language. Sarica & Cavus (2008), assert that “powerful internet connections like mobiles, webs and net devices can provide many new possibilities for the educational system”.

1. E – Learning:

Web-based Learning: it is a recent way of learning from distance, in which this online education is based also on the four skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) but they can be on the web. Students prefer the e – learning and can communicate through using e-mails, blogs or chats because they are easy to learn, easy to use and well – designed. Such new a trend in teaching is good if it is just to support the main lecture but it cannot be a replace of the ordinary lectures. It is important to make sure that the e – learning is used correctly otherwise many problems will occur.

Using technology in a number of fields has been so successful and beneficial for teachers to reach some specific goals particularly in education and for those who are learning a foreign language. Technology is seen enjoyable in these days in every step in our lives and with technology barriers are reduced. In teaching e- learning can include web, emails, internet, mobile devices, iPhone, iPad, live series lectures, corner book club

and others. Such educational technologies make the whole world one big family and make everyone all around the world to be understood and have lectures and able to develop his ability at any time. (Storey et al., 2002) E – Learning includes:

a. E-mail

E-mail is a communication tool which is being used before the existence of Internet, but now it is used by students to join e-mail and to communicate with their instructors. It is an excellent way for communicating, because it is easy and useful, especially with foreign contacts and teachers can mix e-mail based on activities into their curriculum. For example if we have a class of students meet weekly for a lecture, a few days before the class meeting, the teacher sends an e-mail for each student mentioning about the essay they have to discuss and the student have to write something about it, in this way the students can prepare for the class ahead of time. Teachers can also send his students some emails to start to write compositions or essays in English and send back to their teacher, this skill improves writing and vocabulary skills. English teachers can benefit from websites which include; Yahoo, Hotmail, Gmail etc. (LeLoup, 1997, p. 439)

b. Blogs

Blogs are well suited to serve to discuss informational website publish on the worldwide website. Blogs are well suited to serve personal online journals, particularly for students. Students who want to learn language could use blogs by linking to a course and by writing for their classmates. Who writes the posts expects other readers or reviewers to respond on his post as criticism. Such activity is considered as self-publishing and it encourages thoughtful ideas as well as enhances writing and develops the reading and critical insight of students, for students should only write in English. (Pinkman, 2005, p. 21)

c. Skype

Skype is a new developing technology, in which students can talk to their far away instructors. By doing so students can speak with native speakers directly this will enhance their pronunciation and develop their

speaking skill through such an application. Besides all that such an application does not cost students or teachers any penny except for internet access. (Wu, 2005, p. 272)

d. Mobile Devices

Nowadays everything changed and developed even teaching. Mobile is included in the teaching process and it is considered one of those technological devices that a learner can depend on in giving electronic information and it really helps in gaining knowledge regardless of place and time. In mobiles E - Dictionaries applications can be helpful for learners to check word meanings and it's synonymous. This application serves learners as a study guide tool, to understand the concepts that can be exemplified using live images, videos and online quizzes. Another feature for this application is the instant feedback and students evaluations during the lesson which will help to improve their performance. (Lehner & Nosekabel, 2002, p.30).

e. IPods

iPod is another device which helps to produce and enhance language learning. Students can use that gadget to share texts, images and audio texts with his teachers. This technology improves not only listening but also vocabulary building and grammar learning. Students can record their voices and do their listening and speaking exercises through that that device like listening to English news, poems and even songs. (Shinagawa & Schneider, 2007, p. 87).

Though technology and E – Learning helps a lot in teaching especially in Modern age, yet for sure it has its defects; which in such kind of the need for a fast internet connection. And some countries either have a slow internet connection, or they don't have technology in teaching. One has to put in mind that many students don't have financial ability to buy a gadget or pay Internet access. Innovative teaching trends do not depend on E – learning and technology only, there are ways the teacher can use in class and even outside class to develop the teaching process. These ways need a smart teacher to mix between the traditional methodologies and the new way of teaching. The way of teaching depends on the class number and the curriculum. From these methods are:

2. Creative thinking:

Stimulate learners for creative thinking and think critically by including playful games and visual exercises, such methods really excites the learner's minds and stimulate their interest in learning. A teacher should always encourage new ideas of his students; it is considered one of the best ways to develop creative ideas and to encourage their freedom in exploring the new language.

Good quality innovation in education could make learners learn more in a shorter time and could stimulate learning proficiency. Therefore, it is important to create a good innovation in the teaching process. It is important to support an environment that can motivate learners in their learning process, create activities to solve the problems the learners face. Such a method depends a lot on teachers and how to apply the suitable activity and learning model and ask clever questions that creates creative thinking. The results discovered that the approaches which support the creation of creative and innovative education should focus on systematical progress. These approaches usually grounded on design-based learning, problem - solving, creative thinking, research writing learning, or innovative teaching process could lead to innovative education creatively. (Prompan, 2007, p.54)

3. Audio and Visual Materials:

Teachers should not depend on the students' imagination, but he should include audio – visual Materials to his courses to ensure that the idea is understood better. Depending on audio – visual materials will help the development of the listening, reading and comprehension skills of students. There are also a number of ideas like inviting native guests; to listen to the right way of pronouncing words, presentations, data show, seminars or even using charts or poster presentation. The teacher should not let this visual or audio material to skip his domination role, for these materials are only aiding his job but are not as a substitute for his role. It is an undeniable fact that audio - visual was one of the operative ways in the past and in the present also; it enables students to practice what they have learned. It is really an effective way of teaching for learners can achieve communication by using gestures, eye contact and facial expression to convey meaning. (Katchen, 1996, p. 256)

4. Brainstorming:

Brainstorming should be included in class sessions. Make time to give a single important idea, a multiple brain focus to encourage each and everyone in the class to participate and to give voice to the student's thoughts without wondering if they might be wrong. Using a simple brainstorming session needs some ground rules before applying it in the class. Ramazani (1994) used the brainstorming technique in his class by asking his students to submit short summaries of reading then he hand-out in his class ideas for brainstorming and stimulating class discussions. Another time he can assign debate topics in his class and then ask his student to begin discussion freely, by doing so the students will have a satisfactory understanding of both sides of the issue and able to comment easily on the topic. (p. 13)

5. Outside Classroom:

The environment really has a great effect on learners. Most of the best classes when they are outside the classroom; taking students outside the usual class refresh their ability and excitement in learning. Whatever is going to be given since is a change of routine is going to be remembered without much effort. This experience is considered as a field trip which helps to build experience for doing an assignment afterwards. The teacher should establish an objective for the event and connect it with the new environment, as the new location creates an inspiration, this will encourage the learner of the language to blend between the society and curriculum; students should make an assignment on the related topic. After the trip the learners can have a discussion in the class to connect what they have learned and highlighted the importance of such a trip. (Cox, 2011, p. 60)

6. Storyboard Teaching:

Rudyard Kipling said, "If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten." If a teacher connects each and every subject with a great storyboard, it helps students to learn step by step, for the effect of visualisation is highly effective in teaching. Such a way of teaching stimulate activity and even complex ideas will be easily dealt with. The Storyboard can be made either by the teacher or by the learner's imagination also.

Storyboards allowed the students to visualize the images that are helpful for brainstorming activity because it engages them in thinking about how they wanted to frame their images. While composing the storyboards, students read them; it is a way to make students smarter in reading visual texts. Storyboards are an innovative trend of teaching it reminds us of the comic pages in newspapers and graphic novels. (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 98)

7. Work Together As a Team:

Teamwork is defined by Scarnati (2001) “as a cooperative process that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results” (p. 5). As everyone knows, the result of every teamwork is always great and effective. Encouraging learners to do teamwork; one helps the other in their weak points to have a complete sharing project that each learner feels he is part of that afford. Maybe in a teamwork the teacher shares with his students the activity and all can be one great teamwork which is considered one of the best strategies in learning.

Harris & Harris (1996) also explain that a “team has a common goal or purpose where the team members can develop effective, mutual relationships to achieve team goals”. Team members must be flexible enough to adjust helpful working environments where goals are achieved through cooperative rather than individual work. (p. 29)

8. Humour:

It demands creativity and imagination to capture students’ attention and interest in one’s teaching. From students’ point of view, a repetitious lecture would delay their interest to focus in the class. So adding humour in the class is so useful and motivates students’ comprehension. There are benefits to include humour in the language classroom. Activities that can increase fun and learning by lowering students’ nervousness are shared. It is important to teach students while playing and laughing, that avoids unease and keeps the thread of learning with no stress especially when there is a lot of work to do or when it is a very long session. (Shiyab, 2009, p. 264)

9. Stimulating Classroom Environment:

A well - decorated classroom is a good environment for students to stimulate the learner's mind. It helps them to think better and encourage creative exploration. A positive environment for sure has a positive impact on its learners. Learners might bring the outside problems in the class like home problems or fear of tests or live pressure, which will lack their motivation and dulls the love of learning so using warm positive classroom really affects their learning ability and encourages them to ask questions and to be involved in the class lecture. (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009).

10.Engagement:

It is important for students to be engaged with the real world, making learners involved in everyday life makes learning language easier and memorable. Instead of conventional teaching methods, students were taken to visit local businesses where they were able to witness how the knowledge that they were learning applied to the real world. Multiple days were set aside for this practice and all students were required to wear business suits in order to attend. The idea is to get students engaged and to connect their learning to the real world. Engaging learners with the real world makes learning more meaningful for students and they become more aware of the choices they make in society. (Bolliger, 2018, p. 211).

Conclusion:

The traditional “chalk and talk” method of teaching that used to be effective for hundreds of years is now not that effective like before, modern revolutionary teaching methods are the need of modern age. Educators, teachers and who are in higher education always in search of new trends in teaching for learners to raise the quality experiences for students cross ages. Electronic devices are one and the most important trend of the modern age, it is the youth’s requirement to study through social media and does not come instead of the traditional methods but it really helps a lot in teaching. i.e.: e-reading, kindle book reading, I-pods, mobiles, blogs, Skype and emails. Adopting new methods needs to train teachers and educators on how to apply the new methods and what kind of classes are needed to apply it in. so educators need a lot of training and courses to develop their abilities to apply the new methods on their students.

Though it is important to include technology in the teaching curriculum yet with technology or without the actual effective learning is about the teaching method that is used. The clever teacher can use many effective methods in and outside the class that can stimulate students interests like encouraging creative thinking by using the suitable activity and the smart questions in the class. By asking the student to submit short summaries the teacher stimulates brainstorming which encourages clever ideas and analysis to pop out. To develop the listening and speaking comprehension the teacher can use audio-visual materials learners can achieve communication and convey meaning through gestures, eye contact and facial expression

The environment is really important for learners whether it is outside the class which encourages learners to get out of the mountainous class lecture of every day or inside the classroom. Such a strategy enables the student to build an experience that will help him to create an assignment based on that experience outside the classroom. As for the environment inside the class, it is really effective to have a well - decorated class, it arouses the learners’ ability to think, analyse and inspire them for new ideas. Students can visualise images through storyboards, it is helpful because it engages learners to think of framing their ideas in a clever way. In some materials teamwork is so important enforces learners to work together and they help each other and share their ideas to reach one goal

together. As it is known the result of teamwork is always superb. Humour lessens the learners tense in the class and makes him feels home an idea makes learning easier and full of fun. It is important to engage learners with the outside world, for he is learning the language to apply it, so being connected with the outside life is the best way to use and learn the language in the right way.

At last, there is no fixed way or the best method of teaching, but there is a best teacher. A teacher can use the traditional or the trendy method or mix between the two depending on his class needs. Teaching is a complex art, the more methods the teacher has the better, to be able to use the right one in the right time. Whether using technology or not, the teacher is the master of the role of teaching and his way can be effective if he chooses the right method in the right place and time, and if he can solve the learners problems and serve the learners' needs.

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