Changing Dimension of Language Teaching

Bam Dev Sharma† · Seong-min Han† †

ABSTRACT

This article tries to see how language teaching, especially English language to the young children, has changed over the years due to different innovative methods and expertise of language teachers and instructors. Furthermore, it gives an overview of prevailing language teaching methodologies that prevailed and have been fallacious because they did not usher changes that were desired. Finally, it brings forth instrumental insights which are supposed effective in language teaching through studies, practices, and researches over the years. At the same time, it manifests some of the pertinent features suggested to have been applicable for modern language teaching.

Keywords: Instructional technology, Functional approach, Soft skills

1. Introduction

Language teaching has gone through diverse transformation. As it has gone through diversity, it is posed with different opportunities and revolutionary approaches which differ from traditional roles. Breaking long held notion that teacher is all in class controlling teaching learning activities and resources to be utilized, modern approach of language teaching, however, is different. In the wake of modern teaching, linguists and educationists have worked on several approaches in order to make transformation in prevailing teaching and learning norms. Many of these new approaches have made drastic transformation because they have tried to overthrow the concept of teaching and learning, not just parochial and narrow academic pursuits, but part of whole perspective learning associated with life.

We know that modern dynamics of teaching learning encompass class and beyond class phenomenon. Children are exposed to more different social and cultural contexts than the past. Profuse use of technology and resources has paved ground for artificial intelligence which has a greater social stress for the modern learners than the past. School and teaching learning institutions may need an environment to make them ready to grapple with new challenges of the times they are being exposed to. Every country is not well equipped for this. Sadly to put, in some countries schools still run on rudimentary system as a center for passing exams. Dynamic approach is
required where children can obtain various experiences to learn reasoning skills, artificial intelligence, and exposure to social and cultural issues to be more adaptable and responsible to themselves and the global society. So the approach of education from attaining professional goal in teaching and learning is constantly shifting towards global understanding as a global citizen. Though it seems farfetched, if it properly tuned to new challenges, it can address the new challenges.

This shift is contributed by several factors. The growth of technology-based education is increasing because it is often thought to be enhancing educational opportunities in language classrooms. As a matter of fact, instructional technology is continually attracting more students and teachers as well. This gradual attraction is largely backed by the advances in digital devices, the convenience of online resources, the handiness of learning management systems. In fact, these tools help flourish techno-savvy nature of a 21st century student to be conversant with job markets. Besides, it is also believed to enhance competency not for mere communication but for adjustment to all round development of life. The idea of integrating technology into teaching and learning may help teachers to be aware of educational attainment to holistically understand, respond, and engage in techno-based education for positive outcomes in the long run. Modern technical accessories used in teaching and learning open up several other frontiers.

As the premise of teaching and learning is getting more expanded, there come several questions because language teaching is also a part of comprehensive learning. It cannot be segregated from the entire genesis of teaching and learning practiced in the teaching institutions. In that expansive quest, we can have the following questions:

- Whether language teaching and learning is just for professional and communicative enterprise?
- Should it comprise human faculties?
- Should language teaching be an act of enhancing capabilities for a job market?
- Whether should it incorporate human values?

Finding answers to this question is to see the broader frame of teaching and learning. To be precise, it is to incorporate language and beyond language faculties, still not explored. And obviously, the inclusion of human faculties is something to do with the approach of modern language teaching and learning enterprise for balance approach which has been often overlooked.

Enhanced by technologies, various approaches of language teaching and methodologies have been devised ranging from communicative language teaching to cooperative teaching, participatory language teaching to learner friendly language teaching, collaborative language teaching to interactive teaching, and so on. Though these approaches and techniques are different in different context of language teaching and learning environment, they, however, are envisaged to benefit the students as the following:

- Incorporating real life situations in language
- Teaching all skills of language
- Innovative and experimental teachings
- Ensuring learner friendly environment
- Specific tasks and project based teaching and learning
- Interpersonal skills
- Intercultural skills
- Communicating skills
• Creative skills
• Collaborating skills
• Thinking and critical skills
• Performance skills

With these objectives in mind, modern teaching and learning is considered as a liberal enterprise with an approach where a student is not under the control and scrutiny of class and teacher, course content and class hours, but an active agent of learning on his own engaged into certain learning pursuits. Having been assured of some of the apparent benefits, the language teachers and scholars prescribe these techniques for the class, especially in the classes which are supposed to impact in the long run.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this article has three distinct elements: First, it tries to study modern liberal aptitude of language teaching and learning. Second, it seeks how new techniques and expertise are implemented to enhance effective language teaching. And, the third: what roles of teachers, students and others can be ensured to attain desired results in language teaching. To make the claim, this article would manifest some of the dominant ideas and views of the prominent linguist and scholars from the relevant resources and practices. Some of these knowledge and understanding are tested and have been proved satisfactory.

3. Limitation of the Study

This article does not go into in-depth and exhaustive detail of language teaching areas practiced in the modern time. It can pick some of the innovative ways which have been proved justifying their perspectives: practiced in teaching and learning activities. Besides, it would try to amalgamate major trends considered and acceptable for course of language teaching with cursory glance. However, it is also stated that many of these are yet to be explored how far they can be applicable for language teaching and learning situation in varying contexts and needs.

4. Comprehensive Language Teaching and Learning

The concept of language for basic skill is becoming dry bones in modern times. What language is supposed by many is: it has to make one capable and skillful in communication. This, though being the primary task, need to be supplemented by other benefits as well. Today students don’t get convinced with the ideas that language is mere a tool of communication. Learners obviously try to seek many skills of language, including reading, writing, listening, viewing, sharing, participating and collaborating. Challenges of the modern teachers, obviously, multiply not as usual teacher, but as an instrumental teacher to adjust with modern needs and requirements. On this backdrop, J. Miller, J. Krishnamurthi, John Holt, the prominent figures of modern education, have suggested about the holistic education in which they focus on all round development of a child. Further, they strongly
support the ideas that education and its attainment should be based on all aspects of life, but not the fractured attitudes of learning. This approach has been accepted as one of the innovative approach to have ushered significant leap in the growth of modern education (Awasthi et al., 2015, p.17)

In the recent years when diverse language teaching techniques have thrived, the use of grammar is on the wane; it is supposed to be the outdated way of language teaching. Growth of communicative language teaching (CLT) brought some revolutionary outlook in the prevailing teaching and learning practices. In fact, communicative language teaching gave rise to contextual teaching that introduces and exposes learners to the real life situations. However, some linguists and language teachers are now seeing the importance of grammar in language teaching. The resurrection of grammar is not just a haphazard approach, but is nicely backed up with justifiable experimental teaching and learning procedures in different parts of the world, especially in second language teaching.

While communicative and functional approach of language teachings are prescribed as innovative techniques of language teaching to rouse interest in students, the use of grammar is considered to be applicable in making students aware of the concept, but not for the drills as was thought to be useful. This being the case, some linguists and language teachers are of the opinion that grammar teaching in selected cases can enhance communicative and functional language teaching in different language learning contexts. From this stand point, what we gather is: the teaching of language is all inclusive. Unlike the past, we cannot term as only some ways are applicable and some are not.

5. Teaching of Language beyond Language

Language teaching explicitly involves teachers, text, materials, learners, classrooms to cater successful conduction of teaching and learning. However, modern language teaching is beyond the language: it is, in fact, a venture that is set within social, cultural, contextual and humanistic contexts. Commencement of this approach is student centered enterprise where the autonomy of students is to be ensured. Several elements comprise in it. It is thought that cultural element is an avoidable which has long lasting impact on the students. Kramasch (1993,1) is of the opinion that the role of language teaching is even more central, calling it not just fifth skill but rather something that is always in the background, right from day one. Precisely to put, the cultural elements, though implicit in nature as many of them don’t seem to be apparent and palpable, can play an important role in language teaching.

Realizing its ensuing importance, language teachers and educationist advocate this in the classrooms in the recent times. In some case, culture is also associated with civic, moral, and ethical values in which the learners are attached to. In the same vein, El Karfa (2007, p.18) seeks the importance of civic education and its values. On being confident of its comprehensive impact on language teaching, El Karfa is of the opinion that civic values and educations encompass all aspects of teaching and learning with an ultimate goal of creating autonomous and responsible individuals who can make decisions of themselves. Furthermore, it also includes subject matter of lessons, the classrooms atmosphere, and the quality of students’ learning, both in and out of school.
On this backdrop, it can be clearly stated that language teaching beyond language as mere communication is more inclusive, broader, and comprehensive to ensure all round of learning competency of the students. Obviously, modern institutes and job providing agencies not seek professional who are good at language, but also bear good aptitude.

6. Role of Teachers

Though modern language teaching does not give as much as controlling roles many teachers and language instructors did have in the past. However, teachers have still rooms. They can be good motivators and influencer in both class and outer class activities in the process of learning. They are not active in terms of domineering roles performing activities of teaching and learning, but they can support, motivate, activate, and give feedbacks in case students require. Besides, teachers are not expected to be expert of materials and resources, but they need to have good insights and foresights so as to facilitate the students. For this, they must have clear perception in the activities and should have deep motivation of teaching. At the same time, they need to have formal and informal trainings for teaching learning to be conversant with modern dynamics. It is equally good for them to have collaborative and interactive teaching and support and feedbacks form their colleagues for further exploration. If they simply rely on text books and course content alone, I think, they might not be able to cope with the modern challenges. Smoak (2003, p.27) also observes something like this and puts in his words this way, "We must acknowledge the fact that much of the language that our students need will not be found in any course; therefore, we must be willing and able to prepare own."

Admittedly, a modern teacher is like a catalyst. He does not show his role as dominant role, but is there to see and watch the students to correct, motivate, inspire, and track.

7. Use of Modern Technology

As we advance in technological development in terms of teaching and learning, we are at the access of diverse information that early people were deprived of. This access has made us capable of using several approaches and devices that are compatible for us. As a result, and we are making teaching learning approach more sophisticated than it was in the past. Obviously, modern gadget, computer, Ipad, and Iphone are accessible in most of the teaching learning circumstances, which, to a great extent, make it more varied and interactive. Besides, the learner and teachers both enjoy greater range of freedom and select teaching learning activities suitable in the context. Teachers in Japan and Tokyo are said to have been using mobile phones in language classes with satisfying results in which they learn grammar rules, vocabularies, pronunciations, and other language drills.

According to Hayo Reinders(2010, p.20) the use of mobile phones and other gadgets can be important in language class. She is of the onion that there are several pedagogical reasons to consider mobile phones in the second language classroom. Most importantly, phones are social tools that facilitate authentic and realistic collaboration among learners in real life circumstances.

Similarly, use of the Internet is also taking vogue in most of the teaching and learning setting over the years. While the internet is becoming popular, it has been accessible to the people across
the globe. Students are seen using it for personal writing, creative pieces, creation of blogs. More rewarding it becomes when the students share, get feedback and make interaction with their friends and relatives. Furthermore, it can be used to widen their social cultural perspectives. Boas (2011, p. 27) sees it specifically important as she puts:" Among the many strategies and tools to corporate meaningful activities into the writing curriculum, the use of internet stands out for its ability to create conditions for idea generations, research, and collaborations, especially with the young learners habituated to interacting online with social media."

8. Human Faculties in Language Learning

Suggestions pour that modern language teaching is not comprehensive to include human faculties in it. The critical side of it is; it is lacking humanitarian sense and values that needed to be developed in the formative minds of the children who are on the verge of promising career growth. To elaborate, modern teaching and learning is considered to have lacked the quality of being good human being with integrity though he can be a good professional. Many factors impact this. The prominent ones are the growth of result oriented teaching and learning, lack of humanitarian values in the course, the cut throat competition in job market, and so on. If human values are devoid of teaching and learning activities, we can expect a person with professional caliber but not a human being with love, care, and wisdom.

In the recent years, humanistic values in language teaching have been added in certain syllabuses and it is believed that satisfying results have been poured. Given the wider expansion of human connection, technology, and social and cultural exchanges, modern values would be crucial to shape the foundations of humanistic values in the future. In this context, Simon (1998, p.102) thinks of humanistic values as, "From knowing yourself, your behaviors and your patterns—a new confidence and internal security, a sense of potency will emerge that is life giving."

Humanistic teaching tries to establish a link between the students and the external society and community. To achieve such values in the language classrooms, roles of teachers are considered of prime importance because it is they who have to make their students for this task. Arnold (1998,p. 237), in this context, contends: "Humanistic language teachers see that they can teach English at least as effectively as those who take another approach, at the same time provide their students with added benefits."

Humanistic values can be good assimilating factors that can not only make teaching effective, but can surcharge confidence and integrity in the learners because a learner would feel that he is not only part of the class, but a part of the universe who has certain responsibilities of the world. This has more benefit: it can make an individual not a learner but a participant.

9. Other Aspects

A person with professional ethics but lack of human ethics, to be generated by modern teaching and learning context, would not face the challenges of the twenty first century humanity. Taking this into consideration, language experts and educationists, in the modern times, try to focus the importance of values. The value-oriented teaching and learning may be what should be the prime
target for the modern teaching and learning.

10. Physical Well-being

Good health /physical capacity /willingness to action

11. Mental Well-being

Mental flexibility/endurance/positive thinking/

12. Emotional Well-being

Emotional flexibility /maintaining good relationship/ emotional transformation /balance state of emotions/

Spiritual well being: Spiritual flexibility /intuition/ power of good understanding/ insightful cognition/

13. Social Well-being

Social coordination/ social flexibility/ social adjustment/ quality of mixing with others/

14. Attention in Soft Skills

In the modern time, the question of soft skills is much talked out subject. Soft skill, in common sense, does not mean any expertise knowledge or skills that can be learnt or taught in schools or through any prescribed calendar. Rather, it is a way how a person is capable of handling relationship in the world or society where one interacts. A number of researches indicate that soft skills are the basis for further skills that a person is to harness in course of times. It has been found that, in modern work forces, people fail to continue and gain professional skills in satisfactory level not because they lack professional skills and education, but because they lack soft skills. Research Institute of International Carnage Melon Foundation makes a point that seventy five percent of long terms of job success depends on peoples’ soft skills, whereas just twenty five percentage is based on technical knowledge, skills and education and communicative skills. This indicates how important is soft skills in making a learner successful in educational, enriching interpersonal capabilities. Furthermore, this is not the case of professional integrity, soft skills are considered to enhance basic efficiencies for maintaining good personal skills, healthy relationship, cooperation, and exchange.

15. What is expected of the Students?

It is indisputable fact that the twenty first century teaching and learning environment is liberal. As we know, it asks teachers as not controller and he should not rule the whole teaching and learning environment. It also has some rooms for the students. Students are also expected to
perform certain tasks. They should be interacting with the roles of the teachers. The participatory approach of the teacher should ensure learner's participation and make them responsive and interactive in the class, thereby helping them getting access to different group activities. In this sense, the learner becomes a key player in all classroom activities. (Lier, 1998, p.173)

It is from this sense that the outcomes of teaching and learning is envisaged in enhancing conducive environment for:

- To be able to express
- To be able to respond
- To be able to participate
- To be able to interact
- To be able to cooperate

We obviously see that modern teaching environment lays a great deal of role on parts of students in teaching and learning. To ensure greater participation, students should be lively motivated and activated in both the class and non-class environment. Understanding this value, Hatch (1983, p.183) gives emphasis by suggesting: "Help promote communication, help establish an affective bond that can serve either an explicit or implicit teaching mode."

Moreover, the learner centered activities are quite important and they can provide the opportunities for the students to encourage, respond, cooperate and share the values which will be foundation for them to attain better citizenry values of the world. (Nunan, 1998, p. 62). To gear up that ideal environment of teaching and learning, several factors become conducive beyond teachers and students.

Some teachers also lament the fact that there is often distance between the real teaching environment and the courses. In some countries, English language is often thought to have failed to germinate effective results due to lack of proper course, innovative classes, and trained teachers. It is not overlooked that language teaching can be achieved in satisfactory level when we have very relevant courses specifically designed for the class needs. Taking this into consideration, educationists and language experts are engaged in making effective courses incorporating several factors that have been thought less important in the past. In fact, many such innovative approaches have opened up several possibilities.

16. Materials for the Modern Teaching and Learning in Language Classes

In the modern times, traditional and conventional methods of teaching and learning have been felt irrelevant. Apparently, these approaches lack strategies to incorporate innovative approaches. Most of the linguists and experts believe that teaching and learning of language should include materials that appeal to learners. Considering this importance, it is suggested that illustrations, picture books, and graphic novels have been proved quite satisfying.

Similarly, journal keeping, role plays, anecdote sharing, word puzzles, spelling contest, elocutionary are other associated activities that have been proved effective as required by the need and situations of the learners and class sizes.

Taking this into consideration, Eisner(1985, p.5) gives emphasis of sequential arts that have been
becoming popular in many language settings. These books and materials are set in artistic forms relevant to the psychological tuning of the learners. Cartoons, comic books, graphic novels, and some puzzle books are becoming quite effective for certain classes.

17. Game Activities

Since liberal values of teaching and learning have been adopted over the years, various alternative teaching and learning activities are suggested applicable. One of the activities is the game activities in which students show full participation. Besides, they also get exposed to interactive roles which can help in language communication in the class. Understandably, when teaching and learning acts take place in the classrooms, full participations of students can be ensured. Furthermore, game activities make them confident and participatory as they think they are part of the games as other friends.

18. Peer Review and Observation System

Peer review among the learners and observations are considered crucial in language activities for all types of class. This can bring forth productive results. Unlike teacher’s tedious checking of grammar drills and other comprehensive questions, peer teaching and observation become more fun oriented tasks in which students learn language, words, grammars effectively on their own or through participatory approaches. The most important aspect of this is: they are learning things while they become sort of players. Teacher’s reviews and correction or rectifying mistakes are more cumbersome, as they don’t take active parts. But while they do so in the groups are more captivating and joyful acts. In some case, the peer reviews can go with different activities tailored with several other kills in the process of language teaching and learning.

19. Process for Creative and Critical Thinking

In the expansive growth of language teaching over the years, creative and critical teaching has been considered more innovative as other tools that have been discussed. It is also believed that incorporation of such elements in language class can ensure learner’s autonomy and confidence as well as independence. For this, the literary texts with good moral stories are often thought to be effective. Literary and critical texts are considered effective in promoting English language development in all four skills through interactions, collaboration, peer teaching and student and independence.

20. Testing and Evaluation

Testing and evaluations have often been controversial issues to have created pains for the language instructors and course planners over the years. It is often suggested that language testing and evaluations have been complex and rigid. In some language setting, teachers fail to test all of the skills of the students. As a result of the short sighted and narrow testing tools devised in
the language classes, testing and evaluations have been just immediate measures of generic intelligence, deviating other latent skills. Besides, these testing methods are more concerned with brain but not with many other emotive, psychological and attitudinal aspects human faculties. Taking this into consideration, modern testing and evaluations techniques have been more accommodating. They try to seek performance based skills, multiple types of skills, oral testing, critical and creative testing and evaluations. However, these many testing techniques are not still progressive to evaluate dynamic approaches of language learning and teaching. In some cases, it is a bit contradictory between teaching and testing. Morris( 2012, p.42 ) of the opinion that testing tools should be more liberal and encompassing . He suggests: "Language assessment , then, is much more than simply giving a language test; it is the entire process of test use. Indeed , the ultimate goal of language assessment is to use tests to better inform us on the decisions we take in language education."

What we gather more from such innovative ideas of testing is: we can ensure our teaching and learning environment that is compatible to the testing system we adopt. Moreover, testing and evaluations techniques can help us make our teaching and learning strategies to drive towards accomplishing goals. As teachers and instructors have roles in teaching and learning, the testing processes, in this aspect, can also link with the performance and skills disseminated and taught in the classes. Thus, it can be said that more comprehensive testing, the more effective classes.

21. Conclusion

It is obvious that things have changed over the years related to language teaching and learning. The dimension of teaching and learning, from mere bookish and drilling activities, have been transformed to rather broader enterprise, encompassing social, cultural, moral, and humanistic values that are envisaged as long term impacts. Though there are challenges to adopt many of these modern dynamics, but these, if implemented properly, can accrue better results.

References