

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A GATEWAY OF DIGITAL LITERACY

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an effort to focus on the significance of English and its direct role in developing digital literacy but for which it won't be possible for an individual to make pace with the digitally fast changing world around and thereby being smart in the matter of education as well. It also emphasises on the role of English Language in inculcating the habit of smart living and building smart thinking and learning among the youth. As it is known that English Language is the lingua franca of the world, and today most of the knowledge on internet is available in English language only, it goes needless to say that this language can play a vital role in making the people digitally literate.

Key Words: Digital Literacy, Smart Living, Smart Thinking, Smart Thinking

Introduction

One of the virtues that India gains from grievous colonial legacy is English Language. It had been in the budding stage during the British reign. After independence, many opposed the use of English in India, but in due course of time, the percentage of denial of use of English Language decreased and it has been accepted as one of the key languages. It has been contributing in the formation of new India as well.

India seems to be on the right path and trying to take every possible step to establish itself the World Power. The concept of Digital India, transforming cities into smart ones, making people digitally literate etc. have been hailed and appreciated in and out of home. "Information and communication technologies are raising the bar on the competencies needed to succeed in the 21st century and they are compelling...to revisit many of ...assumptions and belief."⁽¹⁾ The vastness of human knowledge, globalization and the accelerating rate of change due to technology compel us to redefine competency skills: mere literacy and basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing are not enough, rather, it is essential to be digitally literate to remain in the flow global

society. As the time changes, society changes and the skills needed to negotiate the complexities of life also change.

In the early 1990s, the person who had acquired simple reading, writing and calculating skills was considered literate but now, the requirement has changed; it needs the proficiency in operation of technology and emphasis on digital literacy. If the Indian government has taken initiative to metamorphose the way of administration and services, English language has certainly a vital role to play.

The foremost role knowing English language is to understand the directions, methods and suggestions displayed on the screen and to give command for or next step. To be able to understand the notifications which are often the guidelines to perform or initiate the task is the key component of digital literacy. Sometimes the vocal commands are required to proceed further. For this purpose, one must have accurate knowledge of the globally accepted pronunciation. There are many ways present around our surroundings through which this can be brought into a reality.

Language Lab software

Pronunciation is a jewel of any language without which the language cannot leave its impact in the way it is expected to. Many a time wrong pronunciation of words may lead to a great confusion and leaves the listener in dilemma. The country like India where a major portion of population speaks its regional language, digital literacy will take a lot of time to come into normal usage. Wrong pronunciation leads to a great confusion. So with the help of language lab software exact pronunciation can be taught. But it should be so that instead of being depend on any institution if it is available in one's desktop, laptop or even smart phones we can speed up this process without which the survival of a common man will be very difficult where almost every activity is expected to be digitally governed. "The concept of literacy has changed over the years from the specific ability to read and write and participate in the community of the literate to a set of generic functionalities like 'the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts'" (2)

Latest available apps

There is reciprocal relationship among latest technology, its use, advancement and English language. With the progression of science and technology, many latest apps have come into existence that can play and are playing a significant role in improving the language competence of the users in English language. By making some changes according to the need and requirement of present users these links can also add a new feather. At the same time operating of such tools requires sound knowledge of English.

Internet

Internet has brought the entire world under a single roof and brought revolutionary changes in almost every field. Gaining knowledge available in almost every corner of the world is possible by one click today. Moreover a great percentage of people is using internet for one or other purpose. Therefore by introducing different language tools and making some alternations in the presently available ones, we can cover a long distance in this field. Today different links like www.english-edge.com, www.ted.com, englishpage.com, learn.english.com, and many other links are really playing a dynamic role in strengthening the English language skills of the users. Today hundreds of internet users go through these links and are being benefitted. Moreover different available search engines like Google etc also provide knowledge in almost every field of knowledge.

Digital speech therapies: technology has given tongue to the dumb and ears to the deaf. Today it is possible for the dumb to speak because of the available speech therapies.

Smart Phones

Smart phones no need to say, have made the life smarter and easier. Instead of using smart phones just for a fun, we can make different educational groups where people can share their ideas and clear their doubts regarding different areas of language. Some of our friends are working nicely on this platform. Different students are being benefitted by using them. But still there is a long distance to cover. With the help of smart phones, the day is not very far when entire country will be a large classroom where English language teaching will be available.

Understanding the Audible command

As I have earlier said that in the coming years, everything will be governed by smart commands. And in order to make these commands universally popular and acceptable, no doubt they will be in an international language and being the lingua-franca of the world; only English language will be a language of these commands. Even our home-doors will be linked to some open and close on digital commands that are passed in English Language only. Now it goes needless to say that unless we have command over English language, it may not serve its purpose.

International technologies and books

Knowledge does not know any national or international boundaries. Today, information in almost every field is available on internet and most of it is available in English language

only. Moreover, even most of the e-books provide knowledge in English. Today most of the engineering and medical books are also available in English. All these things prove that the knowledge of English language be a milestone in making our space in the tomorrow's digital world.

Conclusion

“The development and diffusion of digital technologies are bringing in significant changes in literacy practices.”⁽³⁾ Digital literacy with English language is the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to improve English language as a gateway to new era and use it appropriately to identify access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse and synthesise digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others. It is important to note that as teachers' digital literacy is a changing process.

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