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Tamil Language Teaching Through E-learning: a Conceptual Framework

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INTRODUCTION

Language learning is crucial to not only meaningful learning in all the subject areas but also to the learners' emotional, cognitive and social development. New entrants with poor language background remain poor learners and poor performance in all areas unless specially helped in language skills. Failure to teach language skills properly and adequately in the early years will lead to difficulty in learning subsequently through the various stages like upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stages.

Language education has the greater potential as a means to develop, progressively through various stages, attitudes and values related to all the core components by appropriate themes and adopting suitable teaching learning strategies.

Generally, language teaching must aim at encouraging independent thinking, free and effective expression of opinions and logical interpretation of the present and the past events. It must motivate learners to say things their way, nurture their natural creativity and imagination and thus make them realize the basic difference between their verbal language and numerical language. These are the resources why teaching and learning of language ought to find a central place in the total educational process.

LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS

In India, the 'three-language-formula' was implemented for decades ago in order to bring the national integration, intra-state, inter-state and international communication effectively. According to 'three-language-formula', the language teaching has categories as follows:

- The first language to be studied must be the mother tongue or the regional language.
- The second language will be some other modern Indian languages or English for Hindi speaking States, and Hindi or English for non-Hindi speaking States.
- The third language will be English or a modern Indian language, which is not studied as the second language for both Hindi speaking and non-Hindi speaking States.

Hence, it is clear that the first language that is, the mother tongue or the regional language should be given importance than that of other two categories. Every child's mother tongue or

regional language has to be taught right from the first standard. Unfortunately, even about four decades after the implementation of 'three-language-formula', it is yet to be effectively implemented in true spirit. Despite all the changes in the socio-economic scenario, market pressures and the behavior pattern of the Indian Youths, the 'three-language-formula' still remain relevant (NCERT, 2000).

Tamil is one of the traditional languages, which is a root for other Dravidian languages such as Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam. It is considered as a regional language for southern states of India, especially for the people of Tamilnadu state. The Tamil language has its own traditional, cultural, political and social effects. It has rich literature potentials, which are reflected over the lifestyles of Tamil native speaker. Due to improper implementation of three-language-formula system, the Tamil language teaching is suffering a lot. Further, nowadays, the people of Tamil speakers are spread all over the world.

Though several steps have been taken by the federal government and the Tamil language research Institutions, there is a hurdle to improve the quality of Tamil language and the rate of Tamil language acquisition is decreasing. Further, with the present infrastructure, size of the group, availability of teacher, training of teacher etc., it is difficult to achieve the objectives of Tamil language teaching. Since the objectives are multi-dimensional in nature, multiple methods are to be used in an integrated fashion for their achievement.

ROLE OF E-LEARNING FOR TAMIL LANGUAGE TEACHING

The rapid rise in the development of sophisticated and improved technologies has been the driving force behind the widespread embracing of the concept of flexible delivery and the application of the many and varied tools upon which it is based in the field of education in general and language teaching in particular. Increasingly Institutions, the Tamil language learner realize the value of the techniques of resource based learning and e-learning system is being utilized to provide materials for language learning who are at distance as well as who are on campus (Ranjan & Arul, 2001).

The e-learning system is one of the recent teaching – learning environment, which have very much influenced in the teaching-learning process, may be of some help to fulfill this aspect. It is well-known fact that not a single teacher is capable of giving up-to-date and complete information in his/her own subject. But the e-learning system can fill this important gap because it can provide access to different source of information. It is a most remarkable fact of the emerging digital classroom environment, which operate through the Internet, facilitates exchange of information, ideas, instructional materials, feedback of the evaluation report regarding Tamil language teaching – learning process with speed and efficiency irrespective of geographical location. The e-learning climate can be computer mediated and Interactive Television (I-TV) mediated. The interactively delivered programmes through internet are the examples of the computer-mediated virtual climate and one-way video, two-way audio or two-way video conferencing are the I-TV mediated virtual climate. It will provide information correctly, as comprehensive as possible, in different formats, with different examples. This system having chat facility so that the learner can make use of it and can exchange their ideas and views, and get clarification on any topic with different experts, practitioners, etc. It helps the language learners to broaden the information base. It provides variety in the presentation of content, which helps the learners' concentration and better understanding and long retention of information, which is not possible otherwise. Further, the e-learning system provides flexibility to learners, which is denied by the traditional process and method. Flexibility is a must for mastering the language.

E-LEARNING THROUGH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information Technology (IT) plays very vital role in the virtual climate of e-learning and has come to occupy the center stage of development, with the approach of 21st century. Conceptually, IT involves use of computer accessories and information systems for storing, managing and accessing useful information (Joshi et. al., 2000). In India, significant developments in the use of computers have taken place in the industrial and commercial sectors. Computers have wide applications in educational sectors also. A massive and rapid computerization process throughout the educational system has made IT an integral part of the educational management scene in many countries. Earlier computers belonged only to institutions and large organizations. Now the personal computers and laptop have placed computing power in the hands of numerous individuals. The following may be the application of IT, which facilitates through e-learning for Tamil language teaching:

- Differentiated Instructional Design (DID)
- Individually Designed Curriculum (IDC)
- Multi-channel Learning System
- Asynchronous Interaction
- On Demand Examination

Information Technology will improve the quality and ensure the availability of the best of instructional material for classroom teaching and informal as well as adult learning. The material can be presented by the best of the experts available anywhere in the world. It will be resident on the web servers and can be accessed by any individuals through the Internet.

Internet is one of the major components of IT. The Internet is fast emerging as one of the most important tools, which is speedy and most economic device to deliver bulk of information throughout the world. The World Wide Web (WWW) is the easiest and most popular way to access the Internet. The web designers, educationists, cognitive psychologists are looking forward at how the instruction can be organized and presented effectively through web pages.

CONCLUSION

Tamil Language teaching through e-learning system remove the barriers of age and space. It would be difficult for adult learners to attend a traditional school or college. However, e-learning system allows a 40 or 60 year old to complete the requirements for a high school or university diploma. With IT and WWW the scene of language teaching is taking a new landscape. Attending a class is not restricted to a physical classroom. The learner can attend a class from anywhere in the world, they do not have to go to a college, university or any other training centers to earn a genuine degree or get exposure by in-service training. Hence the e-learning system could be served as an alternative as well as the supportive system for Tamil language teaching.

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