

# Enhancing Reading Skill Through Creative Technology – A Pilot Research

E. V. Ramkumar, R. Vani

*Abstract - English is considered as global language as it is used in all parts of the world. English Language is realized as a link language with global significance and also world widely spread. This paper analyzes how to enhance the students Reading Skill in mixed ability classroom. The sample respondents were from Rural, Urban and Semi-Urban background. The technology based Reading has improvised the students reading skill is explicit from the Pilot study. A survey was conducted among the students and the data garnered clearly shows the improvement in enhancing their language proficiency especially in reading skill.*

**Keywords:** Computer Assisted Learning, Explicit, garner, Language proficiency

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, English is considered an international language as it is widely used in almost all the parts of the world. English is peculiarly suited to be an international language because, in some way the structure of English is adapted for international communication or that English is phonologically more accessible to most learners than other languages are. With the world steadily heading towards globalization, it is essential that English is taught and understood around the world so that the common man can keep up abreast of the current world affairs.

### **The Role of English Language in Current Scenario**

Learning is a process to enlighten and empower the individuals who are able to secure a better quality of life. English Language is realized as a link language with global significance and also world widely spread. In India, it is now an official language in addition to the state-wise regional languages. Students at the school level need to acquire better proficiency in English along with the learning of other subjects like Mathematics and Science. The students need to have a channel of communicating with other schools, colleges, and institutions for which the knowledge of English plays an important role.

### **English Language Teaching: Methods and Approaches**

Right from the Grammar-Translation method to the present Task-Based Approach to Language Teaching various attempts have been made by the linguists to make the second language teaching/learning atmosphere as pleasurable one.

## II. THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNET AND ENGLISH

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The importance of the Internet grows rapidly in all fields of human life, including not only research and education but also marketing and trade as well as entertainment and hobbies. This implies that it becomes more and more important to know how to use Internet services and, as a part of this, to read and write English.

Since the appearance of Language Laboratories, technology has always been regarded as a new panacea for language teaching and learning. A new medium was viewed as synonymous with improved language pedagogy and consequently with better and more efficient language teaching and learning.

### **Technology and Teaching**

The impact of improved ICT and the changed context of English use are explicated well through a study made in the US. It suggests that e-mail is now the main form of business communication in many US industries, surpassing both face-to-face and telephone communication. This fact necessitates a reconsideration of the relationship of computers and the Internet to English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language teaching. Just 15 years ago, for example, it was common for teachers involved in Computer-Based Technologies to say that "a computer is just a tool; it is not an end in itself, but a means for learning English. Yet recently, one EFL teacher in Egypt noted, "English is not an end in itself; it's just a tool for being able to use computers and get information on the Internet" (Warschauer 136).

## III. COMPUTER-BASED TECHNOLOGY IN THE RESEARCH

The present pilot study analyzes the effectiveness of CBTs in developing the Reading of the sample respondents using Globarena, software used in the TKSC in Theni district, taken for the study to improve the students Reading skills.

### **Strengths in Technical Possibilities for Collaboration**

If a piece of information is put on the Internet, it can remain there for a long time. Therefore, students and teachers do not have to arrange to be online at the same time; that is, Internet-mediated communication can be asynchronous. The information can also usually be accessed from any Internet-connected computer in the world, so students and classes can collaborate internationally.

### **Reading**

Reading is the Fundamental Language Skills. It is an interactive program designed for teaching functional English. It is divided into two major sections – Introductory Lessons and Basic lessons. These lessons deal with reading, grammar, and vocabulary.

However, the drills are different.

At the bottom of every Fundamental Language Skills slide is the page number. The students can change the current page number and go directly to a specific page or slide. Each slide has so many interactive exercises.

Drill - 1: Select the right option or multiple-choice questions. In this exercise, students will be provided with two or more options. They have to select the correct answer by clicking on it.

Drill - 2: Drag and Drop the appropriate words into the blanks. The students have to read the given paragraph/passage and answer the questions following it in Drag and Drop method. They have to read two or three times and answer it. Then only, they can understand the passage and give the correct options. They can verify their answers.

Drill - 3: Here the students have to read the given passage and select the word to fill the blanks, which follows it. First, they have to click on the blank and highlight the words in the passage. At last, click the select option to fill the blank. Care should be taken not to highlight an extra space or unnecessary punctuation mark. Students can verify their answers. If it is wrong, they can try it again by clicking the *Reset* button.

Drill - 4: In this part, students have to read the given passage and understand its meaning. After that, they have to indicate whether the given statements are true or false by clicking on the appropriate option.

The sample respondents' response to the questionnaire ascertains the effectiveness of CBT in enhancing their communication skills in English, which is thoroughly statistically analyzed.

To visualize the impacts of the assistance of the computers in language teaching, a survey was conducted. The respondents' data were analyzed. For this Pilot study, the researcher has preferred 180 respondents. Among them, 60 were from I year, 60 were from II year and another 60 were from III year. During the first year, the students have two courses "Technical English I" and "Technical English II," where they do not have any English Communication Lab. The students are exposed to only classroom lectures. During the second year they do not have lab or theory papers in English. But while they come to the third year, all the students have Communication and Soft Skills Lab, and Internet Hour as a part of their curriculum, where they are exposed to Internet and the language skills which include all the four macro skills (LSRW). The researcher has preferred Reading skills for the pilot study. The students are studying five specific fields of Engineering such as Computer Science Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Civil Engineering. The samples collected from the Engineering College are analyzed.

The following Table I represent the gender-wise and year-wise distribution of the respondents taken for the study.

Gender	I Year (60)	II Year (60)	III Year (60)	Total (180)
Male	32(53.3%)	22(37%)	29(48.3%)	83(46%)
Female	28(45%)	39(65%)	30(50%)	97(54%)

Out of 180 sample respondents 83(46%) are male and 97 (54%) are female. It is inferred from the above table that that there is no vast difference between the respondents' categorization regarding the gender and year.

**Table II categorizes the respondents according to their medium of instruction.**

Medium of Instruction	I Year (60)	II Year (60)	III Year (60)	Total (180)
Tamil	49(82%)	46(77%)	36(60.0%)	131(72.8%)
English	11(18.3%)	14(23.3%)	24(40.0%)	49 (27.2%)

Medium of instruction secures a prominent role in the acquisition of second language. Keeping this in mind, the researcher has categorized the respondents based on their medium of instruction. As the researcher has chosen the college with rural background, out of 180 respondents, 131 (72.8%) respondents are from Tamil medium and 49 (27.2%) are from English medium. For Tamil medium students, the medium of instruction is in Tamil. So, when they enter into the college, they find it difficult to follow the language which is used in their text books and in their classrooms. It takes time for them to adopt themselves into the present scenario. Some aids should be provided for them to make it easier. At the same time, students from English medium do not face so many problems like the previous sector. So medium of instruction has made some serious impacts among the respondents.

**The following Table III focuses on whether the respondents are First Generation Learners or not.**

First Generation Graduate	I Year (60)	II Year (60)	III Year (60)	Total (180)
Yes	41 (68.3%)	38 (63.3%)	40 (66.6%)	119 (66.11%)
No	19 (31.6%)	22 (31.6%)	20 (33.3%)	61 (33.89%)

In recent years, many new Engineering colleges have been started and it has paved way for many rural area students to study Engineering courses. As the researcher's research locality also comes under rural area background, many respondents belong to first generation learners. From the Table, it is inferred that out of 180 respondents, most of them, that is 119(66.11%) are first generation learners. Nearly only 1/3rd of the respondents depend on their family in enhancing their communicative skills. Remaining 2/3rd of the respondents entirely rely on their educational institutions and teachers to develop their communicative skills. Hence, the teachers have more responsibility in training these first generation learners.

In the following Table IV the respondents' exposure to English through various mass media is given:

Exposure to English through Mass Media	I Year (60)	II Year (60)	III Year (60)	Total (180)
News Paper	39 (65 %)	37(61.6%)	36(60 %)	112 (62.4%)
General Books	6(10 %)	7(11.6%)	6(10 %)	19 (10.5%)
Radio	--	--	1(0.6%)	3 (1.6%)
TV	9(15.0%)	11(18.3%)	12 (20 %)	32 (17.7%)
Film	3 (5 %)	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.3%)	7 (3.8 %)
e-text	--	--	4 (6.6 %)	4(2.2 %)
e-mail	2 (3.3%)	--	2(3.3%)	4 (2.2%)
Others	--	--	1(0.6%)	1 (0.5%)

Among the different forms of mass media, the researcher has chosen the commonly used Media for the research – “News Paper,” “General Books,” “Radio,” “TV,” “Film,” “e-text” and “e-mail.” The rest of them come under the option “Others.” The options “News Paper” and “General Books” will expose the respondents' ability of reading and comprehending the given article in text book, sports news, politics, etc. Respondents' listening and understanding skills are tested through the option “Radio.” At the same time, the options “TV” and “film” test the respondents' capability of listening and grasping messages which are expressed even by body language, gesture, posture, etc. By watching English movies they can also enhance their accent and pronunciation in accordance with the native speakers. In the same way, the respondents' writing skill is valued through the options “E-mail” and “E-text.” Thus, this tabular column throws light on the students' ability to utilize the four skills. Amazingly, out of 180 respondents 131 respondents, that is 72.9 % have responded to the options “Newspaper” and “General books.” As radio has lost its importance, only 1.6% of the respondents, that is only 3 respondents, chose the option “Radio.” It shows that least importance is given to listening skills.

The table V shows to what extent the respondents understands the lesson from the textbook.

Understanding Lesson from the textbook	I Year (60)	II Year(60)	III Year(60)	Total (180)
Completely	19(31.6 %)	30 (50.0%)	32(53.3%)	81 (45%)
Partially	20 (33.3%)	20 (33.3%)	21 (35 %)	61(33.8 %)
To some extent	14 (23.3%)	8 (13.3%)	7 (11.6%)	29 (16.1%)
Very Little	06 (10 %)	02 (3.3%)	02(1.1%)	9 (5%)

Out of 180 respondents 142 (78.8%) have responded to the options “Completely” and “Partially.” There is a significant drop for the option “Very little” - 10% during the 1st year, 3.3% during the 2nd year, and 1.1% during the 3rd year,

which indicates that the textbook plays a vital role in developing their reading skills.

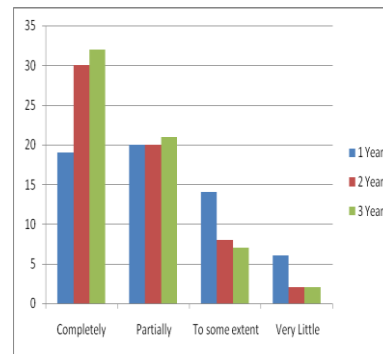


Table VI shows how far the students can understand news article from News paper

Understanding News article from the Newspaper	I Year (60)	II Year (60)	III Year (60)	Total(180)
Completely	7 (11.6%)	9 (15.0%)	11 (18.3%)	27 (15.0%)
Partially	23 (38.3%)	31 (51.6%)	32 (53.3%)	86 (47.7%)
Very Little	19 (31.6%)	18 (30.0%)	14 (23.3%)	51 (28.3%)
Not Applicable	11 (18.3%)	02 (3.3%)	03 (5.0%)	16 (8.8%)

The best way to enrich the English vocabulary is by reading English newspapers and articles. The respondents are not able to understand the style of newspaper but they are able to comprehend the textbook, because only with the assistance of teacher the student can understand the textbook thoroughly, where as no assistance is there to read the newspaper. In the Table 5, same third year students (53.3%) have answered that, they can understand the textbook completely. But in the Table 1.6, same 3rd year students (53.3%) have responded that they can understand the news article only partially. This shows the importance of teacher and classroom input that is given to the students. With the input, the students gain in the classroom and through keen observation, they understand the textbook thoroughly and more over, it is mandatory on their part to score good marks.

Table VIII Figures 2 and Figure 3 clearly show how far the students understand text through CBTs.

Understanding text through CBTs	I Year (60)	II Year (60)	III Year (60)	Total (180)
Completely	13(21.6%)	13 (21.6%)	18 (30%)	44 (24.4%)
Partially	23(38.3%)	28(46.6%)	28 (46.6%)	79 (43.8%)
Very Little	16 (27 %)	13 (21.6%)	12 (20.0%)	41 (22.7%)
Not Applicable	8 (13.3%)	06 (10.0%)	02 (3.3%)	16 (8.8%)

There is a significant growth among the respondents those who have responded to “Completely” and “Partially.” Out of 180 respondents, 44 respondents, that is 24.4%, have responded that they can understand text reading “Completely” through CBT and among them 21.6% are from the 1st year, 21.6% are from the 2nd year, and 30 % are the from the 3rd year. Out of 180 respondents, 79 respondents, that is, 43.8% have responded that they can “Partially” understand the text reading through CBT.

Fig 2

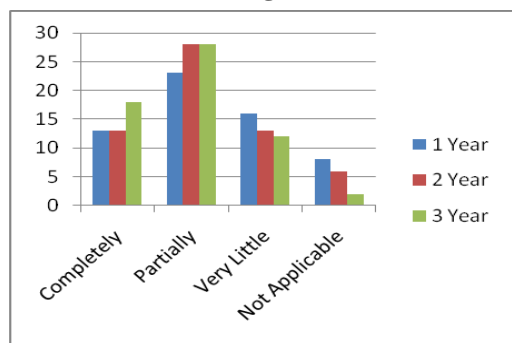
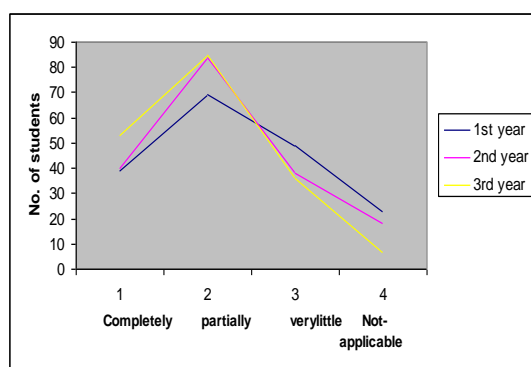


Fig 3



There is a gradual decrease in the option “Very little.” Out of 180 respondents, 41 respondents, that is, 22.7% have responded to the option “Very little.” Among them, 27% are from the 1<sup>st</sup> year, 21.6% are from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, and 20% are from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year and year-wise there is a significant drop.

The tables and graphs clearly depict the ideas of Computer Based Technologies how it induces the students to learn through technology. Language Lab, which is one of the significant advantages of CBT helps them acquire their proficiency in English language through excellent provisions like repetitive drills, learning at a convenient pace and time, etc.,

IV. CONCLUSION

The computer has certain advantages in handling the English teaching and learning. The advantages of the computer are equally applicable to both the students and the teachers. Unlike books or tapes, which are produced in a single uniform from publisher, computer programs can be adapted by the teachers to suit the needs of their students. Based on the Normative Survey method, the present research was conducted as the Pilot study where Computer-Based Technologies is helpful for Developing Communication Skills especially in Reading skills. The role

of demography of the sample respondents in their exposure to Computer-Based Technologies, impact of the Computer-Based Technologies in developing their language skills was focused.

Computer-Based Technology is now an integral part of second language classrooms. Technology, in its many forms, has become a powerful tool to enhance learning and teaching.

The outcomes of the pilot study are based on the effectiveness of Computer Assisted Learning, the multifarious uses of multimedia for language learning and teaching, and survey research and practice with respect to the use of CBT in Second Language Acquisition research.

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