



VIEWING EDUTAINMENT AS A TOOL FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The twenty-first century is a technology dominated era. Technology is used in every facet of life and living – from television to cellular phones, technology has leaped to smart-television, smart-phones and apps created to make life easier in a touch. Technology has extended itself widely that the vastly growing world can be held in a palm. Education too has adopted technology to attain greater heights and accomplish higher triumphs. This paper focuses on teaching the English language with the assistance of technology. It views edutainment as a tool implemented in digital learning. Language teaching holds a fecundeminence in the field of education. Language is a requirement for teaching and learning. Today's learners are being referred to as the *digital natives* while majority of the teachers are referred to as the *digital immigrants*. The terminologies natives and immigrants imply the vastness of the *generation gap*. In order to fill this vast gap, the digital immigrants need to fill this gap with digital tools to reach the digital natives and convey the message in their language that requires the use of digital technology. Therefore, this paper focuses on edutainment as an essential tool that can be used to teach the digital natives.

Keywords – Edutainment, Digital learning, Digital natives and digital immigrants, Spaced Repetition.

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INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is a blissful eraperfected with the help of technology. Every facet of today's lifestyle is enhanced by technology. Education is being blessed most abundantly. Today's teachers and students have a huge platform extended by technology to spread, create and research more knowledge. The digital immigrants are adapting themselves to the hi-tech world of the digital natives. Learning is an ever-continuing process. There are many ways to learn a single

subject. The learner has the choice to define one's own learning parameters and gain knowledge through that method. But, the teacher has to choose the best method for a varied range of learners in a class. One of the methods preferred by both the learners and teachers is edutainment as education is imparted through a medium of entertainment resulting in elevating the learner's involvement and better grasping of the subject taught in class. It is necessary to note that in order to be benefitted, edutainment needs to be used as an aid to induce

an interest among the learners for the subsequent traditional classes which will further help the learners understand the concept better and work on it.

Education

Education is as limitless as the sky – one can go as wide and as high as desired. Education, according to the Oxford dictionary, is defined as the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university; and is also defined as an enlightening experience. Education has evolved significantly. Starting from conveying ideas and thoughts to proving the ideas and recording them, to passing them down to future learners, education has come a long way today by spreading knowledge through digital mediums.

Education and research have brought out a lot of theories to light from obscurity. As the proverb says, 'known is a drop, unknown is an ocean' and 'what is learnt is a handful of sand, while what is unknown is the size of the world'. Every moment in life is an opportunity to learn and educate oneself. One either learns something new or broadens his knowledge on a familiar subject. One might be aware of a subject or even be an expert in it, but there are many subjects left to explore.

Education is for life and so it is important to understand that learning theories to acquire marks and set a high score record is not the true meaning of education. In the words of Malcolm Forbes, "the purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one". Teaching should help the learners apply the lessons in life for a productive and secure future. As Maimonides says, "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime". In order to grasp a concept the learners/teachers lean on an aid that best meets the needs. Living in the digital era, one has to adapt to the use of technology. Education too is being merged with technology thereby expanding its horizons and platform furthermore.

Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants

Life today has become extremely rapid. People keep running towards their goals and start running towards a new goal once one is conquered. One essential part of our lives today is the prevalence of empowering technology. Every aspect

of life is being digitized and encouraged to be approached digitally. Therefore, people have been categorised into two types based on their use of an approach towards technology – namely, digital natives and digital immigrants. To be simply stated, those who prefer technology and are naturally comfortable with the use of technology, principally the younger generation, are referred to as the digital natives; while those who find it challenging to learn the different forms and adapt to the various uses of technology, more commonly the older generation, are referred to as the digital immigrants.

Universally, the digital natives exhibit a technological approach. In order to clear any doubts or inculcate a new practice, the digital natives refer to the web or phone-apps. In fact, various apps are available for even the little of littlest things. Technology covers all the facets of life and living – religion, languages, décor, news, weather, yoga, law, medicine, medical aid, various fields of education and research, etc. Various aspects of language learning and teaching as well have been upgraded by technology.

The term *digital natives* has been created for an opposite reason. Smartphones, i-phones and laptops have become a very crucial part of their lives, the absence of such digital items are felt analogous to the loss of a limb. The digital natives gain much knowledge from the exposure to media. The audio-visual effects used in media create an interest in the audience to continue and help retain the content in mind for a longer period. Therefore the same theory has been adapted in the field of education to impart knowledge. Initially, philosophers passed on their knowledge to their disciples; later, classes were taken under trees and classrooms for a group of learners; then, the traditional classroom teaching was practiced with the use of boards and chalk-pieces/pens as tools. But in the present era powered by technology, the traditional classroom teaching method is considered to be out-dated by the digital natives. In order to match the expectation level of the digital natives, the digital immigrants have started to employ technology as an aid in teaching.

For the sake of the digital natives' ease, various apps have been created for language

learning. Some of the most profound and widely sought after apps are Babble, busuu, FluentU, Duolingo, Memrise, etc. In addition to language learning apps, there are various online platforms for language learning – such as, online chatting sites, social networks, skype, etc. which help language learners not only to learn a new language but also to improve their everyday usage of the language. Sites such as Elluminate, Wimba Classroom and WiZiQ are live and virtual worlds that provide traditional teaching through digital technology.

Edutainment

The digital immigrants create digital platforms and learning modules for the digital natives, but it is essential for the digital natives as learners to benefit to the core from the provided platforms and modules with the guidance of the teacher. It is necessary for the learner and teacher to be in a good communicating zone in order to find the best suitable learning plan and module for the learner. The learners should feel comfortable to share their challenges and doubts with the teacher, and must be equally ready to accept their pits and work harder to reach their zeniths. In this digital era, teachers and learners can connect through technology in order to cross their hurdles.

One of the latest trendy tools for language learning is edutainment. Today's era is enjoying edutainment. Oxford dictionary defines edutainment as computer games, television programmes, or other material, intended to be both educational and enjoyable. The term was coined in the 1980s by blending two words, namely, education and entertainment.

The two most popular forms of edutainment are movies and songs. Language learners, especially, use these two forms of edutainment to learn a language. They download songs in their phones, laptops, mp4s, iPods, etc. and keep listening to their list of songs repeatedly till they are completely familiar with the song lyrics. The learners may not be aware of the fact that the concept of *spaced repetition* is the reason they have become familiar with the lyrics of the songs. The same concept comes into work when a learner watches a movie; but since a movie is an audio-visual tool, in addition to learning a language, they

learn the customs, traditions, style, of the places and periods the film is based on.

As mentioned earlier, spaced repetition is a very useful technique which is advisable for a learner to adopt while learning a language. "Spaced repetition is a learning technique that incorporates increasing levels of time between subsequent review of previously learned material in order to exploit the psychological spacing effect" (Wikipedia). Spaced repetition utilises the spacing effect, which comes from an observation made by Ebbinghaus over a century ago. In the words of Ebbinghaus – as quoted by Chris Nickson in his article *Learning by Spaced Repetition* – "...with any considerable number of repetitions a suitable distribution of them over a space of time is decidedly more advantageous than the massing of them at a single time" (1885).

When a learner repeatedly listens to a song or watches a movie over and over again the psychological technique of spaced repetition jumps into action, thereby, making the learner familiar with new words and the different uses and usages of the words, subsequently helping the learner acquire the language. We can observe that this technique of spaced repetition is being used by learners, but when we rewind our memories we can recall that children under five years of age have been masters in using the technique of spaced repetition – they constantly keep watching their favourite cartoons and listen to their favourite rhymes. We also need to realise that children learn quicker than adults because children recite along with the cassettes and CDs as the songs and cartoons are being played.

A traditional classroom has its age old benefits but it is equally necessary to merge digital technology with it for the following reasons:

- It livens the classroom environment.
- The learners are encouraged to volunteer during class.
- Edutainment grabs the learners' attention.
- The learners will be enthused to stay focused during class.
- Edutainment, which is a combination of audio, visual effects and movement, helps the learners arrive at a better

and clearer understanding of the concepts taught in class.

- The learners are also able to think of the different possible applications for the concepts taught in class.

Methodology

A study was conducted with a group of fifteen students to study the impact of edutainment as a tool for language learning versus traditional

classroom. The students were volunteers from the second year M.Sc. Chemistry, Muthurangam Government Arts College, Otteri, Vellore. They were asked to mark on a scale of one to ten about how they feel during classes taken in the traditional method and classes which use edutainment as an aid for teaching. The following graph represents the difference in the students' interest towards traditional classes and edutainment classes.

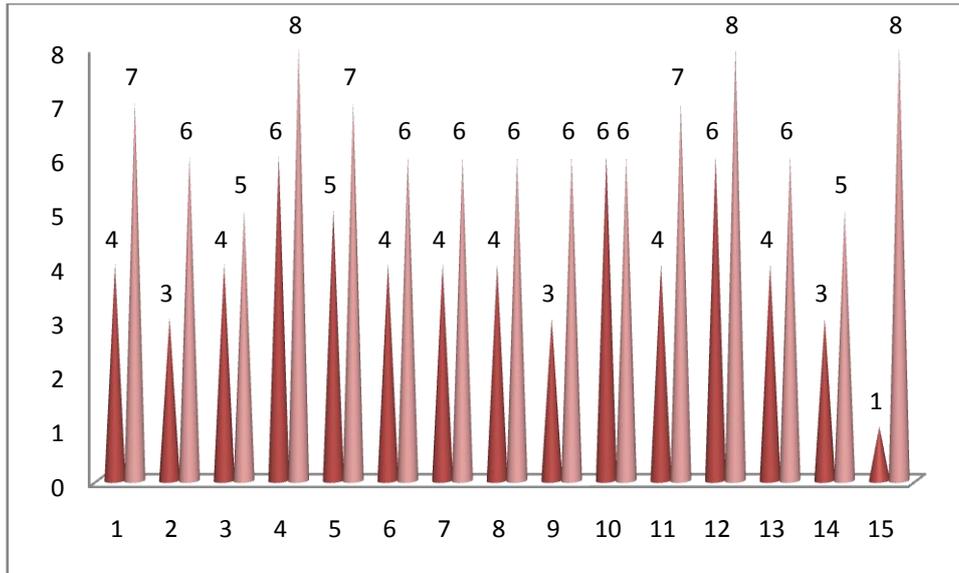


Fig. 1 – comparison between traditional classes and edutainment classes

The following figure shows the average of the above graph, representing the students' interest for traditional classes and edutainment classes.

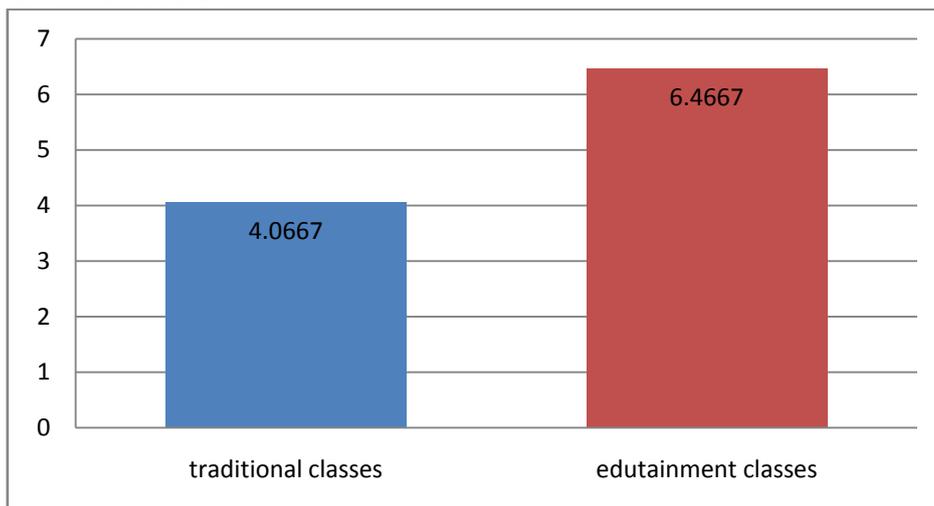


Fig. 2 – average of the marks rated by the students for traditional classes versus edutainment classes

From the above given data and findings, we can clearly understand that today's learners are digital natives and prefer to have digitally oriented classes. In other words, when a traditional class is being conducted the students express an average

interest of 4.0667 on a scale of one to ten while on the other hand they express an average interest of 6.4667 during edutainment classes. The students show an additional 20% interest for edutainment classes. Hence, edutainment can be acknowledged

to be one of the popularly best tools for digital learning.

Conclusion

Learners today are facilitated with numerous apps and online learning tools in addition to edutainment which can be used to the maximum benefit of and by the learners according to their respective needs and requirements. It is highly challenging to learn, let alone acquire, a language solely without any assistance and guidance. Hence, it is preferable to have traditional classes which use edutainment as a tool for language teaching. Language teachers and learners have come to appreciate the boons of edutainment for language learning. The prerogatives of edutainment are as follows:

- It is appreciated by both the digital natives and the digital immigrants.
- It is easy to follow.
- It is an easier path for language acquisition.
- It is easier to relate to.
- The class as a group stays attentive.
- It motivates the learners to volunteer during the traditional sessions of the class.
- It kindles the learners to watch related movies.
- It prods the learners to read the book, if the movie is based on one.
- Language learners stay focused during edutainment classes.
- The following traditional sessions tend to become more interesting.
- Language learners make the traditional sessions alive by volunteering to answer or clear their doubts.
- Language teachers can give different exercises based on the edutainment class- such as debates, essays, discussions and so on.

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