New Trends, Innovations and Creativity in ELT Resources

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ABSTRACT

Change and innovation are closely related, even though they are not the same. 'There is nothing permanent except change' says Heraclites, the pre Aristotelian Greek philosopher. Change is the law of nature. The rapid changes and increased complexity of today's world present new trends, innovations, creativity and put new demands on English language teaching (ELT) resources. A trend is the general tendency or direction towards change. With a number of options of (ELT) resources available before the present generation English language learners, the newer trends innovations and creativity seem to have emerged in the field of English language teaching)ELT(resources that have entirely changed the face of traditional system of ELT. Innovation is the process of creating and implementing a new idea. These useful ideas are the result of creativity, which is the prerequisite for innovation. This paper presents the famous recently created trends; innovations and creativity in the English language teaching ELT field that have been used practically in recent times in the whole world with specific reference to the trends prevalent during the previous decades.

Keywords: Trends, Innovations, Creativity, 21st-century skills

1. Introduction

Change often involves new and better ideas. The new idea may be the creation of a new ELT material or it can be an idea about how to change partially or completely the ELT resource. In the context of a rapidly changing, global economy, governments, ministries of education and education professionals are having to respond to increasing demands for improvements in the learning and teaching of English in formal education systems. Innovation is the process of taking useful ideas and converting them into useful products; services or processes or methods of operation. George Pickering highlights that 'In the field of English language teacher education, any innovation has to be practical. It has to meet the needs of the teacher educators it is aimed at, but more importantly it must develop skills and knowledge which will improve the quality of teaching in the classroom and ultimately impact on learner outcomes.' He also says innovation can be revolutionary and abrupt, but more often it is part of an evolutionary process: small, forward-thinking changes that cumulatively have a big effect. As a teacher I firmly believe that innovation is not always centered on technology. In my opinion every lesson has the potential to be innovative as each lesson or session is unique. Each lesson builds on previous knowledge and introduces something new. Change which often involves useful ideas is the result of creativity, which is the

prerequisite for innovation. Looking beyond the internal parts of innovations; you can be creative in math, science, music, dance, cuisine, teaching, running a family, or engineering, because creativity is a process of having original ideas that have value. A big part of being creative is looking for new ways of doing things within whatever activity you're involved in. The new trends, innovation and creativity that the researcher talks in the paper pertain to materials and resources used in English language teaching. Moreover, this article brings out the subtle distinction between traditional versus modern education. The argument advances as the paper proceeds with trends of education with specific reference to the IRI scenario, the modern trends, innovations, new devices, the need for change, e-learning, creativity, critical thinking and 21st-century skills .

2. General Trends

The current method of teaching has succumbed to some tremendous changes in the past 100 years, which makes us reconsider the model of teaching and the typology of the classroom, among others, as well as how to reproduce and display the information to the student. Thus, we have gone from traditional chalk boards, accompanied by a master class through the audiovisual media and network resources that nowadays populate our classrooms. The student, meanwhile, has passed through handwritten notes to full memos hanging on the website and having available for consulting many resources just a click away. For this, a change in the trend especially the teaching learning process of English language has to undergo a transition for the betterment. Seasons change, fashion changes, attitudes of human beings change but it is disheartening to note that in the last century English curriculum has hardly undergone any change.

3. The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) Scenario

The story of English language teaching (ELT) in Iran, as one of the most notable anti imperialistic countries in the world, has experienced a host of extreme ups and downs. English is simultaneously known as the language of enemies (i.e. the United States and the United Kingdom) on the one hand (Borjian, 2013) and as a tool for progress (Riazi, 2005) on the other. While Hayati and Mashhadi

(2010) believe that Iran's policy on English stops short of nationwide dissemination of the language, the last decade in particular has witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of Iranians learning English. Davari (2013) points out that the rapidly changing situation in Iranian society is transforming English language learning into a fashionable trend, with the result that ELT is not only a flourishing market in the private sector, but is also playing a major role in English language spread. In recent years ELT in Iranian society has been documented in several publications including Dahmardeh (2009), Farhady et al. (2010), Hayati and Mashhadi (2010), Ataee and Mazloom (2013), Borjian (2013), Davari (2013), and Aghagolzadeh and Davari (2014) among others. What these works have in common is the belief that under succeeding political and social changes, English has ebbed and flowed in this society.

4. Traditional Education versus Modern Education

Our society these days are divided in to two different way of thinking on the education. Some believe that modern methods are better than the traditional method of teaching but yet these two methods are both a successful way. In my opinion, every method in teaching is the same for they deliver the same message to the students. Therefore there are pros and cons to it as well in these ways of teaching. The pros for traditional methods are that teaches shouldered too much of responsibilities for teaching in the classroom to make sure everything they thought were understood by the student. Thus it was a good method, where there was efficient communication between teacher and students. There was also the typical way and a controllable class where the teacher would teach on the blackboard, explained, asks students to copy and made sure students paid attention and listen. Besides that, the traditional way in disciplining students in school and teaching them was an effective way in building a good characteristic student where students were afraid of their teacher and respect them. Talking about the pros there are cons to traditional method way where students were too afraid to ask their teacher questions. Thus students get board of the same way of teaching method done by the teacher which is on the

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blackboard and listening to the teacher talk while they sit down in class and heat up their chairs.

Besides that, disciplining the students with canning and scolding is not a sufficient way for students get traumatizes in school. On the other hand, the pros of modern method in teaching help a lot where there is a centered classroom which is created by the teacher and accepted by the students. In modern method students are aware of their learning process through the computers. Thus with the help of computers teachers prepare their work in their thumb drive and present it to the class through slides show which is an easier way. And students can do their studying and their work all in the computer without depending 100% on their teacher in schools. Besides that, there is also classroom contract which consists of agreement between teachers and student regarding on how each will contribute to and behave in the classroom to start building a student's expectation towards independence. Therefore students even have a bonding relationship with their teacher to be their friend so that they can share their problems to the teacher without being afraid. As for the cons of the modern method of teaching students become too independent where they think they don't need guidance from anybody because they think they can accomplish anything by themselves. Thus with the use of computers in school children gets distracted with online games and websites to browse on besides their studies which will cause them distraction. . Besides that saving all data's in the thumb drive can be a problem when there is a virus which can also cause the students and teacher to get to comfortable and depend too much on technology and forget other better tools in teaching. Thus students also begin to be too comfortable with their teacher as their friend in schools and forget their responsibilities and respect over the teacher. Lastly, I feel that the teaching methods should be balance because it both brings good intentions in educating a person for the better future of everyone. Thus it sends out the same message even in different way but yet it is useful.

5. Theories of the Past Decade

Approximately every decade a new approach or methodology comes into vogue. Audio-

lingual method, TPR, Direct method, the Natural approach and the Communicative approach have all had their heydays. A few of the many major theories, events and trends which shaped ELT during past decades include: Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences opened the way to more diversity of activities focused on the students themselves and their innate skills, preferences and abilities. Student-centered teaching and learning-based courses, texts and programs developed at an increased rate. Noam Chomsky's theory of Transformational Generative Grammar gave us greater insight into language learning vs. language acquisition and of structural linguistics. Stephen Krashen et al provided us with five hypotheses to deepen our insight into language acquisition and learning Psychologists Roger Sperry contributed the theory of Dual Psychology which explained our two innate brains and Paul MacLean's Triune brain model postulated the three layers of depth to our thinking and actions. Hermann's Brain Dominance Model allowed us improved understanding of how personality characteristics, learning styles and language learning integrate. Furthermore, the general educational trends like Whole Language Approach, Cooperative Learning and Neuro Linguistic Programming have influenced language teaching and learning considerably. With the advent of e-communication, it has been made possible for the English language teachers to enrich their profession. Apart from this, the Special Interest Group (SIG), support group discussion and chat room have also enriched their profession.

6. Modern Trends of Teaching English

There are two key changes in the purpose of teaching English. Firstly, as Penny Ur (2009) noted, the goal is to produce fully competent English knowing bilinguals rather than imitation of native speakers. The purpose is not to aspire to become native speakers of English because we are already native speakers of our own but to focus on English as a means of communication. Secondly, English is not viewed as an end in itself but as a means to learn content such as science and mathematics". "Change is the Goal of Teaching English" says Boraie" New trends in teaching of English based on

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Deena Boraie and other scholars will be discussed as follows;

I. Change in Teaching Content and Test Design; Alter the Approach to Teaching Culture and the View of an English Teacher

Teachers use a range of local texts or English translations of literature in the classroom. The use of language as well as the use of a variety of accents in listening activities or tests is encouraged in the English language classroom.

Both the local or native and international culture dominates in English language classes. There is less focus on teaching the culture of native speakers of English unless there is a specific purpose for doing so. It is increasingly being recognized that the quality or effectiveness of teachers is determined by their linguistic, teaching and intercultural competence rather than their being native speakers of English.

II. Early Start of Teaching English; Children should start learning languages at age three

For years it was thought that teaching foreign languages to children as young as three was futile. Research findings indicate quite the opposite. Longitudinal studies by Harvard University confirm that learning additional languages increases critical thinking skills, creativity and flexibility of the mind in young children. The brain, like any muscle, functions better with exercise. Learning a language involves memorizing rules and vocabulary, which helps strengthen that mental muscle. Simply, the younger the learner, the better they are at mimicking new sounds and adopting pronunciation. The brain is open to new sounds and patterns in preadolescence. At this age, young children have time to learn through play-like activities. Language lessons can be informal and children's minds are not yet cluttered with facts to be stored and tested. Before children become self- conscious they can try out their newly acquired languages without fear of embarrassment. Children who grow up learning about languages develop empathy for others and a curiosity for different cultures and ideas; prepared to take their place in a global society. Furthermore, in later years, career opportunities increase for those with additional languages to offer.

III. Strategic Teaching/Learning and Students Steering their own Learning

Strategic teaching describes instructional processes that focus directly on fostering student thinking. Strategic teaching and strategic learning are inexorably linked. A strategic teacher has an understanding of the variables of instruction including; characteristics of the learner; material to be learned (curriculum content); the criterial task (the goals and outcomes the teacher and learner designate) and learning strategies (goal directed activities in which learners engage). Moreover, a strategic teacher should be aware of the cognitive requirements of learning. In such awareness, come a sense of timing and a style of management. The strategic teacher is one who is a thinker and decision maker, a modeler and a mediator of instruction and possesses a rich knowledge base. Besides, strategic learning is, in effect, a highly probable outcome of effective strategic teaching. Reduced to its essentials, strategic learning is learning in which students construct their own meanings, and in the process, become aware of their own thinking. The link between teaching, thinking, and learning is critical. As a result, a teacher must be more than a dispenser of information and create conditions and an environment that encourages thinking, deepens and broadens it, and which causes students to become aware of how they think.

Over the last couple of decades, learning has gradually been moving from a teacher-centered top-down approach to a student-centered, bottom-up one. The trend has accelerated rapidly in recent years with the growing quantity and quality of information on the internet. In many respects, this has changed the teacher's role from that of knowledge-transmitter to consultant, guide, coach, and/or facilitator.

IV. Teaching Soft Skills and Critical Thinking Skills

We live in a knowledge based society, and the more critical you think the better your knowledge will be. Critical Thinking provides you with the skills to analyze and evaluate information so that you are able to obtain the greatest amount of knowledge from it. Soft skills are "skills, abilities, and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and

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behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge" (Moss and Tilly 2001).

As English cements its position as the world's lingua franca, many of our students are now learning English to oil the wheels of communication in the worlds of business, trade, education, and tourism. To enable our students to become better communicators, we should perhaps go beyond grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and look at helping them communicate effectively in international settings. Learner resources nominated for an ELTons award this year include Richmond Business Theories (Richmond ELT), which features online resources that help teachers and students with soft skills like problem-solving, presentation skills, time management and decision-making. Academic Presenting and Presentations (Levrai and Bolster) looks specifically at the communication skills needed when making a presentation at college or university. Another ELTons nominee is The Thinking Train (Helbling Languages), which believes in starting young. It helps children develop critical thinking skills that could support them not just in their English learning but in the learning of other subjects and life skills.

After all it's never the tool, but the user that makes the difference.

V. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Although CLIL has been used as Content Based Instruction (CBI), it is a new paradigm shift in the field of language teaching since it entails innovation in methods and approaches. The acronym CLIL was originally defined in 1994, and launched in 1996 by UNICOM, University of Jyvaskyla in Finland and the European Platform for Dutch Education. According to Marsh (2002), it describes educational methods in which "subjects are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language." This definition clearly shows how CLIL not only implies the teaching of Content through English but remarks the importance language has when teaching content. That is to say, educators need to pay close attention to the fact students are learning content through a language that demands instruction and background knowledge. As a result, it is advisable that educators plan content lessons that include a target language goal.

VI. Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching

The Dogme ELT movement has grown over the last decade into a methodology which aims to return English language teaching to its roots. Built on a groundbreaking IATEFL Voices article in which Scott Thornbury called for a 'Vow of Chastity' for ELT, Dogme teaching is an approach based on the three Dogme principles conversation driven, materials light and focused on emergent language implies both 'another way of teaching' and 'another way of being a teacher'.

Teaching Unplugged divides into three sections. In Part A the authors set out the core principles of Dogme, discusses its beliefs and practices, and explores its foundations in both ELT and broader educational theory. The methodology described is conversation driven, where conversation is an 'interactive, dialogic and communicative' process in which language is scaffolded and socialization is promoted. Dogme methodology is also 'materials light';Their final principle, which draws on Second Language Acquisition theory, is that a Dogme approach focuses on emergent language; teaching is not a question of imposing an external language syllabus, but of nurturing the students' inbuilt language learning mechanisms and language acquisition agenda. Dogme teaching is thus strongly learner focused, building its input around the student's emergent and developing needs and abilities.

VII. ICT in Education and Resources: Mobile and Electronic Learning; Digital Platforms and Interactive White Board (IWB)

Mobile technology is changing the way we live and it is beginning to change the way we learn. Mobile learning (M-learning) involves the use of mobile technology, either alone or in combination with other information and communication technology (ICT), to enable learning anytime and anywhere. Learning can unfold in a variety of ways: people can use mobile devices to access educational resources, connect with others, or create content, both inside and outside classrooms. Mobile learning

also encompasses efforts to support broad educational goals such as the effective administration of school systems and improved communication between schools and families.

E-Learning is learning utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online. ELearning is defined as courses that are specifically delivered via the internet to somewhere other than the classroom where the professor is teaching. It is interactive in that you can also communicate with your teachers, professors or other students in your class, plus you can take the class from any location with internet access. There have been many studies showing that eLearning students retain the material to a significantly greater degree than face-to-face instructor led classes. The content delivery is consistent and can be easily repeated if needed to gain a better understanding.

When we discuss innovation, we often immediately think of the internet and what we can now do online. The list of digital platforms is extensive and growing all the time. A multimedia manual like Digital Video by Nik Peachey (nominated for an ELTons award for innovations in teacher resources) can help teachers navigate the complicated, and sometimes overwhelming, world of digital resources, enabling teachers to create activities, lessons and courses from a range of digital tools.

The IWB started appearing in classrooms in the early parts of this century and has now become a staple of many classrooms in Britain and around the world. It allows us to save and print notes written on the board, control the classroom computer from the whiteboard, play listening activities on the sound system, use the screen as a slide for presentations, access the internet, and so on.

VIII. Communicating with People around the world; Online CPD (continuous professional development) and the Global Staffroom

The advent of the internet and the growth of social media have certainly allowed teachers of English from all over the world to form online communities that act like a huge global staffroom.

Additionally, the ability to communicate online with people outside the classroom via Skype and similar tools has enabled students to meet and interact with others in English. In monolingual classes (i.e., most English classrooms around the world), this could give much-needed motivation to students who otherwise might not have the opportunity to interact with anyone in English. And as for teachers, the ability to converse with students face-to-face online has opened up a whole new market for Skype lessons and online classes.

IX. Online Corpora and Authentic Materials

One of the biggest benefits of the internet for language learners is the sudden widespread availability of authentic resources. As David Deubelbeiss points out, this enables teachers to use 'content with messages students want to hear'.

The use of corpora – large text collections used for studying linguistic structures, frequencies, etc. – used to be the privilege of lexicographers. But with most corpora now available online, and quite a few for free, teachers now have access to information about the way language is used in authentic texts and speech.

X. Teachers as Lifelong Learners

In a knowledge based society and to remain competitive and employable, teachers are expected to engage in a continuous professional development or the professional learning activities from the beginning to the end of their careers. As with any other profession, teachers are also expected to assume a greater responsibility for their own professional learning, continually developing their knowledge and skills.

7. Latest Trends and Innovations in ELT Resources

Apart from the above mentioned items, Rachael Roberts looks at the latest trends and innovations in English language teaching resources ahead of the ELT resources, but none of them are new.

I. Spaced Repetition

The idea of spaced repetition, which is a buzzword at the moment back in 1885 (it wasn't a new idea), Hermann Ebbinghaus carried out an experiment designed to measure how quickly we forget. He discovered that, unless new information is reinforced, we quickly forget what we have

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learned. In the 1930s, other researchers followed this up by looking at how often we need to reinforce new information, and found that spacing out repetition – revising the information every two days, and then every four, then every eight, and so on – was most effective. So, we've known about spaced repetition for quite a while, but it has been difficult to implement, as it involves keeping track of an awful lot of words. However, this is something that a language learning computer program or app can do brilliantly. And so we're starting to see more and more language-learning apps which use the principles of spaced repetition, such as Lingopolis or Olive Green – two nominees for the ELTons awards this year.

II. Digitalization

Another way in which digitalization is affecting ELT resources is in the way its connecting learners with the outside world. Students nowadays have access to an incredible amount of English-language material online. But while this is clearly beneficial, it can also be a bit overwhelming. Students don't always know where to go for the most appropriate material. For teachers, the amount of time needed to find, select and prepare materials can be off-putting. As a result, more and more sites that adapt materials for students are appearing. Easier English Wiki, for example, provides students (and teachers) with free materials based on articles from New Internationalist magazine. Newsmart is an app that uses daily, up-to-date content from the Wall Street Journal to teach language and develop reading and listening skills.

III. The Growth in more Specialized Elt Materials

Another effect of our increasingly online world is the growth in more specialized ELT materials. While publishers continue to produce large, globally oriented courses, there is more and more scope for niche, local products written for specific groups of learners. Dr Chris Lima's EAP Shakespeare materials, nominated for the Macmillan Award for New Talent in Writing, is one such example. Teachers are starting to create materials in ways that would have been impossible some years ago. Nearly every student now carries a powerful mini-computer, video camera and audio recorder in their pocket (otherwise known as a

mobile phone) and teachers are finding new ways to use this technology in the classroom for learning English. Web tools and unprecedented access to authentic materials online mean that teachers can create courses tailored to the specific needs and interests of their students.

IV. Creativity

'We live in an age when the most valuable asset any economy can have is the ability to be creative – to spark and imagine new ideas, be they Broadway tunes, great books, iPads, or new cancer drugs.'(Thomas Friedman, 2010) both within the world of TESOL and without, the benefits of creativity and creative thinking have been recognized as essential for success (Bronson &Merryman, 2010; Craft, 2011; Cropley, 2008; Csikszentmihalyi& Wolfe, 2014; Richards &Cotterall, 2016). But not all the latest trends rely on technology. A very noticeable trend is towards more creativity in the classroom. This probably started with Ken Robinson's talk, How schools kill creativity. Viewed millions of times, it has definitely brought creativity back to the forefront of teaching and materials design. There are other signs too, such as the setting up of The C Group: a group of ELT teachers and materials writers dedicated to encouraging creativity in the classroom.

V. 21st- Century Skills

Creativity is often about seeing things from a new perspective. This brings us to my final trend: 21st-century skills. It is used to refer to skills that are felt to be of particular importance in today's world. The 21st century skills can be summarized by the 4Cs: Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity and Collaboration. This means we want our students to be able to: Perform independently and with groups in a highly technologically advanced atmosphere; 1-Be ready for daily, global interaction. 2-Be cable of adaptive, flexible and creative thinking.3- Understand how to plan for, build, and include collaboration with peers who are colleagues and experts in the field. This goes a bit above and beyond the basics of the walls of the English language classroom. And yet, preparing our students for the 21st century doesn't require a classroom that looks like the set of a science fiction movie. In fact, several teachers have proved that you can

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embed 21st century skills be utilizing the most important resource available in the classroom: Your students.

8. The Roles of Teachers and Students

There's no doubt that traditional resources, chalkboard and master class, did not allow, especially in technical careers to show students the reality of professional life. The "hardness" of the master class forced the teacher to master the subject exhibited. The class almost entirely depended on the teacher, who could get very close to the audience or full bore. The revolution came with the video projector. This resource has brought, along with the PowerPoint file, a reign that can scarcely be forgotten in the classroom. The teacher can now bring all the material, previously selected and prepared, and give a class almost entirely with this media. We say almost, because even now, most teachers use the blackboard or the slate markers to solve exercises and problems. However, with the proliferation of pc tablets, sometimes the entire class is taught on the screen, including the exercises.

The student will not necessarily experience these changes as deeply, as they are "short term" passengers in the University. Nevertheless he has changed from taking handwritten notes of all subjects and drawing by hand during blackboard and master classes, to hardly take any notes and have a large number of references, books and documents posted on the web to consult. This has led to a change that allows him to pay more attention to the explanations, not so focus on taking notes, and thereby, participate more actively in class.

9. Learning Process

Currently, we have been seeing that over the last few years, the learning process has changed. Thus, generally speaking, we have gone from passive learning to active learning. Without going into detail on each of the many cases, we will stay with three, which ultimately, summarize the evolution and changes over the past 100 years: master class, collaborative learning and project-based learning, the first a clear example of passive learning, and the latter two representing the active learning. The video projector and the Network resources have had a very important impact on active learning.

10. Conclusion

It is obvious that technological advances have brought us some notable improvements in the teaching process, but we may have abused of them, or we have not known how to guide them, often favorably. Conclusions bellow pose a series of questions, which should each teacher, each student and each college resolve according to their capabilities, resources and objectives answer.The teacher has undergone substantial changes and now has some means of support in the classroom that provides him safety and reliability. But sometimes, the use of such media has been in detriment of the communication between the teacher and the student; as some teachers are limited to "read" and rely too much on the projected material, forgetting one of the major functions of teaching: motivation. Moreover, the teacher is totally reliant and at the mercy of the electronic resources, so that in the event of failure, he can hardly teach class. The student has seen no need to take notes in class, he may attend or either be dispersed, as it is confident that at home he will have the possibility to download some perfect notes from the web. But does he really look at all the material at his disposal? Ease of access is causing some teachers to hang lots of information for consultation. The student does not always print all information, which is beneficial for the environment, but can you study on a screen as well as on a paper? Homework of collecting and finding information, in other words, the state of the art, in many cases are obsolete, since the student can download the homework directly from either a national or a foreign university, shamelessly plagiarizing their contents. Even worse is when they do it from blogs or any other not contrasted resources. This, forces the teacher to change the teaching method and propose work on the basis of the logical reasoning more than on the information itself. We do not know for sure what the future will be, even every day we are at a crossroads of whether the means, techniques and resources we try to use to improve education will provide adequate training for our graduates.

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