

RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH DIFFERENT MEDIUMS AND HOW IT IS CREATING A COMMUNICATION GAP BETWEEN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

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Abstract

Learning and enhancing a language is not an easy task and it takes time to excel any language, especially English which is a language of variety with an unending vocabulary because it is highly dependent on words borrowed from other languages. Anyways learning English is equally hard for both the native speakers (with an experience of a lifetime) as well as the second language speakers due to its complex nature which is why both require classroom lessons as a necessity to clear the basics of the language. However, there are certain other mediums help us to grasp English effectively. This paper explains the different mediums used for learning a language and enhancing it. It also aims to verify whether these mediums are useful and if yes, then how? The analytical part of the paper explains the results obtained from the questionnaire that was done in order to collect information from people of different age groups about the same. Different ages were discussed because people of different age groups have their preferred ways or

mediums that they inculcate in their day to day life which ultimately helps in language learning knowingly or unknowingly. The paper also deals with the theoretical explanation of how the use of different mediums by different age groups is creating a communication gap between them.

Keywords: English, Language, Learning, Mediums, Communication, Different ages.

English is one of the most widely spoken languages around the world. According to Wikipedia, there are over 200 million speakers of this which have made it the preferred language of choice for domains like business, education, entertainment, trade, etc. It serves an excellent means of communication, especially between people with different native languages, cultures, ethnicity, etc. This is why English has become lingua franca of the world, and people learn it globally. Classroom learning is one of the

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most traditional means used for teaching English. It has always been an essential part of acquiring the basic norms of the language. However, Kruk & Zawodniak (2018) noticed that people tend to get bored during such lessons due to which they find difficulty in language acquisition. One important reason for this failure might be the inability of the teacher to understand the learner's preferences for learning English (Littlewoods et al., 1996). The learners did learn the basics of English; the rules, word formations, spelling from the acquired classroom lessons but lacked interest which debarred them from the real understanding of the language and hence demotivated them.

Media is one of the essential tools of communication which has always been under evolution with the emerging times. Even the slightest developments in the technology brought about drastic changes in the course of media increasing its reach ability to more and more people. When the globalization took place, and the technology came into play, the learners got exposed to media and the internet. Richards (2010) saw the use of English in person, as well as via virtually, provided more significant opportunities for meaningful and authentic use than that available in the classrooms. One can also say that the use of the English language boosted after the emergence of technology. It now acted as a means of communication for more people around the

world due to easy accessibility. It also gave learners a choice of different mediums and also kept them interested by providing both learning as well as entertainment. There are different sources of media that people have been consuming in their day to day life like Broadcast, Print Media, Internet, etc. which brought a significant impact and also changed the course of learning. According to Sabzian, Gilakjani & Sodouri (2013), the use of technologies in language learning has a great potential to change the existing norms of teaching methods. They emphasized that learners could now control their learning and had got access to information over which their teachers also did not have control.

How Print Media Affected the Language Learning Process of the People?

Print media is one of the earliest sources of media available. It is a collective term used for various outlets of media printed on paper like books, newspapers, magazines, etc. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg proved to be a game-changer in the world of media just like the invention of the internet five centuries later. It was initially used for information-only purposes but later started providing entertainment as well. The people around the world were dependent on the newspapers, books, magazines for relevant information by intensely reading consuming even that part of the text also which they did

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not require. Novels and magazines provided a great source of entertainment and kept readers engrossed with twisted tales and stories. Thus it helped people to acquire critical language skills, broadening the background knowledge of the learners and also increasing their vocabulary. Though with the emergence of the internet and people using e-books (Amazon kindle), e-news, etc. a sharp decrease in the circulation of print media was seen. It led to some people think about the irrelevance of this medium in today's world, when the emphasis is on using virtual platforms. However, research by Columbian journalism review showed that the print media is not dying just yet and still has a long way to go with a little bit of resurgence too.

Television & Radio Broadcast

This medium provides an excellent opportunity for English language learners in countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the other European countries with English as a second or foreign language. People have been watching television, radio for a variety of purposes. The people enjoyed watching television because they found it visually attractive, especially the children and helped them assimilate things more easily. They started imitating what they heard more quickly. Radio and television have been seen more effective in countries like India, Pakistan, etc. especially with high illiteracy rates. The people of these countries use code-mixing and code-switching in their

speech due to which the illiterate people starts acquiring some English words also along with their Native language by listening to other people. The effectiveness of this process depends on how carefully we are listening to it and for how much time. India is a hub for code-mixing due to which even the illiterate people of this country are aware of some English words. Television and radio, the most accessible mediums available have played a role in this process of acquiring English making more and more people attain language skills.

The Emergence of the Internet gave us our Third Medium; Social Media.

The impact of social media has been seen significantly in the lives of the people. It has created a web connecting people around the world and giving them a platform to share their ideas and thoughts. The rise of more affordable smart phones, internet at cheaper rates gave rise to more and more people using it. People started using Face book, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp, etc., connecting people around the world. Also, with the technological advancements, the smart phones today are provided with specific inbuilt features like autocorrect, translation, capitalization, etc. which helps in correcting our mistakes while typing. Hence regular chatting lead to the practice of our writing skills and consuming different applications like YouTube videos, Tik Tok, Instagram posts, etc. developed our reading skills meticulously. Today people have

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millions of views on their YouTube and Tik Tok videos, millions of followers on Instagram and Facebook, which testifies how effective social media has become serving a variety of purposes to people. YouTube and other applications like Duolingo, Babble, Memrise also offers online language teaching courses. Google is like the solution to every problem. Social media has so much to offer that it gets challenging to cover every aspect. Thus one can say that it serves the purpose of helping people, suffering from language difficulties, also improving their cognitive and metacognitive skills and expanding their vocabulary.

Over The Top Platforms (OTT)

Have you heard about Netflix and chill? Yes you heard it right. The OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, etc. gained much popularity among the people, especially in youths. These platforms provided a variety of shows, movies and documentaries from different countries and languages at one place. Most of them either dubbed in English or provided with subtitles. This helped people explore more at any time and any place. Televisions and theatres did not allow this. This lead to people consuming more and more, ending up completing shows in no time & started binge watching which helped them in enhancing learning skills. They started imitating the dialogues from their favorite show or movies. A famous Korean band even confessed in a show how they

learned English by watching ‘F.r.i.e.n.ds’ on repeat. Keeping the subtitles on also plays a vital role as it helps better in understanding the dialogues of the people making us remember better.

Language Learning Through Music

Music has been serving the people for a long time providing entertainment, lifting the moods. Perhaps it also proved to be effective in language learning. The digital revolution brought profound changes in the teaching practices around the world, and access to music through online resources opened learning possibilities to use it as a teaching tool. Especially the youth who spend hours listening to music and songs daily, which ultimately stimulates their brains to process them even when they are not listening? Perhaps this might be because of how music activates so many parts of our brain like Broca’s area (language centre) or the limbic (processes emotions) that it helps in creating an intriguing atmosphere for language learning (Lems, 2016). Learning English through songs is explicitly easier than the other language as is it is on the most dominant language in the music industry. Thousands of songs are made by different artists everywhere and are listened to by millions even at places where English is not the native language. It might be because of how popular the language has become with a massive range of vocabulary available to make songs.

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How the use of these mediums is creating a communication gap among different age groups?

Today's spectrum is totally different from the past. Our society is privileged with a lot of options (listed above) to help us get command on English language and become a fluent speaker. Although every person has its own choice when it comes to inculcating them their daily lives, keeping entertained as well. For example some people like listening to music, surfing social media whereas some prefer reading newspapers, listening to radio and some like to have a variety of mediums to rely on. This is the reason why our society is getting divided into groups on the basis of the medium they prefer the most. Interestingly the youth today is inclined more towards the songs, social media, YouTube, etc. than the older people who still rely on their daily dose of newspaper, television, radio for the access of information. This has led to the emergence of lack of communication between particular age groups. The adults feel out of context while standing in a group of youngsters due to their lack of knowledge about the latest songs, movies and other upcoming innovations and vice versa. Inorder to support this, a survey which included a questionnaire was conducted. The purpose of conducting the survey was to gather information from individuals to find personal opinions from age-groups 12 to 25, 26 to 45, and 45 above. A total number of 45 people participated in the survey; 15

from each age group. The survey aimed to find out what are the mediums that people prefer to inculcate in their daily lives, to find whether they are aware of how these mediums help them in language acquisition or not. Most importantly, it focused on finding whether the choice of different mediums by different age-groups created a communication gap between them. The survey was performed online on Google forms by sending a link to the people on Whatsapp. The responses were kept confidential considering the privacy of the people and were carefully evaluated for the best results.

The age groups are labeled as – A (12-25), B (26-45) &C (45 above) for a better understanding. Almost all the people that filled the form had learned English in classrooms. However, 21.7% of them found language learning through classroom lessons boring. Majority of the people who responded this were from group A. The people from other groups had mixed responses to it. The choices of the people were based on reading, listening, or watching. Almost 87% of the people agreed that media has helped them learn English better. However, their choices of mediums were different like group a chose to rely on social media, movies, shows and music for learning the language. In contrast, group C chose reading newspaper, books, television, radio, etc. to learn English. The group B though had mixed responses. Nevertheless,

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majority of the people agreed to have been a fluent speaker if they were exposed to other mediums like songs or social media as a kid. The responses of group A and C were mostly found to be contrary to each other. Group A claimed to spend more time on social media, watching videos, listening to songs, etc. They also sought to rely on their age group for discussing these mediums. Others also chose their age group to discuss this medium. However, group C claimed to spend more time on reading and similar sources, whereas the responses of group B were wildly varying. It might have been because the people of this group are in a stage of transition from a youth to an adult which helped them connect better with both groups. These preferred mediums by different age-groups must have helped in language acquisition processes as explained above in the paper. However, it did create a communication gap among the youth and the adults as most of the people who agreed to it belonged to either group A or group B.

Conclusion

The survey found contrasting opinions in the choices of different age groups, especially between group A and group C. Both groups preferred their group for a better flow of communication and felt hesitant with each other. They also agreed that they feel a communication problem while facing each other due to lack of topics. The Group C had little or no idea about mediums that Group A enjoyed while the

mediums used by group C were labelled as boring by Group A. One reason for the rise of this communication gap that can be inferred is the continuously evolving technological changes. The people above 45 years took time to process these changes as they were not born with the internet or the smart phones but got access to it much later compared to the younger generation that now starts operating them instantly. This ultimately helped them develop language learning skills way more quickly.

Today the children start speaking English more fluently using large vocabulary in their speech including slangs, abbreviations and even new words just by using these mediums which the adults are less aware of as they preferred to stick with the traditional ones which has a very rigid format. However, it would be wrong to say that the older people do not use evolved mediums as they filled the questionnaire through an online portal which proves that they do use these mediums but to a limited extent. Whether this gap will increase or decrease in the coming years will depend on many factors but most importantly, on how many new mediums come into existence. As for language learning, it is a process that is happening continuously; every time. We do it all the time intentionally or not and hence it will only get boosted with the introduction of more advanced mediums.

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