

WEB BASED LEARNING: - AN APPROACH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

MRS. MARY CECILIA

Lecturer, Department of English
St. Pious X Degree & PG College for
Women, Hyderabad
mary.cecilia@rocketmail.com

SR.B. VELANGINI KUMARI

Principal
St. Pious X Degree & PG College for
Women, Hyderabad
velanginikumari@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Today every Indian student has to acquire proficiency in English Language as it is a compulsory subject of study. It is in this context that a teacher of English as a second language should be equipped with a number of skills, methods, approaches and techniques for effective teaching. An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. The proliferation of approaches is a prominent characteristic of contemporary second and foreign language teaching. This paper deals with web based learning as one of the approaches in English Language Teaching. A few websites of language teaching and learning were chosen randomly and evaluated them based on title, objectives, language, methodology, glossary instructions and illustrations. These websites that are browsed cater to language need of students of all levels.

Key Words: English Language Teaching, Skills, Methods, Approach, Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The much needed transformation in Learning, Teaching and Research is utilising the tools of Information Technology. New uses of Technology are being found every day. They are helpful not only in a wide range of agriculture, industry, scientific research, machine design. Banking and examination but also in language and literature. Hence technology is helpful in a wide range in the field of education too, especially in language learning and teaching process.

An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. It is axiomatic. The proliferation of approaches is a prominent characteristic of contemporary language teaching. The way of looking at teaching and learning, a theoretical view of what language is and how it can be learnt. An approach gives rise to methods, the way of teaching something.

Every student has to acquire proficiency in English language as it is a global language, a compulsory subject of study and also it is the need of the hour.

It is in this context that a teacher of English as a second language should be abreast of times equipped with a number of skills, modern methods, approaches, new pedagogic trends and techniques to realise the purpose for effective teaching.

ADVANTAGES OF USING WEB

Web based learning engages the learner in active learning. Interactive activities available on the web hone the learners' creative and analytical skills by making them sharper and quicker on the uptake. It is both effective and enjoyable. It supplements the teachers' traditional methods of teaching.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main aim of this paper is to critically evaluate the nature of ELT materials on the web. It is assumed that these materials are still traditional in nature i.e., like fill in the blanks and match the following.

Higher education and advanced learning is not possible without English. These days the English language learnt by the learners in colleges is not adequate. It is deplorable to see that substandard language materials are provided to the learners which make them in turn to be not up to the standard of English language. The thirst for speaking and writing good English is not quenched. When they turn to websites one doesn't know how many of the sites are good and provide materials for real learning.

METHODOLOGY

It involves two steps- sampling of materials and evaluating them. In order to select materials for evaluation we browsed through the internet and listed a number of sites and randomly chose a few websites.

ANALYSIS

To evaluate the materials certain **criteria** was developed -

Title: should be attractive and the learner should comprehend the global idea of the activity.

Objectives: The intended outcome to be stated clearly

Language: should be simple, aimed at the level of the learners.

Methodology: Should always be providing an atmosphere where the learner can follow.

Instructions: Provide learner steps which the learner should and should not follow and should be clear and explicit

Illustrations: should be self explanatory and should be directly linked with the content of the unit.

Structure of Units: Proper divisions of units and sub- units should be lucid

Contextualisation: encourages learners to relate the text with practical experience drawn from real life situations.

Assessment: the learners get a chance to check how well they are meeting the objectives and provide feedback.

Examples

1. To help students prepare well for the exams around the clock online help was introduced by ‘egurucool.com’ that provides study materials or modules. These contain summaries of various topics meant for quick revision, practice tests and assignments, solved question papers in last five years and pre-board papers of leading institutions.
2. The website ‘allentrance.com’ has some lakhs of questions from various subjects taught in school, elementary, intermediate and advanced learners. The exercises offer a variety of theme and purpose.
3. The website ‘efl.esl.com’ was developed by Daisy A. Stocker in 1997 which consists of many categories. Learning English with laughter is one of them which contain “about the authors” “examples from our book”, “activity pages” and “children books”. Activity pages have 20 various activities about vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing. The author claims that this site is meant for teachers and students. The activities are meaningful and carried out in language skills and at all levels of language. The activities take in to account students age, interest and need for variety. They include role play and discussions.

			
<p>ESL activities for teachers and students</p>	<p>Activity pages</p>	<p>Examples from our book</p>	<p>About the authors</p>

ACTIVITIES

Beginners

Intermediate

Advanced

Activity Books

Complete Package

Conversation Activities

ESL Games

ESL Murder Mysteries

CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOKS

Beginners

High Beginners

Intermediate

Advanced

History of Flight

Children's Textbooks

Children's ESL Storybooks

ABOUT US

About our Products

Testimonials

Our Teaching Philosophy

About Us

We shall analyse three websites and give a general view of each of these websites first. Then we shall analyse a task\unit from each of these websites

Website 1

www.englishday.com

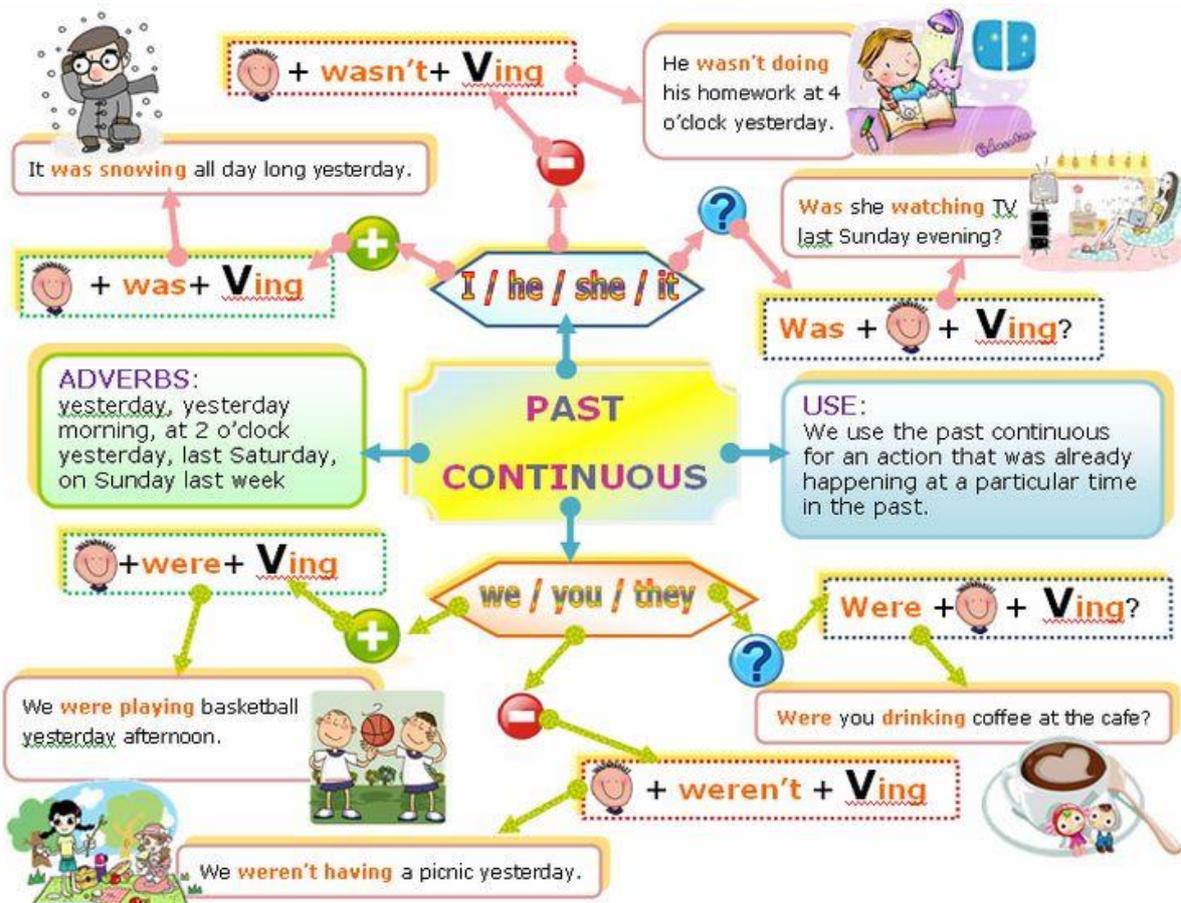
This is one of the websites which aims to provide English Language materials for both learners and teachers. There are many activities for improving their language skills through practice and they also allow the learners to interact with tutors online. For example “English Channel: ESL” has units on Grammar, Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. There are exercises to give practice in whatever is taught in the unit.

Task 1 - We shall look at the unit on tenses.

In this unit tenses are dealt with. The tenses along with examples are given in a pictorial format and there are exercises following it. There is no explanation to understand how tenses are formed and where to use what tense. The students have to see the picture and understand what simple present, simple past etc is. Each tense is illustrated with only one example and the examples are isolated sentences. The presentation seems to focus on form but even that is not complete it is followed by practice task where students are supposed to practice tenses for some task there are no instructions given. Therefore users can do the task even without any instruction.

ENGLISH TENSES			
PRESENT SIMPLE	PRESENT CONTINUOUS	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS
PAST SIMPLE	PAST CONTINUOUS	PAST PERFECT	PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS
FUTURE SIMPLE	FUTURE CONTINUOUS	FUTURE PERFECT	FUTURE PERFECT CONTINUOUS

Rules →



Fill in the blanks using the correct form of the verbs

1. Hardly had the minister finished his speech when gunshots ---- (storm) the stadium.

2. Everybody will be at the office at about 08:30 tomorrow as the meeting ---- (start) at nine o'clock.

3. That candidate who we had been interviewed before we ---- (speak) to all the others is still my favorite.

4. While climbing onto the mountain top, I ---- (encounter) a strange animal which I'd never seen before.

5. The chairman was sure that his plan would work out fine as no other member ---- (oppose) it up to that time.

www.englishlearner.com

English learner.com is one of the websites which aim at the betterment of the English learners it clearly indicates how to use the activities. The activities are graded according to the level of the learner. There are various games based on grammar, spelling, reading, vocabulary and listening. It offers a wide variety of information and resources for both teachers and learners. With feedback which gives an opportunity to interact with each other and the teacher what their particular experiences were and the problems they encountered. Answers to all the activities are given at the end of the tasks. It provides an opportunity to improve their learning in numerous ways.

Task 1 - Fill in the blank with the correct form of adjectives and adverbs given in the box

1. He reads a book. (*quick*)
2. Mandy is a girl. (*pretty*)
3. The class is loud today. (*terrible*)
4. Max is a singer. (*good*)
5. You can open this tin. (*easy*)

This task is meant for learners at intermediate level. The instruction given at the top is clear and precise it tells the learner what to be filled in. The aim of the exercise is not clear. It does not concentrate on one item and it is not focused.

www.tolearnenglish.com

To learnenglish.com is a free site for English learners. There are free English vocabulary sheets, grammar sheets, English exercises and lessons. This site caters to the needs of students of all levels. It has sections for beginners, intermediate and advanced students. Each section provides a range of activities on grammar, vocabulary, quizzes, dialogues, comprehension, correct sequence and word choice. Depending on the level of proficiency which the activity assumes it is classified as easy or difficult.

Task1

Vocabulary: the house

Find the words.

Click on letters between brackets to build correct words. Click on the box to start again.

1. It's where you prepare the meals : the (K E C I N H I)
2. It's the room where you can have a shower : the (B M R A H I O O)
3. It's where you sleep : your (O R O M E B D)
4. It's where you have your meals : the (D G M O R N I I N O -)
5. It's where you keep your good bottles of wine : the (L C A E L R)
6. It's the place where we generally keep old things : the (I C A I I)
7. It's ideal for a car : a (A G E R G A)
8. Dad works on his computer there : his (U D I Y S)
9. It's the best place for a washing-machine : the (D L R A N U Y)
10. You open the front-door and you are in the (H L L A)

CHECK MY TEST>>

This task is a vocabulary exercise which has no presentation of the grammar items the learners are given directly the activity they can use this activity to improve their vocabulary and word power. After they complete the exercise they can assess themselves by checking their answers immediately.

LIMITATIONS

A variety of tasks are available on the web for various levels of learning, but had to select a few that aim at helping them develop their language skills.

CONCLUSION

The websites browsed cater to language needs of students of all levels that is websites that provide materials for study for a particular level (efl.esl.com), websites which provide activities for preparing for examinations like GRE, TOEFL, IELTS etc., (free esl.com), some websites give only a summary of the usage of an item (English day.com) which is not

sufficient. Some activities are paid and some are free. Some websites offer online courses for which the user can only practice whatever he has learnt elsewhere. Some of the websites are traditional type like fill in the blank and match the following. Some include group work, pair work, writing and role play. Some are too simple. Some can be used in classroom but cannot be done by the user alone. They deal differently with different learners.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Varying methods present a formidable challenge and many hurdles
2. No unity among them to follow one methodology
3. Before providing activities there should be presentation of each topic with good illustrations which encourages the user to visit the websites.
4. The instructions for each activity should be clear and elaborate
5. The materials should concentrate both on form and usage
6. The activities should not involve more than two persons
7. The tasks should be challenging and interactive
8. Some activities should not neglect the vital methodological considerations in which teacher plays a key role

Proper implementation of these suggestions will enable the learner benefited. It is also very helpful for the teacher because the suggestions involve pedagogical problems related to language learning.

All these together with actual classroom teaching can provide hours of interactive learning. The learning process is greatly accelerated in technology.

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