ABSTRACT

Amazing developments in the field of information and communication technology, globalization of education, ever increasing demands for communicative competence in all realms of life have necessitated the learning of the global language, English, today. The wide world has become a global village with this information explosion, and for various reasons English has come to be accepted as the main medium of communication. Particularly, the job scenario in the globalized world involves many dimensions of assessment in the form of competitive examinations and personal interviews; and, English serves as the medium of communication in these encounters. Hence, aspirants of progress in life in this technological era have to gear up with desirable English language skills that cater to the various needs of their employment and advancement.

The language has not left any field untouched, bringing about tremendous changes in the social, cultural and educational contexts of the globe with sudden rush in lives of people of almost all nations towards mastering the skills of this global language. Further, the research and development in all arenas is interwoven with new technologies for which English language serves as the medium, thus necessitating the inevitable need to be well versed in the English language skills. As more and more countries began attributing special status to English language, the demand to cultivate the skills of the
language too has increased proportionately. Many parents are focusing on English medium education considering it as more beneficial for their wards at the primary or the elementary level itself.

To meet this challenging situation, where language skills have to be imparted to a vast number of learners, the traditional classrooms cannot cater to the diverse needs of ever increasing number of learners. The implementation of technology in the field of education simplified the procedures of teaching to such massive strengths by providing alternative opportunities to the learners. With the help of these technologies self taught techniques have been developed.

The recent advances in multimedia technology offer Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as an alternative to the traditional mode of the lecture method followed in the teaching/learning of English language. There are many advantages of CALL. The CALL environment offers the learners, irrespective of their diversified needs, an opportunity to interact with the computer on one-to-one basis. This is advantageous to an average or a weak student; he feels attended to. The second important advantage is that it allows learner autonomy. The learner enjoys a certain amount of freedom as the teacher’s role is confined to that of a facilitator. Thus CALL methodology has immense potential to integrate all the major and ancillary skills of the language and to make an individual competent in the target language.
Since technology enhancement received its due attention as a means to achieve the desired progress, the government proceeded in the direction of establishment of more number of technology institutions of higher learning. In addition, the favourable situation in the country which is constantly growing towards progress in science and technology has been encouraging the educational institutions towards making complete use of education technology to reform their teaching/learning strategies. An access to technology-oriented pedagogy is offered at present in the all the institutions of higher learning, both technical and non technical streams by establishing language labs in their respective institutions. Each college has erected some software or the other to cater to the language acquisition needs of the learners.

Although the CALL teaching is autonomous in nature still a learner has to avail the resources of CALL in a multimedia environment with the guidance of a teacher. Today a number of software companies are offering CALL materials for the benefit of learners. The popularly used software and platform devices have been examined keeping in view the usefulness of the CALL material in the Indian context. An analysis of the software and platform devices to examine their suitability to the present language needs of the students has revealed some of the shortcomings and need for alterations. However, the point to be considered is how effectively the language labs are being used by the instructors to impart communicative competence to the learners.
The examination of all these softwares and platform devices indicates that the packages are not comprehensive and lacks in integration of skills. The Writing skill is not dealt in the way it is required of Indian students. Such material does not offer considerable help in improving learners’ communication skills. So, the course design of any software should follow careful grading and should consist of all the language skills comprehensively, both major and minor. A course design based on these guidelines is offered to institutions of technology learning to enhance the effectiveness of the software.