Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of literature in the major areas of present research. The focus is on integration of Internet-based tools to teach language effectively, and major theoretical frameworks this study is based upon. It also reviews literature on specific Internet-based services, such as blogs and podcasts used by educators for language teaching.

2.1 Historical Perspectives on Language Teaching

The language teaching domain has seen many changes and innovations. Several methods and approaches to language teaching have been introduced and adopted. Each of these have experienced ups and downs throughout the century. These methods and approaches are discussed here chronologically.

A. Grammar-Translation Method

The earliest method propounded by the German scholars Johann Seidenstücker, Karl Plötz, H. S. Ollendorf and Johann Meidinger was the Grammar-Translation method. In this method, grammar was seen as the starting point for instruction and its focus was on detailed study of grammar rules followed by applications of the learned-rules in translation exercises in and out of the target language (Thornbury, 2000; Dendrinos, 1992). This method focused more on writing and reading as compared to speaking and listening. However, accuracy was one of the core features of this method as students were expected to achieve high standards in translating sentences in written tests (Richards and Rodgers, 2007).

According to Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979) the following were the major characteristics of Grammar-Translation method:

- Classes were taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language;
- Much vocabulary was taught in the form of lists of isolated words;
- Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar were given;
- The grammar rules often focused on the form and inflection of words;
- Reading of difficult classical texts used to begin early;
- Little attention paid to the context of texts, which were treated as exercises in grammatical analysis;
- Often drills translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue;
- Little or no attention was given to pronunciation.

Since there was no focus provided to listening and speaking skills in the Grammar-Translation Method, with the emergence of phonetics, the Direct Method was adopted for language teaching.

B. Direct Method

Direct Method was developed at the end of 19th century and challenged the views on grammar teaching (Thornbury, 2000). Sauveur (1826-1907) and other advocates of the Direct Method expressed that with this method language could be taught without translation and learners' mother tongue by demonstrating and using actions to convey meaning.

According to Richards & Rodgers (2007), the following were the main principles of Direct Method:

- Classroom instruction was only given in the target language and the native language of the students was not used at all;
- Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught;

- Oral communication skills were shaped in a carefully graded process in form of question-and-answer exchanges between teacher and students;
- Grammar was taught inductively;
- New teaching items were introduced orally first;
- Vocabulary was taught through demonstration, actual objects or pictures;
- Speech and listening comprehension were taught;
- Correct pronunciation and grammar were regarded as crucial.

This method was criticized as it failed to consider practical classroom realities. It required teachers who were native speakers which was not possible in all classrooms set ups and its success depended upon the teachers' skills. Also it lacked a base in applied linguistics (Richards & Rodgers, 2007). The Direct Method gave innovations at the level of teaching procedures but lacked a clearly defined methodological basis (Henry Sweet, as cited by Kamhuber, 2010). Sweet and other linguists advocated the integration of sound methodological principles in language teaching which led to introduction of Audiolingualism in the United States and Situational Language Teaching in Europe.

C. Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching

This approach was developed by British linguists from 1930s to 1960s. Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornby, who were the most prominent leaders of this movement, aimed at developing more scientific oral approach to language teaching than the Direct Method (Richards & Rodgers, 2007). In this approach, grammar and vocabulary were given utmost importance since vocabulary was seen as a key component for achieving reading fluency and grammar was also seen as a crucial component since it caused problems for foreign language learner. The Oral approach consisted of principles of selection, gradation and presentation where selection meant the principles on the basis of which the grammatical and lexical content was choses, gradation dealt with sequencing and organization of contents, and

presentation was all about the techniques adopted for the presentation of the contents. This approach continued developing over a 20-year period with a principle that new language items should be introduced in situations so it is also called Situational Approach. With further developments the name Situational Language Teaching (SLT) came into usage.

The SLT model comprised of P-P-P model wherein a language lesson had three phases: a) presentation of new language item; b) controlled production of the item; and c) free production phase. This approach was questioned at later stages and led to the development of communication approach.

D. Audiolingualism

At the time of World War II, in United States military personnel were required who can speak in foreign languages such as French and Germen. For training them in foreign languages, American universities were appointed to develop foreign language training programs for them (Richards & Rodgers, 2007). Since this training program called 'Army Method' focused on intensive oral drilling, it was called Audiolingual Method. In this method emphasis was on memorisation through pattern drills and conversation practices rather than promoting communicative ability.

According to Prator & Celce-Murcia (1979), the following were the characteristics of Audiolingual Method:

- New material was presented in dialogue form;
- There was dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases, and overlearning;
- Structural patterns were taught using repetitive drills;
- Vocabulary was strictly limited and learnt in context;
- There was much use of tapes, language labs, and visual aids;
- Pronunciation was given more importance and teachers were not allowed to

use mother tongue;

- Immediate reinforcement of successful responses was possible and students were encouraged to produce error-free utterances;
- There was a tendency to manipulate language and disregard content.

This method was criticized as the students taught with this method were not able to transfer the learnt skills in real life communicative situations. This led to the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which focused on the communicative and functional aspect of language.

E. Communicative Langue Teaching

The greatest advantage of CLT was as Richards & Rodgers (2007) put it that - "different educational traditions can identify with it, and consequently interpret it in different ways". The key characteristic of CLT is communication: "Language learning is learning to communicate" (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1988).

CLT emphasized the communicative potential of language offering a great variety of classroom procedures. According to Richards and Rodgers (2007), the following are the principles of CLT:

- Learners learn a language by communicating;
- Classroom activities are planned for authentic and meaningful communication;
- Fluency is considered as an important dimension of communication;
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills;
- Language learning process involves trial and error.

This approach focused on identification of learners' needs and accordingly designing communicative classroom exercises such as group work, task-work, information-gap activities etc.

F. Natural Approach

While the CLT was being put to use in teaching language Tracy Terrell and Stephen Krashen came up with a new philosophy on language teaching. Krashen advocated the theory of second language acquisition which created the theoretical base for Natural Approach (Richards and Rodgers, 2007). According to Krashen, people are naturally equipped for language acquisition (Thornbury, 2000). The main principles of this approach defend teaching of language using communicative situations without using mother tongue. It also rejected the grammar teaching focusing on comprehensible and meaningful practice activities instead of producing grammatically perfect utterances and sentences. In this approach input is given more importance than practice in the teaching learning situations. Comprehension plays vital role in this approach which linked Natural Approach to comprehension-based approach, such as the Total Physical Response Method.

G. Content-Based Instruction

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach was based on the CLT and is seen as an enhancement of it but the focus of the two approaches is on two different aspects. In CLT, students are given an opportunity to practice the learned communicative functions whereas in CBI priority is given to process over predetermined linguistic content (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). In CBI, content remains at the core of teaching aimed to convey meaningful content to the students. Language is used to deliver the contents and in this process of learning considered a by-product of learning about the real-world content (Richards and Rodgers, 2007). This approach is based on the principle that students can learn the second language successfully while using it as a means of acquiring new information.

H. Task-Based Language Teaching

In 1980s, the TBLT approach came into existence as a logical development of CLT. This approach is based on CLT principles such as:

- Activities that involve real communication are essential for language learning; and
- Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning.

According to Skehan (1996), tasks are the activities which have meaning as their primary focus. The language teaching tasks bear resemblance to the real-life situations and its success is evaluated in terms of achievement of the outcomes. A task-based syllabus consists of various tasks carried out by learners. According to Nunan (1989), there can be two types of tasks: a) Real world tasks based on needs analysis of learners having tasks which could be faced by learners in the real world; and b) Pedagogical tasks having psychological base in second language acquisition research.

The following are the principles of TBLT approach:

- The main function of language is to convey meaning;
- It incorporates structural, functional and interactional models of language;
- Conversation is the key element in the process of language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2007);
- In carrying out tasks, meaning is important because it is the outcome in terms of tasks which are being assessed (Skehan, 1998).

In this approach, the learners are group participants, risk-takers and innovators. In TBLT, group work is more frequent as compared to other approaches. Here, the tasks are designed in such a way so that the learners can notice how the language is used in communication. They also assume the roles of risk-takers and innovators as several tasks require them to understand and produce messages for which they lack full linguistic resources (Richards & Rodgers, 2007).

2.2 Technology and Language Learning / Teaching

Today, it is difficult to find a language class that does not use some form of technology. In recent years, technology has been used to both assist and enhance language learning. For decades, technology has been influencing the language educators to find new ways to enrich their students and expand language-learning opportunities to everyone regardless of where they live. Technology continues to grow as an important tool to assist language teachers in facilitating and mediating language learning for their students.

According to Warschauer (2000), every type of language teaching has had some kind of technological support. For example, teachers who used grammar-translation method used blackboard for one-way transmission. Blackboard is considered as the most ubiquitous technologies in U.S. education which was later supported by overhead projector. At a later stage came computer softwares which provided "drill-and-practice" grammatical exercises. These were the forms of visual methods that played an important role in language teaching. On the other hand, audio-tapes provided audiolingual support to the teachers and learners. It was popular during 1970s and '80s in university language classes. Later in 1980s and 1990s, as mentioned earlier, a shift toward communicative language teaching was observed which gave importance to student engagement in authentic and meaningful interaction in which these audiotapes provided resource materials. A detailed view of the technological integration in language teaching is presented below.

2.2.1 CALL – Computer Assisted Language Learning

With the development and extensive use of language laboratories and authoring tools mentioned earlier, the concept of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was formed. The CALL has been a buzzword worldwide for language teachers for more than 45 years, as it offers the ability to capture the attention of learners and effectively engage them in language learning tasks.

CALL facilitates language learning process in the following ways:

- **Learning efficiency**: enables learners to pick up language knowledge or skills faster or with less effort;
- **Learning effectiveness**: enables to retain language or skills for longer period of time. It also makes deeper associations and/or learn more of what they require;
- **Access**: It facilitates learning by way of availability of materials, experience or interactions;
- **Convenience**: provides learners with an opportunity to study and practise with equal effectiveness across a wider range of times and places;
- **Motivation**: brings in more engagement of the learners in the language learning process;
- **Institutional efficiency**: reduces the time taken by teachers, learners require less teacher time. In turn, the institutions and teachers are able to meet the needs of more language learners with limited human resources (Hubbard, P. 2009).

Offering language teachers and learners with the above mentioned advantages, CALL has developed gradually through three phases i.e. Behavioristic CALL, Communicative CALL, and Integrative CALL (Barson & Debski, 1996). The three stages of CALL correspond to certain level of technology as well as a certain pedagogical approach in a specific time period which are explained below.

A. Behaviouristic CALL

The first phase of the CALL was conceived in the 1950. It was based on Behaviourist theories of learning and was implemented in 1960s and 1970s. This phase featured repetitive

language drills under the drill-and-practice method. The computers in this phase were viewed as mechanical tutors. They were used to expose learners to the same materials in repetitive manner and also to deliver instructional materials (Ahmad, et al., 1985).

Under this theory, CALL drills were offered to students with a view to give them repeated exposure to same materials for learning. Computers were used with the intentions of saving time and providing learning flexibility to the students. During the period of Behaviouristic CALL, tutoring systems were developed for the mainframe computers. Another independent system called PLATO was also developed during the same phase (Ahmad, Corbett, Rogers, & Sussex 1985).

Due to the emergence of microcomputers which provided new language learning possibilities to the learners in early 1980s, Behaviouristic CALL was replaced by Communicative CALL.

B. Communicative CALL

Communicative CALL emerged on the criticism levied on Behaviouristic CALL. Behaviouristic CALL was criticized for not offering enough authentic communication among learners and hence replaced with Communicative CALL. This phase of CALL brought in the scope of providing skill practice to learners, in a non-drill format. Communicative CALL developed programs on paced reading, text reconstruction, and language games. The communicative CALL recognized language learning as a creative process of discovery, expression, and development (Healey & Johnson 1995).

Communicative CALL (Underwood, 1984):

- focuses more on using forms rather than on the forms themselves;
- teaches grammar implicitly;
- allows and encourages students to generate original utterances;
- adjusts itself with a variety of student responses;

- avoids telling students that they are wrong;
- provides learners with a platform where they can use the target language in a natural manner;
- adds value to the knowledge share through books.

As stated earlier, during the phase of Communicative CALL, different CALL programs providing skill-practice in a non-drill format were developed. Some of the programs were on paced reading, text reconstruction and language games. In the Communicative CALL programs the computers were treated as "knower-of-the-right-answer" (Taylor & Perez 1989). It was an extension of the computer as a tutor model. The communicative CALL programs involved a fair amount of student choice, control, and interaction.

The computers, during this phase were put under three models, i.e. ‘computer as tutor’, ‘computer as stimulus’ and ‘computer as tool’ or ‘computer as workhorse’ (Taylor & Perez 1989; Brierley & Kemble 1991; Taylor 1980). Under the first model, the computers were used as medium to send instructions to the learners. The second model ‘computer as stimulus’ was employed to stimulate learners’ discussion, writing and critical thinking skills. And the third model ‘computer as tool’ was integrated into language learning to enable learners to understand and use language. Word processors, spelling and grammar checkers, desk-top publishing programs, and concordancers were used under this model. All of the above models worked in conjunction to each other.

Communicative CALL was criticized on the ground that computer was used in an ad hoc and disconnected manner, therefore it was not contributing to the language teaching process in an optimum manner (Kenning & Kenning 1990). The educators, who were against teaching of compartmentalized skills or structures and dissatisfied with the communicative CALL, sought ways to teach in a more integrative manner. This was a challenge for the

advocates of CALL and it gave them a reason to develop models for integrating various aspects of the language learning process. They were able to do so with the advancement in the computing technologies (Warschauer 1996).

C. Integrative CALL

With the advent of multimedia computers and the Internet, Integrative CALL emerged. The Integrative CALL emphasized real language use in a meaningful and authentic context. These two technologies allowed hyperlinking of existing resources such as text, graphics, sound, animation, and video, which proved to be quite useful in language learning. These hyperlinking strategies are better known as *hypermedia*.

Hypermedia offered the following facilities to language teachers and learners:

- **Creation of more authentic learning environment.** Listening was combined with viewing, just like in the real world
- **Integration of different skills.** Variety of multimedia media in the forms of text, graphics, sound, animation, and video made it possible to combine reading, writing, speaking and listening into a single activity
- **Greater control to learners.** The learners could get into the process of learning at their own pace. They were at liberty to practice skills which they considered important.
- **More focus on the contents.** The hypermedia enabled learners to have greater focus on specific contents without sacrificing secondary focus on language form or learning strategies (Warschauer 1996).

The emergence of Internet enabled language learners to communicate directly, inexpensively, and conveniently with other learners or speakers of the target language twenty-four hours a day, from school, work, or home (Warschauer 1996). With the help of

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), language learners could work and learn collaboratively wherein the use of sounds, graphics and video was very much possible, adding value to the process of language learning. Internet facilitated language learners to access authentic materials according to their areas of interests.

With the spread of Internet, the technologies that influenced the language learning process in a positive manner are:

a) Blogs

Blogs are defined as 'a website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer' (Merriam-Webster). It is an online journal which can be continuously updated by its users (Matheson, 2004). Blogs have been around for more than twenty years now. Blogs offer the facility to publish anything on the Internet very quickly. Nowadays blogs are considered a great aid in the development of interpretive and critical thinking skills.

a) **Wikis**

Wikis are defined as 'a website that allows visitors to make changes, contributions, or corrections' (Merriam-Webster). Wikipedia is the best example of a Wiki where anyone can create and edit a page about any person, place or event. Wikis are interactive webpages that allow students to read, generate, and publish content online in an environment of collaboration. The Wikis provide an open, user-friendly, and efficient interface for student interaction and collaboration (Cynthis & Joshua 2013). Wikis have been utilized extensively for teaching reading and writing to the learners of second language.

b) **Podcasts**

Podcasts are 'a digital audio or video file or recording, usually part of a themed series that can be downloaded from a website to a media player or computer' (Merriam-

Webster). Podcasts are audio files which are made available on the Internet. They provide an opportunity to the language teachers and learners to share their recordings with other learners via Internet. Podcasts offer a platform to present clearly articulated, authentic material automatically and regularly through computers.

d) Social Networks

Social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct and manage public or semi-public profiles, connect with other users of the service and establish conversations with their connections, online (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The social networking sites have been thriving with the millions of users for years now. Several educators have tried to explore the potential of the social networks for enhancing linguistic abilities of the students in an interactive manner. These networks have been fruitful in facilitating the interaction, communication, and collaboration among the students (Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009; Veletsianos).

2.3 Theoretical Considerations

The theoretical considerations governing this research are:

1) Blended Learning
2) Task-based Learning, and
3) Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

2.3.1 Blended Learning

Blended Learning occurs when a portion of traditional face-to-face instruction is replaced by web-based online learning. It is also called hybrid approach. This approach combines face to face classroom methods with computer-mediated activities to form an integrated instructional approach (Pennsylvania State University's Blended Learning Initiative, 2009; Bonk & Graham, 2006).

The concept of Blended Learning is comparatively new in educational settings. Prior to the emergence of the term, 'hybrid course' was often used in higher education. In education, both terms are used interchangeably.

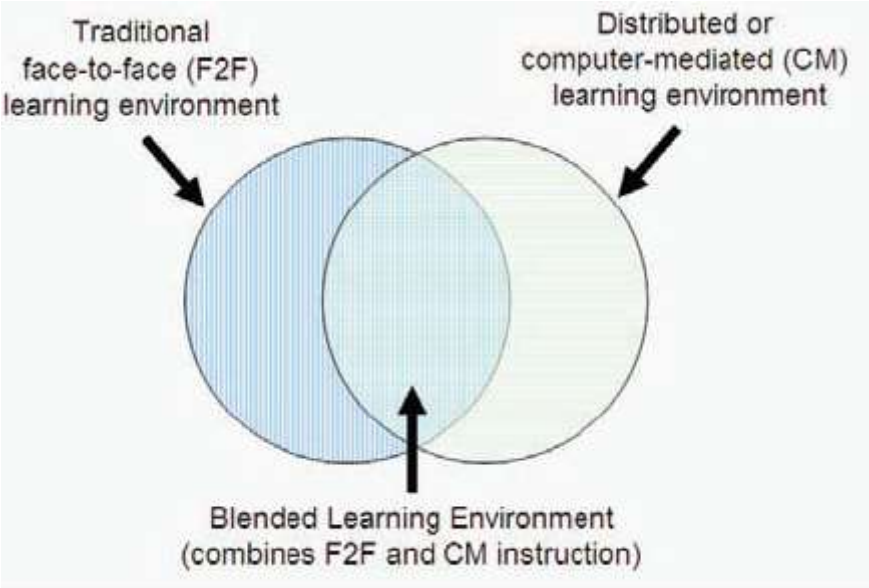

Figure 2.1 *Blended Learning*

As shown in figure 2.1, Blended Learning combines traditional face-to-face and computer mediated instruction which enables learners to receive dual treatment in the teaching-learning process.

It focuses on connecting the best aspects of face to face and online instructions. Inclusion of Blended Learning in an academic program helps learners and teachers get more time for interaction – inside and outside the classroom. In such a scenario, classroom time is utilized for detailed discussions while follow up activities are conducted online. Technological advances and widespread use of Internet has fostered rapid growth of Blended Learning approaches in education. This approach is adopted in several educational settings resulting in enhanced learner satisfaction and language output (Cheung and Hew, 2011).

2.3.1.1 Why Blended Learning?

There are several reasons why Blended Learning approach is used in educational settings. According to Graham, Allen, and Ure (2005) improved pedagogy, increased access, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness are the key reasons for widespread adoption of this approach. Each has been explained briefly.

- **Pedagogical improvement**

  Blending improves pedagogical practices. It fosters active learning strategies, peer-to-peer learning strategies and learner-centered strategies (Collis, Bruijstens & van der Veen, 2003; Hartman, Dziuban & Moskal, 1999; Smelser, 2002). Blending integrates formal classroom learning with informal workplace learning.

- **Accessibility and flexibility**

  Blending allows learners to access courses at any time and from anywhere. This results in continuous learning practices resulting into better performance.

- **Cost-effectiveness**

  Blended Learning is cost-effective in the sense that it enables the instructors to reach large learner base in a short time period.

The above mentioned characteristics often allow educators to choose to integrate Blended Learning in their teaching pattern. It helps them to deliver their thoughts and ideas clearly, enabling them to take advantage of the "best of both the worlds" (Young, 2002).

Blended Learning also effectively **facilitates online collaborative learning**. It enables learners to reflect on and evaluate their work in peer group and provide suggestions for improvement (Shih, 2010). It combines several delivery methods to provide the most efficient and effective teaching and learning experiences to learners. Bonk and Graham (2006) state 10 predictions on future of Blended Learning. They are:

- increased use of mobile devices
- greater use of visualization tools and hands-on learning
- increased learner input in the design of their own learning programs
- increased connectedness, community, and collaboration
- increased authenticity and on-demand learning
- stronger ties between work and learning
- need for calendaring system to change and to be more flexible
- programs to begin including Blended Learning course designations
- instructor roles to move increasingly toward being a mentor, coach, and counsellor
- emergence of Blended Learning specialist teaching certificates.

2.3.1.2 Blended Learning as Learning Technology

Blended Learning is viewed as a learning system that combines face-to-face instruction with technology mediated instruction (Bonk & Graham, 2006). The initial integration of Blended Learning in teaching-learning situations focused on the delivery aspect only and lesser efforts were made to design activities based on robust learning theories.

Today, Blended Learning is perceived in a different way. The focus now has shifted from delivery-centered technology to learning technology. This shift is coupled with pedagogical considerations. Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) and Graham (2006) suggested frameworks for Blended Learning that is useful in demonstrating the application of pedagogical approaches in deciding what is blended and what are the goals of blending. In addition to the combination of face-to-face and online instruction, they have also suggested four types and levels of mixing for Blended Learning. They are activity level blending, course-level blending, program-level and institutional-level blending. At the **activity level and course level blending**, Blended Learning can be used to design learning activities,

initiating interactions between learners, interaction between students and instructors, and interaction among instructors. **Program-level and institutional-level blending** are driven administratively and not much useful from the pedagogical point of view.

2.3.1.3 Blended Learning in the CSCL Environments

Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) is defined as 'a field centrally concerned with meaning and practices of meaning-making in the context of joint activity and the ways in which these practices are mediated through designed artifacts' (Koschmann, 2002).

The major elements of CSCL are computer support and collaborative learning. According to Koschmann, CSCL deals with collaborative-meaning making processes that go beyond information sharing among multiple people. It can play a vital role in building interactive learning environment by holding joint activities involving multiple users and with multiple modes of communication. Observing works of Clouder et al. (2006), Koschmann et al. (2003) and Suthers (2006), one can state that, CSCL Blended Learning is all about mediation of technology rather than being completely online or face-to-face.

A study by So, H.-J., & Bonk, C. J. intending to identify and predict roles of Blended Learning approaches in CSCL environments found that Blended Learning offers unique opportunities for international collaboration, knowledge construction, negotiation and project management. The findings of this Delphi method study indicated that Blended Learning has become an integral part of today's teaching and learning system. The instructors can help their learners grow in an international culture by enabling them to communicate within their classes as well as between classes around the world (So, H.-J., & Bonk, C. J. 2010).

It is important to note that CSCL does not aim to replace face-to-face interaction, but it intends to enhance interaction by providing more resources for communication and learning. Suthers (2006) has stated that if we try to replicate face-to-face interaction by using

online technology as a medium, we may not be able to achieve positive results due to the complexity of temporal and spatial factors associated with human interaction. Therefore, instead of replicating face-to-face types of interaction, the need is to design tasks and learning activities to make online interaction more fruitful. Supporting the importance of learning experiences which integrate online and face-to-face interaction, So (2009) stated that there was a need to design CSCL tools for supporting the effective integration of online and face to-face communication. This could help in retaining the critical discourse episodes in face-to-face discussions and developing them online.

2.3.1.4 Neumeier's Framework of Blended Learning

A commercially available learning management system (LMS) for an intermediate ESL listening and speaking class in an intensive English program was used by Grgurović which was proposed by Neumeier. The LMS was used to combine face-to-face classroom learning and online learning in the computer lab and for homework (CALL mode). The findings of the study suggested that all language skills were successfully integrated into both face-to-face classroom learning and online learning.

Neumeier's (2005) framework consists of six parameters: (a) mode, (b) model of integration, (c) distribution of learning content and objectives, (d) language teaching methods, (e) involvement of learning subjects (students, tutors, and teachers), and (f) location.

Mode: Neumeier (2005) opines that the two major modes in blended environments are face-to-face and CALL. The mode that guides learners and where they often spend most of their time is called the lead mode. Sequencing and negotiation of content is done in the lead mode.

***Model of integration*:** This is related to the optional nature of activities referring the combination of two modes of delivering lessons. For example, the face-to-face mode can

alternate with a CALL submode (such as message board) or the message board can be available throughout the course parallel to the other submodes.

***Distribution of learning content and objectives*:** The third parameter, distribution of learning content and objectives, can be implemented in two ways: parallel or isolated. In Parallel distribution, we can incorporate and practice certain language skill in both modes. Neumeier (2005) published a blended course called Jobline which prepares students to apply for a job in English. This course uses isolated distribution because speaking was only practiced in the face-to-face mode (Neumeier, 2005).

***Language teaching methods*:** The fourth parameter is Language teaching methods. The methods are influenced by online materials, the online tutor, and the face-to-face teacher. According to Neumeier (2005) the CALL mode is often considered a limitation in comparison to face-to-face teaching when it comes to the range of teaching methods. He advises to incorporate the communicative language teaching methods to counterbalance CALL mode limitations.

***Involvement of learning subjects (students, tutors, and teachers)*:** The fifth parameter, Involvement of learning subjects, refers to types of interaction that can take place in blended environment. There are two major interaction patterns, human-to-human and human-to-computer. The human-to-human pattern refers to the way human beings communicate with each other, while the human-to-computer interaction involves the study, planning, design and uses of the interaction between people (users) and computers. In addition to these two, there could be a number of variations like human-to-human through computer. The teachers and students assume new roles while engaging in Blended Learning. It enables teachers to become online tutors while students become autonomous learners.

***Location*:** The sixth parameter, location, refers to the physical space were learning takes place. Blended environment gives teachers and learners an opportunity to be free from

traditional locations such as classroom and home. New technologies such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets allow for learning to take place elsewhere.

2.3.1.5 Blended Learning, Language Teaching and ESL Classroom

Today, Blended Learning can be seen as one of the most important educational advances of this century in teaching-learning scenario (Thorne, 2003). Blended Learning is now seen as an answer to problems in higher education instruction (Hauck and Stickler, 2006) as this approach combines online learning with more traditional methods of learning and development (Thorne, 2003).

In language teaching, technology has brought in several variations which make language learning more fruitful for the learners. The key benefits of Blended Learning (BL) in ESL (Tomlinson and Whittaker, 2013) are:

A. BL provides massive comprehensible input to the learners in the forms of videos, podcasts and other multimedia without requiring teachers' continuous involvement

B. It enables the learners to access the support materials such as texts, pictures, videos, etc. for enhanced understanding of what is discussed by a teacher in the classroom.

C. It also empowers the teachers and learners by providing an ability to track learner performance at different levels for planning teaching-learning schedules as per the individual needs of the learners.

D. Finally, BL helps the learners achieve their individual goals and satisfy their learning needs by enabling the teachers to provide learners with learning activities designed to meet individual needs.

Research studies of two kinds investigate the use of Blended Learning. These types are comparison and non-comparison studies. In comparison studies, the aim is to examine the impact of Blended Learning by comparing the blended instruction (face-to-face together with CALL instruction) and traditional instructions (face-to-face without CALL instruction). In non-comparison studies, the Blended Learning program design and implementation of the program are examined. It also examines the student and teacher attitudes towards Blended Learning.

Grgurović (2011) used the comparison study method to evaluate the performance of an ESL class with Blended Learning. The subjects of Grgurović's study appreciated the blended approach. They expressed that working on online activities helped them with speaking English. They also stated that it helped them to improve their listening and English pronunciation.

In a review of research on Blended Learning, Bekele and Menchaca (2009) identified many studies that revealed positive influences of blended learning on student performance. Student participation and motivation, increased access and flexibility, cost-effectiveness and more active and deeper learning as compared to traditional classrooms.

2.3.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a communicative approach which dates back to the 1980s when Prabhu (1982) used it for teaching English to secondary school students in Bangalore under the Communicative Teaching Project. Unfortunately it did not achieve the expected results at that time but later, new stimulus brought TBLT approach to the fore of language teaching.

TBLT, an approach developed for language teaching is based on the completion of communicative 'tasks' for the purpose of language teaching at various levels. This approach is applied by putting forward a set of instructions for the students to '*get something done*'

while using the language (Benevides & Valvona 2008). Let us first understand what is meant by ‘tasks’.

Definitions of a ‘task’ help us to understand their characteristics:

> “an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language …A task usually requires the teachers to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task.” **(**Richards, Platt, and Weber. cited in Nunan, 2004)
>
> “by a task I mean an activity which involves the use of language but in which the focus is on the outcome of the activity rather than on the language used to achieve that outcome.” (Willis, 1990)
>
> “a task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form.” (Nunan 2006)

Considering all the above definitions, the key characteristics of tasks (Skehan, 1998) that emerge are:

- Meaning is primary
- Learners are not given other people’s meaning to regurgitate
- There is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities
- Task completion has some priority
- The assessment of the task is in terms of outcomes.

2.3.2.1 TBLT Sequencing

Task sequencing is a major issue in preparing a task-based syllabus (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Successful task sequencing leads language learners to communicate with limited resources, to know about the limitations of their knowledge of linguistic structures and to find ways to overcome those limitations (Salaberry, 2000). According to Skehan (1998), and Willis (1996), sequencing of tasks should be done by methodological task features like extent of communication, task difficulty and amount of planning allowed for a particular task. There is also an opinion that tasks should be sequenced according to developmental sequence of language acquisition.

Prabhu (1987) proposed a three-stage model for task sequencing:

a) Pre-task: In pre-task phase, the teacher gives a glimpse of what would be there in the task.

b) Task: In this phase, the students perform the task in pairs or groups, depending upon the requirements laid by the teacher.

c) Review: In review phase, the peer-feedback is encouraged to make the task-based language learning more fruitful. Also the teacher evaluates the tasks carried out by the students.

Based on Prabhu's model, Willis (1996) came out with the following three-stage TBLT framework:

1) Preparation for the task (pre-task)

   The teacher introduces the topic and task to students. It includes some ice-breakers to make students comfortable with the language learning environment.

2) The task itself (task-cycle)

This is the main task phase where students work together or individually on various language oriented tasks. Students initiate the tasks, plan their actions and report to the teacher in this stage. They are motivated to accomplish the language learning in the form of task accomplishment.

3) Follow-up or language focus (post-task)

In this stage the teacher analyzes the students' work and helps them enrich linguistic performance with a focus on accuracy.

2.3.2.2 Long's Model for TBLT

The present research work follows Long's task-based language teaching model which refers to form with main focus on involvement of meaning, structure and context of communication. It's sequence begins from task development to task implementation and to assessment.

The seven stages of Long's task-based language teaching model (Long, 1985, 1991, 2005):

1. Needs analysis to identify target tasks
2. Classification into target task types
3. Deriving pedagogic tasks
4. Sequencing to form a task-based syllabus
5. Implementing with appropriate methodology and pedagogy
6. Assessing with task-based, criterion-referenced, performance tests
7. Evaluating program.

In this model tasks are created based on the real world communication needs so that they help students leading them toward better communication (Long, 1985) in second language.

2.3.3 Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

In the year 1956 Benjamin Bloom developed taxonomy on educational objectives – known as 'Bloom's Taxonomy'. According to Bloom, learning fitted into one of the following three psychological domains (Churches, 2008):

- Cognitive – involves processing of information
- Affective – affects attitudes and feelings of the learners
- Psychomotor – refers to manipulative or physical skill.

Out of the above three domains, Bloom's Taxonomy focused on the Cognitive domain and the thinking process. This domain categorised learning and orders thinking skills and objectives. According to the taxonomy, a person cannot understand a concept without remembering it; and knowledge and concepts cannot be applied without understanding them. It is in continuum from Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). In his taxonomy, Bloom has described each category as a noun. Bloom arranged these categories in an increasing order, from lower order to higher order (Churches, 2008) as is represented below.

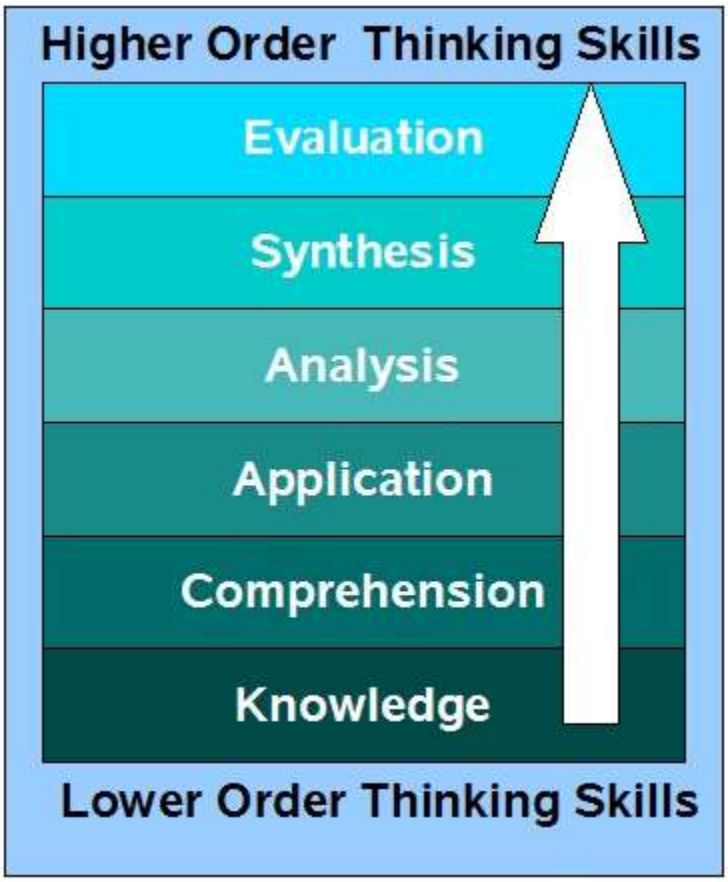

Figure 2.2 *Bloom's Taxonomy(1956)*

Definitions are provided for the six categories i.e. Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation. All categories were broken into sub-categories. They were ordered from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract.

This taxonomy was used to classify curricular objectives and test items for showing breadth or lack of breadth across various categories. It emphasized on recall of information in the knowledge category.

The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

In 2001, Lorin Anderson and D Krathwohl published the revised version of the Bloom's Taxonomy. The major change they incorporated in the revised taxonomy was the usage of verbs instead of nouns for describing the learning strategies. The also re-ordered the sequence within the taxonomy. As shown in the figure given below, the strategies were

arranged in increasing order, from lower order to higher order, having key verbs associated with it (Churches, 2008).

Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS)

- **Remembering** – *Recognising, listing, describing, identifying, retrieving, naming, locating, finding*
- **Understanding** – *Interpreting, Summarising, inferring, paraphrasing, classifying, comparing, explaining, exemplifying*
- **Applying** – *Implementing, carrying out, using, executing*
- **Analysing** – *Comparing, organising, deconstructing, Attributing, outlining, finding, structuring, integrating*
- **Evaluating** – *Checking, hypothesising, critiquing, Experimenting, judging, testing, Detecting, Monitoring*
- **Creating** – *designing, constructing, planning, producing, inventing, devising, making*

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

Figure 2.3 *Verbs associated with the thinking skills*

In Revised Taxonomy, the lowest-order level (Knowledge) replaced Remembering, where learners were asked to recall or remember information; Comprehension became Understanding, where learners were required to explain or describe concepts. Application became Applying, where learners used information in some new way, such as choosing, writing, or interpreting. Analysis became Analyzing, making the learners to demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

The following figure shows the arrangement of six learning strategies according to their importance in Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

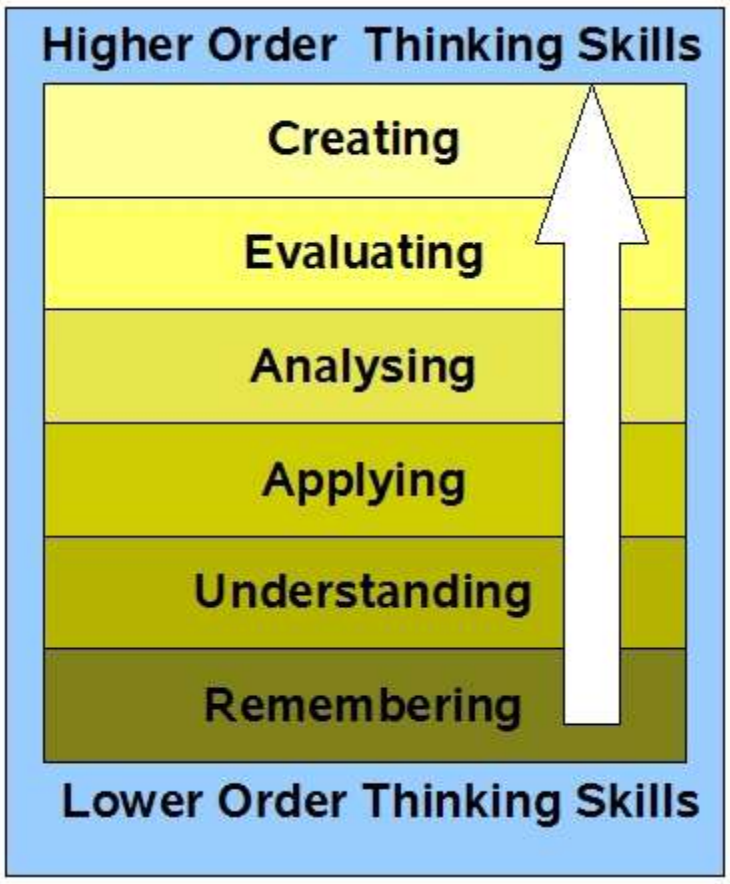

Figure 2.4 *Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (2001)*

According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), creativity is higher within the cognitive domain than evaluation, while remembering is given the least importance. In revised taxonomy the elements and actions conveyed by different verbs point to the activities and objectives undertaken in classroom practices. It defines six different levels of thinking. These levels are built in an increasing order according to their difficulty from basic skill like remembering to higher levels of critical thinking skills, leading to creating.

2.3.3.1 Two-dimensional Approach

The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy has a two-dimensional approach: Cognitive Process Dimension and Knowledge Dimension. Justifying these two dimensions, Anderson (1999) says:

> *The categories of the original taxonomy knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation -- were ordered along a single*

dimension. This dimension was conceived by the authors as a hierarchy of increasingly complex "student behaviours which represent the intended outcomes of the educational process" (Bloom et al., 1956, p. 12).Because the authors defined these intended behaviours in terms of "mental acts or thinking" (p. 12) we have chosen to use the phrase "cognitive processes" to refer to this dimension.

Here, the Cognitive Process Dimension leads to a continuum of increasing cognitive complexity – from remembering to creating. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) identified 19 specific cognitive processes for clarifying the bounds of the six categories.

Table 1. The cognitive processes dimension — categories, cognitive processes (and alternative names)

lower order thinking skills → higher order thinking skills

remember	understand	apply	analyze	evaluate	create
recognizing (identifying) recalling (retrieving)	interpreting (clarifying, paraphrasing, representing, translating) exemplifying (illustrating, instantiating) classifying (categorizing, subsuming) summarizing (abstracting, generalizing) inferring (concluding, extrapolating, interpolating, predicting) comparing (contrasting, mapping, matching) explaining (constructing models)	executing (carrying out) implementing (using)	differentiating (discriminating, distinguishing, focusing, selecting) organizing (finding coherence, integrating, outlining, parsing, structuring) attributing (deconstructing)	checking (coordinating, detecting, monitoring, testing) critiquing (judging)	generating (hypothesizing) planning (designing) producing (construct)

Figure 2.5 *Cognitive Processes Dimension by Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, pp. 67–68.*

The Knowledge Dimension represents concrete (factual) to abstract (metacognitive) knowledge encompassing the factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive dimensions. In this model, "*metacognitive* knowledge is knowledge of [one's own] cognition and about oneself in relation to various subject matters . . . " (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p. 44).

Table 2. The knowledge dimension — major types and subtypes

concrete knowledge → abstract knowledge

factual	conceptual	procedural	metacognitive
knowledge of terminology knowledge of specific details and elements	knowledge of classifications and categories knowledge of principles and generalizations knowledge of theories, models, and structures	knowledge of subject-specific skills and algorithms knowledge of subject-specific techniques and methods knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures	strategic knowledge knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge self-knowledge

Figure 2.6 *Knowledge Dimension by Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p. 46.*

The present research tries to integrate the taxonomy and ICT which is explained in the following section.

2.3.3.2 Revised Bloom's Taxonomy and ICT

In 2008, based on Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, Andrew Churches further developed a model called Bloom's Digital Taxonomy. In his revision, Churches (2008) added collaboration as a separate element to the revised taxonomy. Defending the ICT enabled version of Taxonomy, Churches says,

> *Collaboration is a 21st Century skill of increasing importance and one that is used throughout the learning process. In some taxonomic levels the collaboration verbs are included as an element of Bloom's Digital taxonomy and in others it is just a mechanism which can be used to facilitate higher order thinking and learning…*

In Bloom's Digital Taxonomy, collaborative tools such as wikis, classroom blogs, collaborative document tools, social networks, learning management systems are used for

teaching. Churches has associated various tasks to the verb elements defined by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) which are presented below.

- Remembering

  This strategy has been lined with digital actions such as bullet pointing, highlighting, bookmarking, social networking, performing an online search etc. wherein the students are associated with the ICT tools for enhancing their domain knowledge.

- Understanding

  Understanding helps students build their knowledge level. Different Internet-based activities can help them express and construct their knowledge. The digital additions to this level include advanced and boolean searching, blog journaling, categorising & tagging, commenting & annotating and subscribing.

- Applying

  The ICT-based tasks associated for the application strategy are running and operating, playing, uploading and sharing, hacking and editing which can be utilized as per the requirements of a subject taught.

- Analysing

  Activities such as mashing, linking, reverse-engineering and cracking can be used. Using these, the students get an opportunity to utilize their critical thinking skill for performing various kinds of data analysis.

- Evaluating

  The digital additions to the evaluation strategy are blogs commenting and reflecting, posting, moderating, collaborating and networking, validating etc. These activities help students put their evaluative skills into practice.

- Creating

  With this element of projecting creativity, Churches has associated activities such as programming, filming, animating, video casting, podcasting, directing and producing, publishing etc. These activities provide students with a global platform to showcase their creative genius.

2.3.3.3 Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, ICT and the Present Study

As advocated in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (2001), Higher Order Thinking Skills play a vital role in the overall language teaching-learning process. It leads students towards developing the ability to put their Critical Thinking skills in practice.

The present study uses the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (2001) and the ICT elements added by Churches (2008), in putting ICT-based tools into practice for developing expressional skills of the Management graduates. Internet-based communication and collaboration tools such as blogs, podcasting platforms, video sharing sites, social networking sites have been used for enabling the subjects perform various language learning tasks.

Based on the six learning strategies defined by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), the researcher devised different speaking and writing tasks which incorporates the elements of remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating.

With the application of the strategies defined in Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (2001) and its integration with the ICT tools, the researcher aims at developing critical thinking skills of students enabling them to improve upon their expressional skills with the help of the tools they are using in their day-to-day activities. The tasks developed for the studies aim at keeping them involved in the language learning process by way of using it for their communication in expressing their needs, opinions, knowledge, analytical suggestions and creative ideas.

A. Critical Thinking and Language Learning / Teaching

Critical Thinking refers to an individual's ability to think and make independent decisions. It aims at solving problems by gaining understanding and evaluating different perspectives.

According to Elder and Paul (1994), critical thinking refers to the ability of individuals to take charge of their own thinking and develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their own thinking. It is described as an ability to question, acknowledge and test previously held assumptions. It also helps learners examine, interpret, evaluate, reason, and reflect in the process of learning a language.

Paul & Elder have come out with the Paul-Elder framework of critical thinking (2009), according to which, Critical Thinking is:

- **Analysis of thinking** by focusing on the parts or structures of thinking ("the Elements of Thought")
- **Evaluation of thinking** by focusing on the quality ("the Universal Intellectual Standards")
- **Improvement of thinking** by using what you have learned ("the Intellectual Traits")

Critical Thinking is also known as *complex thinking* and higher-order thinking. According to Paul & Elder (2009), the ability to think critically calls for higher-order thinking skills. Critical Thinking is of high significance in language learning and teaching due to the following reasons:

- With Critical Thinking skills, language learners can take charge of their own thinking and monitor and evaluate their ways of learning more successfully.
- It expands the language learners' learning experience and makes language

more meaningful for them.

- It has high degree of correlation with learner' achievement. It means that learners can achieve better language improvement results.

Various studies have mentioned the role of Critical Thinking in students' writing ability, language proficiency and oral communication abilities (Kusaka & Robertson, 2006). As language development and thinking are closely connected, teaching of higher-order thinking skills can result into successful language learning. Thus several educators have stressed the importance of developing higher-order thinking skills in language classrooms (Chamot, 1995; Tarvin & Al-Arishi, 1991).

According to Mahyuddin et al (2004) language learners who have developed Critical Thinking skills are capable of carry out various learning activities as compared to the students are not trained in Critical Thinking. The learners with Critical Thinking ability are capable of thinking critically and creatively for achieving the curriculum goals; solving problems and making decisions; understanding language and its contents; and treating thinking skills as lifelong learning.

Keeping such advantages of Critical Thinking in the forefront of education, Brown (2004) has opined that in an ideal language teaching classroom, the objectives of curriculum should focus on Critical Thinking development along with the target language.

Importance of Critical Thinking in Managers

Since the job of a manager or a leader is to make effective and timely decisions, Critical Thinking skills enable them to do it with more precision. It leads to effective communication and problem solving abilities and a commitment to overcome egocentrism and sociocentrism. According to Islam and Regan (2015), following are the benefits of effective Critical Thinking skills which applies to the 21st century leaders and managers.

- Critical Thinking **enhances language and presentation skills** which are of utmost important to the managers who are supposed to lead, instruct and advise people. While learning how to improve logical structure of various texts, Critical Thinking helps in improving comprehension too;
- It **promotes creativity** as Critical thinking plays an important role in evaluating new ideas, modifying if necessary and selecting the best ones;
- Critical Thinking **leads to self-evaluation and self-awareness** by giving an opportunity to justify on and reflect on values and decisions. Self-awareness is promoted by enabling them understand their own perspectives and help them compare the perspectives of others; With Critical Thinking, one of the crucial learning developments is an awareness of differing approaches to a problem, alongside an ability to assess those approaches critically.
- It also **enhances communication skills** by teaching managers to analyse and build their own evidence for any given premise. With Critical Thinking skills, they become more effective communicators and are able to convey thoughts convincingly;
- It also **transforms decision-making abilities** since this skill fosters application of analytical skills.

Apart from these, According to Paul & Elder (2008), a well-cultivated critical thinker can:

- raise vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely;
- gather and assesse relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively;
- derive well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;

- think open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- communicate effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

2.4 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English Language Teaching / Learning

Technology is being utilized for language learning and teaching for more than fifty years now. The first computers used for language learning were large mainframe computers of 1950s (Beatty, 2003). Today, various gadgets including desktops, laptops, tablets and mobiles are exploited in an intensive manner for language learning and teaching. The advent of internet has made the language learning and teaching process easier and more productive. Several special language teaching tools are available for the language educators and learners. In recent times, 'everyday language is so tied to technology that learning language through technology has become a fact of life with important implications for applied linguists, particularly for those concerned with facets of second language acquisition' (Chapelle, 2001, p. 1). ICT brings enormous opportunities to increase the effectiveness of language learning and teaching. Incorporation of well-organized and effective technology into language learning and teaching helps learners improve their language and enhance motivation for learning.

Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (2003) proposed the following attributes on the influence of technology in language learning:

A. Interaction, Communicative Activities, and Real Audiences

The inclusion of technology in the language teaching process boosts interaction among learners. As learners get connected through the Internet, they are exposed to

multicultural and real life experiences of learning a language in different contexts. Technology enables teachers to provide learners a dynamic and meaningful experience to enhance their language (Lin, 2009, p.2).

In addition to the traditional ICT tools, blogs, podcasts, webcasts, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook have been playing a pivotal role in helping language educators cater to the needs of their learners. The key advantage offered by these technologies is the connectivity with the real world audience where the process of communication and feedback retrieval is possible. And as today's young learners are keen to be an integral part of the constantly emerging technologies, the process of involving them into the learning process becomes easy.

B. Comprehensible Input

'Comprehensible input' coined by Krashen (1987) refers to the language input that can be understood by listeners despite them not understanding all the words and structures in it. It is described as one level above that of learners if it can only just be understood. Giving learners this kind of input helps them acquire language naturally, rather than learn it consciously. By way of comprehensible input, computers employ a "multi-sensory collection of text, sound, pictures, video, animation, and hypermedia to provide meaningful contexts to facilitate comprehension" (Butler-Pascoe, 1997, p. 20). The comprehensible input strengthens learners' language learning through facilitation of interactivity. It brings in an element of dynamism in the course of language learning. In this manner, ICT can provide learners with real-life and latest inputs which generate communication among them and make the language teaching effective.

C. Task-based and Problem-solving Activities

Task-based learning offers advantage of greater interactivity among learners which results into better output in terms of language learning. When learners are engaged in task-based learning, they develop problem-solving abilities while working on different activities.

The learners having basic knowledge of computing devices could be easily engaged in various Internet task-based language learning activities. For example, students engaged in creating a blog related to effective communication and writing articles for the blog, develop motivation towards language learning and also develop problem solving abilities working with new tools for blogging.

D. Focused Development of English Language Skills

A well-planned and designed language learning class provides language learners with an opportunity to practice, develop and improve their receptive and productive skills (Butler-Pascoe, 2003) resulting into all-round development of their language skills. This can be achieved by engaging learners through different Internet technologies such as Wikis, Moodle, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Blogs, Podcasts, Skype and Second life etc. These technologies provide varied features which can be employed with a focus on specific skill development of learners. For example, Twitter's 140-character tweets can be creatively utilized by teachers to help them read and write better. Similarly, when they are asked to create a podcast, they are expected to express their views, opinions or ideas in a limited time frame which makes them become specific in their expressions.

E. Multiple Modalities to Support Various Learning Styles and Strategies

Technology-based multimedia tools are useful in addressing learners' diverse learning styles. These tools enable teachers to address the needs of language learners having different levels and learning styles. According to Lin (2009), technical modalities such as learner-centered and teacher-centered; covert and overt; deductive and inductive; fluency-focused and accuracy-focused; and form-based and meaning-based help teachers in fulfilling learners' needs and improve their motivation and willingness to learn a language.

F. Affective Needs of Students

One of the reasons for ESL learners' poor performance in language is lack of exposure for practicing their language skills. They seldom get a chance to speak in English language and it weakens their self-confidence to use language. To resolve such issues, educators can incorporate web-based communication tools such as Skype and Podcasting. These tools have proved to be quite effective for improving learners' confidence and in lowering their anxiety. These tools help learners socialize for English speaking environments and play a vital role in enabling them improve their communication skills by putting them in virtual communication environments.

The above attributes by Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (2003) prove the need and effectiveness of incorporating technology in English language teaching environments. If successfully and carefully integrated, it could bring positive results in terms of effective language learning.

Though, initially the introduction of Internet and other technologies in language teaching was a controversial issue, most educators now agree on its positive impact on the process of language teaching. Integration of technology in the process of language teaching allows:

i) Quick and easy adaptation of teaching materials according to learner's needs and responses;

ii) Access to events and news from around the world as they happen. Creating opportunities to utilize different authentic materials for language teaching;

iii) Possibility of receiving quick feedback;

iv) Combining text, images, audio and video facilitates learner involvement in the teaching-learning process;

v) Focus on specific skills like listening or speaking could be emphasized with various types of ICT resources (Houcine, 2011).

Observing the above impacts of technological tools, they are used by language learners to learn effectively.

Grey (1999) has presented four ways in which Internet can function as an educational tool. In other words four basic ways in which Internet can be used in ESL/EFL classrooms.

1) Search for and receive

The 'Search for and receive' activity encourages learners to use the Internet as a 'huge virtual library'. Learners are supposed to search and access various kinds of information from the Internet, which enables them to review different kinds of contents and compare and contrast similar kind of resources. It can play a vital role in developing critical thinking ability among learners.

2) Publish and provide

The 'Publish and provide' technique involves learners in the process of online publishing activities. Here, learners interact with the publication of different kinds of information on web pages, where information is stored on and accessed over the Internet.

3) Talk to and reply

In these conversational activities learners are involved in the process of communication that takes place via the Internet through email correspondence and chats. These days, there is an addition of social media to these activities which makes the conversations more interesting and lively.

4) Collaborate and learn

This activity enables learners to participate in joint projects that involve students in two or more classrooms which are physically separated. In the post 2010 era, technologies such as Google Drive have enabled larger level of collaboration in the teaching-learning process.

The Internet and other ICT technologies have brought in an increased emphasis on strengthening students' learning initiative adopting a "student-centred" teaching concept in language teaching. This aspect of technology has motivated language educators to explore effective and appropriate teaching models both in theory and practice (Lu Z, Hou L & Huang X, 2010).

2.4.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Using ICT

Despite the challenges in accessibility of ICT tools and in its implementation in the educational activities, teachers have been using Computers, Internet and Web 2.0 tools in their classrooms. There are advantages as well as disadvantages of integrating such tools in language teaching and learning. McLuhan (2012) has presented eight **advantages of using the Internet** for language teaching which are explained below:

1) Access

   The Internet offers opportunity to learn and practice language from anywhere in the world saving time and energy. Internet-based communication tools like IMs, blogs, social networks could be used optimally for productive language learning results.

2) Flexibility

   In addition to learning from anywhere, Internet also enables learners to access learning resources at any time irrespective of the differential time zones. Accessing

language learning materials at any point of time via an Internet connected device saves learners' time and energy giving them liberty to work at their own pace.

3) Response

Feedback plays crucial role in any kind of learning. Exercises undertaken over the Internet provide instant feedback to the language learners. This makes the process of learning interactive and faster.

4) Repeatability

While using ICT tools for language learning, learners get flexibility to repeat the encounter of language in various forms trying to achieve excellence.

5) Durability

Technology does not take breaks unless there is a power shortage or the applications cannot be used due to some technical reasons etc., and offers the freedom of utilizing it at any point of time. There are several online tutoring platforms where tutors from one country are tutoring to the learners of foreign countries for several years.

6) Modality

Internet and other technologies associated with it have proved to be multi modal learning tools which are providing stimulus to the process of successful language acquisition.

7) Specificity

Technology offers learners with a choice of learning process and medium. In some cases learners can choose tasks of their choice and they can work with their partners for enhanced language learning. And learning can be tailored according to language learner's capacity and needs.

8) Cost

The dynamicity of web enables learners to access learning materials free of cost and 'pay as you can' manners. This has created the possibility of involvement of all kinds of learners in the Internet-based learning processes.

Looking at the other side of the coin, we also find certain **disadvantages** of the application of technology in language teaching.

1) Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a growing concern among language educators as it hinders the learners' creativity and their sincerity in the process of language learning.

2) Hacking

Hacking has been a growing problem for the whole world and language educators are also not spared. The softwares and services used by the teachers could be illegally accessed by third party and can be tampered by them.

3) Translation softwares

The availability of free translation tools from Google and other companies has made today's language learners reluctant when it comes to doing things on one's own. The technology savvy learners use these softwares for linguistic production and miss a chance to empower their language.

4) Professional writing services

Taking advantage of the growing awareness for the acts of plagiarism, several professional writing services have come up on the web nowadays. They pose a real threat to the process of language teaching and learning as it is difficult for most educators to justify whether a piece is written by their student or by some professional writer.

2.4.2 Challenges Faced While Using ICT

Introduction of any technology in the classroom cannot take place randomly and arbitrarily. According to Jones & Sato (1998) the questions that need to be considered while integrating technology in any classroom are:

- Does technology facilitate attainment of course goals?
- Is it cost effective? Do the benefits outweigh its cost?
- Are teachers ready to work with the new technology? Is any training required?
- Does technology help teachers make more efficient use of class time? (Jones & Sato, 1998, as cited by Richards & Rinandya, 2002:361)

When planning to integrate technological tools in language classrooms, the teachers should prepare themselves by remaining informed on the utilization of such tools and the impact of its applications.

In addition to the conceptual barriers the teachers also face technical challenges in applying new technologies for language teaching. Some of the common issues faced by them are:

a) Infrastructural and logistical problems

In most of the developing and developed countries power shortage and slow internet connectivity is a major issue. These problems could result into frustration on the part of the learners and the teachers as well. Many times problems in Wi-Fi connectivity are observed. Organizations like Google have been proactively trying to help citizens by offering free Internet services to but it is impossible to extend these services to everyone.

b) Restricted access to certain resources

Due to political issues and other intra-national and international problems, sometimes teachers fail to make their learners access the resources they wish. In language teaching, authentic materials play an important role and when such contents are unavailable, learners miss a chance to enhance their knowledge and improve on their language.

c) Ban on tools and contents

With the advent of social networking sites, the notion of interaction fosters all kinds of language teaching / learning set ups. Sites like Facebook, Twitter and Google+ are being used by language teachers in an extensive manner. When such sites are banned due to some reasons, the teachers find it difficult to provide required exposure to their students.

2.4.3 ICT and Receptive Skills

Today students have developed an inclination towards using technology and various communication tools that are available globally. Constant use of such gadgets and resources enables them to improve their skills of reading and analyzing information. Even the use of ICT tools such as computers, Internet and mobile apps has gained wide momentum among researchers and teachers for teaching reading and listening skills in different contexts and settings.

Birmingham and Davies (2001), investigated the ways in which secondary school students and their teachers use ‘Kar2ouche’, a storyboard tool that enables the user to create, capture, store, retrieve and interact with a range of images and texts. The findings of this study showed that use of this tool encouraged students to explore the subtexts of a complex play like Macbeth to gain a deeper understanding of plot, mood, atmosphere and character motivation.

According to Sherman, Kleiman & Peterson (2007) the following ICT capabilities help learners for effective reading:

- Availability of information and activities
- Assessment of their work
- Feedback
- Availability of guide to word pronunciation and definitions.

One can also observe the following benefits of ICT for developing listening skills:

- Audio and video platforms enable learners to comprehend information in an easy manner
- Learners are exposed to different cultures while learning;
- Learning of pronunciation and accent becomes simpler;
- Availability of podcasts and webcasts over the Internet enables learners to practice and sharpen their listening skills.

2.4.4 ICT and Productive Skills

ICT has influenced teaching of writing and speaking skills in various forms. Use of technology in language teaching fosters verbal interaction, vocabulary development in general helping learners to perform well when it comes to writing and speaking. Web-based instructions for writing courses have proved to be important factors in enhancing the quality of writing among students of various levels (Ybarra & Green 2003).

Web-based lessons, when added as a supplement to traditional in-class writing instructions, bring more effect than teaching with textbook alone (Al-Jarf 2004). In addition to word processors, blogs have proved to be a dynamic resource for developing students writing skills. Blogging provides a real-world digital medium for communication to the

students where they can practice their writing skills. Blogging is a multi-dimensional task which offers the possibility of reaching out wide audiences (Kelly & Safford, 2009).

As far as speaking skills are concerned, computer simulations incorporating synchronous chat functions motivate language learners to participate in interactive exercises. Such a tool can be utilized with learners who are shy and intimidated by face to face interactions (Ranalli, 2008; Freiermuth, 2002). The computer assisted language learning promotes collaborative learner-centred knowledge construction. It provides a comfortable environment for interaction as compared to traditional classroom instruction and discussion set ups (Warschauer, 1996).

In an experimental study Breese (1996) investigated the effects offering graduate students with unlimited access to word processors for their writing tasks over a period of two years. They were given laptops to use for all their writing activities in English lessons. Their narrative writing samples were compared with samples from a parallel class that used hand writing methods. Results indicated that students using word processors produced better quality writing than children using pen and paper.

Deadman (1997) in his work ‘An analysis of pupils' reflective writing within a hypermedia framework’, a study of 24 secondary school students in London, explored how reflective writing supported students’ learning. The study compared the analysis of writings which was produced with the support from teacher viz a viz the writings which was produced with the support from teacher and a hypermedia framework. The analysis of the writing samples showed improvement in students' ability to write with reasoning when they were supported by a hypermedia reflective writing framework.

Barrera, Rule and Diemart (2001) examined the effects of computers on writing competency compared to writing by hand. Under this study, over 750 writing samples, distributed between computer and handwriting conditions, were analyzed using repeated

measures analyses of variance. Their study found that when students used computers to practice writing, they performed better than those students who did not use computers. This showed that the use of computers brought greater writing competence compared to the group which did not use computers for their writing tasks.

Fan et al. (2001) examined a constructivist approach to writing using the computer and a multimedia environment. The study carried out two experiments. The first group involved 20 randomly selected students. After a pre-test, they were given 6 weeks to create a multimedia writing project. After finishing the project, they wrote their post-test essay. The results of this experiment showed that there was a significant improvement in students' writing ability after participation in the multimedia writing project. The second group was made up of 47 students. They were divided into two further groups, control group and experimental group. The group under experimental research, worked on their multimedia projects for six weeks. The control group worked on a writing workshop which required them to complete two writing assessments by the end of the grading period. All students wrote the pre-test and post-test essays. The results of this experiment showed that there was no significant difference between the writing of the experimental group and the control group. The researchers noted that students, who were assigned the multimedia project, completed much of the work in the form of graphics and audio, not text.

By presenting this research work, Fan et al. opines that having technology in the classroom alone is not the answer to student problems. One needs to thoughtfully consider the use of technology. Instead of just using technological tools to teach a language, one should consider the value-addedness aspects of using particular technologies and use them effectively.

2.4.5 ICT and Internet-based Tools

The application of ICT and Internet-based tools in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has been quite influential in the language teaching methodologies. Today's language teachers are putting in great deal of efforts with an intention to strengthen learners' learning initiatives and to adopt a "student-centred" concept in their academic activities (Lu et al., 2010). They examined the feasibility of the student-centred teaching model utilised in an English audio-video speaking class (EAVSC) in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) environments. They carried out two quantitative longitudinal case studies. Analysis of correlated data shows that this specific teaching model in general is both plausible and effective in improving students' communicative language abilities, especially in their speaking abilities. The findings of this research suggest that Internet-based tools function as an intermediate medium between the teacher and the students and help them communicate in a better manner.

There has been a significant change when it comes to teaching language and communication in today's colleges that offer professional courses in Engineering, Management and Medical Sciences. There have been a range of reforms in terms of the teaching methodologies and the teacher-learner interaction. Internet has been exploited extensively to make the learning process more interactive. The focus is on putting in extra efforts to help learners enhance their reading, listening, speaking and writing abilities. Teachers are more conscious about improving their students' communicative language ability (CLA).

The use of ICT is critical to supplement the traditional mode of education. Even today, in several universities of India, English Language and Communication are taught in the traditional mode (Jain M, 2012). The addition and proper utilization of ICT can enable

teachers to make the teaching-learning process more interactive, interesting and fruitful for the learners. According to Jain M (2012):

> The use of ICT in teaching English literature and language can revolutionize the way the subject is seen, taught and thought of. The role of the teacher is of immense importance in the teaching of literature but ICT can enhance the teaching by doing away with boredom and making the students interested in what is being taught. It can motivate and keep the students engaged because ICT tools work at different levels – the students can have an opportunity to see, read, visualize, hear, ponder, discuss, interact and learn. This can be achieved through various means involving ICT.

The effective use of ICT can enable teachers to bring variations in teaching and to enable students to keep the text in their minds. In the teaching of English, a combination of the interactive and communicative mode of teaching, involving ICT tools can go a long way to make the teaching and learning of English interesting.

ICT, Internet-based Tools & Platforms for Developing and Imparting Internet and Computer-based Tasks

From MS Office to Google Docs and Yahoo Messenger to Skype, with the passing of time, several technologies have come into existence offering an advantage of effective data management and communication. The emergence of web 2.0 has brought about several new platforms which can be integrated into language teaching procedures. Such tools make the process of task development and deliver easy for the researchers and because of their wider availability; students are able to use them irrespective of their geographical location. Some such tools which can be used are given below.

A. Blogs

The Internet blogs have emerged as a new communication and publication medium. Blogs are easy to create websites which are also referred as online diaries. Blogs have been

around for almost 20 years now and have gained popularity as an easy to use publication tool. Blogs can be updated by its users at any time and they offer a greater level of flexibility by allowing communication between the blogger and the visitors in the form of comments. They have changed the way information is shared among the people. Blogging is an easy task and it offers an exciting way to share individual opinions and ideas with others. It also facilitates safe and open interaction over the Internet.

Blogging supplements face-to-face interactions and extends a classroom beyond the four walls. Connecting the teacher and student enables them to raise and clarify doubts and stay involved into a continuous learning process. The applications of blogs in language classrooms have helped language teachers to enable their students to achieve higher level of communicative competence along with a better grip on reading writing skills. (Williams & Jacobs 2004; Stanley 2006; Pinkman 2005; Blackstone, B., Spirit, J. & Maganuma, N. 2007)

In the words of Stanley (2006):

> "(Blogs are) a way of opening up the classroom walls and showing the wider world what is happening...thus creating a small language learning community".

In the language learning process, blogs can be used as a collaborative tool for student groups. Language instructors can use them as a medium for delivering news, messages, resources, encouraging discussion, and giving feedback and comments. In education, there are three primary uses of blogs (Weller, Pegler & Mason, 2005):

a) Group blogs

Group blogs are various blogging communities set up around specific subject areas. Such online blogging communities allow members to post articles, videos; views and comments by visitors initiate healthy discussion. The group blogs can be

set up for specific groups of students or it can be a general resource for anyone who is interested in accessing the blog contents.

b) Academics keeping blogs

Several academicians maintain their personal academic blogs for several reasons. Firstly, blogs offer immediate publishing environment and saves time. Secondly, academicians who are established in their areas have something to say and they can reach a wider audience easily. Lastly, blogs offer advantage of connecting people with similar background and create an online discussion board.

c) Students using blogs

The most prolific use of the blogging environment is where students set up their blogs and share their learnings and readings. With the emergence of portfolio assessment, blogs have been utilized by students and educators for continuous assessment. Students, who keep blogging at the same place, gain a competitive edge by showcasing the improvement in their subject over the years. Blogs could also be used by students as collaborative tool where students working on a joint project can use the blog as a medium to share their progress.

Blogging enhances the responsibility and ownership of a writer and facilitates self-expression and self-empowerment (Oravec, 2003; Pinkman, 2005; Blood, 2002). It also encourages student participation in the activities like reading and writing (Godwin-Jones, 2006).

The core advantages of using blogs for language teaching:

- The blogging communities offer easy access to everyone. For example, if there are student blogs from a specific class, all students would have access to all the blogs which are created by their peers (Murray, 2007)

- Blogging activities involve learners by focusing on curriculum, active learning, student engagement, and student responsibility (Darabi, 2006)
- Blogging is a communicative and interactive process where participants / visitors have multiple roles of readers / reviewers (Pinkman, 2005)
- Blogging gives learners with an opportunity to get maximum exposure to language in new situations, peer collaboration, and enables them to stay in contact with experts (Dieu, 2004)
- In classroom blogs, students are required to communicate with their peers which leads to language competence
- Linking to the original contents and reference, materials from blogs enable students to access multiple resources for the learning process (Blood, 2002)
- Blogs provide learners with real audience. It creates an opportunity for peer review and a range of process-based writing tasks that learners enjoy doing (Raith, 2009; Ward, 2004)
- Blogging facilitates students with instantaneous access and exchange of ideas. Finally this leads to the activity of peer-reviews and facilitates effective language learning.

As stated earlier, lively interactions via blogging gives language learners an opportunity to express themselves and improve their ability to write and speak better. In addition, blogging also enables them to achieve higher range of cognitive and social learning outcomes, and helps them in developing reflective learning strategies. (Birch & Volkov, 2007; Hourigan & Murray, 2010; Tan, Ladyshewsky & Gardner, 2010) According to Alm (2009), the act of blogging provides learners with personal space and encourages them to interact with others.

In 2004, Ward ran a blogging project for a reading/writing class at the American University of Sharjah. The project helped learners improve their language competence. Majority of the project participants expressed that the blogging helped them to learn better. According to Ward, the use of blogs helped him increase student interest in reading and writing.

Forster and Tam (2004) have also noted the positive impact of incorporating blogging in teaching MBA students to develop business language and communication skills.

But, there is also an argument regarding insufficient evidence about the improvement in learning outcome due to blogging. It creates a need for comprehensive and longitudinal studies on the impact of blogging on language learning (Tse, Yuen, Loh, Lam & Ng, 2010; Farmer, Yue & Brooks, 2008).

B. Podcasts

In recent years, popularity of Internet-based audio content has increased greatly (McCarty, 2005). The audio files hosted on the Internet are called 'Podcasts' which can be accessed using computer, microphone, and a software program, using smartphones and tablets. The podcasts have gained wide popularity because of their simplicity in creating, editing, publishing and listening to them (Ducate, L. & Lomicka, L. 2009).

Podcasts help language learners improve their speaking, listening and organizational skills. Podcasting has been incorporated in language classrooms in the forms of tasks such as presentations, interviews and group discussions where there is a scope for peer-feedback and interaction among the teachers and students.

The following are the key advantages of integrating podcasts in language education:

- Podcasts can help the students access the missed information during a specific lecture. Educators can use the podcast to distribute the missed information (Tavales & Skevoulis, 2006)

- Podcasting gives students an opportunity to be creative by creating and publishing audio contents for real audience (Stanley, 2006)
- It also supports easy and quick distribution recorded lectures, meetings and conference note to support learning (Meng, 2005)
- While creating podcasts, students get an opportunity to listen to themselves and edit their output, re-record and compare various versions of the same recording. It can lead to development of effective speaking skills (Swain and Lapkin, 1995)
- Like blogs, podcasts can also be shared with peers and effective peer feedback can give students room for language improvement (Meng, 2005; Lord, 2008)

In addition to the above advantages, the other benefits audio tools bring into a language classroom are the following (Durbridge, 1984):

> responding to sound, e.g., understanding spoken language, analysing music, hearing the professor's voice; listening in on conversations, perhaps about some part of their courses; being 'talked through' tasks in the lab or workshop, even on the computer; hearing facts, discussions and opinions from experts in their field; being encouraged by the voice of somebody they know and respect.

Keeping the above facts in mind, teachers can use podcasts to teach pronunciation, listening, and speaking skills in the language classrooms. Furthermore, podcasts can also be used in the forms of audio diaries, conducting peer interviews or of native speakers and for hosting mock talk shows (McQuillan, 2006).

Podcasts recorded with native speakers, when used to practice listening, with a focus on pronunciation, grammar and intonation, revealed interesting results in the form of improved language of the students (Tavales and Skevoulis, 2006).

C. Online Video Platforms

Videos are an integral part of language classrooms worldwide. They provide authentic learning environment to students, helping them improve speaking and listening skills simultaneously. With the emergence of Internet and web-based video sharing platforms like YouTube, the use of video in English language classes has grown rapidly. As video can be used to teach several language functions in real life manner and also for sharing authentic information, it is liked by both the teachers and the students. Video contents provide students exposure to real-life situations an opportunities to learn effectively; it also allows the non-native speakers to practice language authentically.

Similar to podcasts, videos offer lively inputs in the language learning process. User-generated contents from the sites like YouTube have been highly popular and are being utilized by educators from around the globe to help their students gain competitive edge and learn elements such as language functions, non-verbal communication and advanced presentations skills.

Video, when used in a language classroom, brings in the following advantages:

- It provides authentic language input (Katchen, 2002)
- It can easily be used to teach various language functions
- Repetition of information is possible for effective learning outcomes
- Students can concentrate on the nuances of language and interpret what is being said, repeated and predict the reply.
- They can observe facial expression, dress, gesture, posture and adopt various cultural elements.

Keeping the above mentioned advantages in mind, one should carefully note what Bull G. and Bell L. (2009) have to state:

> Youth contribute the majority of posts on YouTube. The 10,000 hours per day posted on YouTube are the equivalent of 400 continually broadcasting channels. They are posted in the form of 200,000 three-minute videos intended for an audience of 100 or fewer viewers in most instances. The shift from analog to digital video transformed the system from a unidirectional analog broadcast to a two-way conversation, resulting in the birth of participatory media.

Through the online video platforms such as YouTube accessibility of video contents has improved and helped teachers and students to use video resources in everyday language learning situations.

D. Instant Messaging (IM) Apps and Social Networks

Klapper notes on Computer-Mediated Communication in language learning (CMC):

> Perhaps the most exciting application of the web in language learning is its capacity for bringing together students and native speakers (Klapper, 2006, p. 191).

Web-based instructional learning has received momentum with the emergence of instant messaging applications such as Yahoo! Messenger, Google Talk, Skype etc. The earlier versions of these applications were text-based but with the advancement of technology video and audio interactions are now possible. These tools are being used by the language teachers in the form of tutoring tools to provide learners with "distant, interactive, and individualised learning activities" (Miller & Miller, 2000; Roblyer & Doering, 2010).

IM is synchronous computer-mediated-communication conducted through writing on the Internet. In IM, two persons from distant places can communicate to each other on the Internet by sending each other texts. It is now also possible to chat in three forms, i.e. text, audio and video.

For language learners, IMs are an effective set of tools because they own the properties of both spoken and written language (Segerstad, 2001). The electronic exchange between two persons can help them interact and simultaneously enhance their language competence by involving them in knowledge-sharing and knowledge-building activities (Crystal, 2001).

The introduction of social networks has made the CMC more prolific. One of the Facebook screenshots below shows the different kinds of English language learning communities which are available to provide live communication between the educators and language learners in the form of text, audio and video messages.

Figure 2.7 *ELT Groups on Facebook*

Introduction of such groups is responsible for the emergence of online Personal Learning Networks (PLN) which enables language learners to collaborate with language educators both locally and internationally resulting in opportunities to enhance their skills.

Social networking sites like Facebook, Google+ and Twitter have contributed a great stake in the process of language teaching. These networks allow teachers and students stay connected at any time and keep the thread of learning alive. Major social networks support the features such as pages, groups and communities which help the learners to develop their linguistic abilities by interacting with different people simultaneously enhancing their intercultural competence.

Various studies conducted by Fernández-García and Martínez-Arbelaiz (2002), Oskoz (2004) and Smith (2003) observing the quality and quantity of language produced by learners in CMC environments have shown evidences of improvement in language. Sotillo's (2003) pilot study with 14 language learners using Yahoo! Messenger showed a room for "direct or explicit corrective feedback". Levy and Kennedy's (2004) work on FonF tasks utilizing students' audio recordings suggested that audio-enhanced CMC facilitates the language learning process.

2.4.6 Developing Internet and Computer-based Tasks for Language Teaching

In 2001, Warschauer stressed the need for technology-mediated tasks to enhance the 21st century learners' communication skills. The technology-enhanced tasks are more of inquiry based which put the learners into real-time communicative situations and encourage them to enact their identities (Lamy 2007).

Considering the application and performance in a technology-based environment, Samuda and Bygate (2008) have proposed the following definition of task highlighting its essential elements: "A task is a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning, through process or product or both" (p. 69).

A large amount of research has explored the development and applications of technology-based language teaching tasks. The integration of technology into TBLT

enhances task performance and allows for the possibility of freer and less-structured tasks. Such tasks make learners focus more on the task-based exercises (Lamy, 2007).

According to Beauvois (1994), Chun (1994), Kelm (1992), Kern (1995), Sullivan & Pratt (1996) and Warschauer (1996), Text-based computer-mediated classrooms (CMC) increase the amount of language that students produce during various tasks. Another research by Perez (2003) found that the students are able to produce greater amount of language during online task performance and they are also able to produce longer dialogues after taking up online tasks.

When it comes to language quality with online tasks, Salaberry (2000) found that students are able to achieve greater grammatical accuracy in online tasks than in the face-to-face contexts. They are able to produce a wider range of speech acts and discourse functions during task performance in online chatting environments (Chun, 1994; Svensson, 2003). Mak & Coniam (2008) found that students showed greater creativity while doing collaborative tasks in a wiki. According to Yamada (2009) students are able to achieve greater confidence in their ability to use grammatically accurate language and cultivate greater number of self-corrections during task performance via text chat.

Apart from these studies, several researchers have opined that technology-mediated task performance leads to long-term language development in syntax, vocabulary, speaking, writing, and intercultural competence. Stockwell and Harrington (2003) found that intercultural email discussions on a series of cross-cultural topics led to gains in syntactic development and incidental vocabulary learning among learners. Payne & Whitney (2002) observed significant improvement in general speaking proficiency of students when they were assigned text-based online chatting tasks. Murray and Hourigan (2008) found that blogging helped students in developing their writing with greater formal grammatical

accuracy. Thus, there is ample evidence that task performance in technology-mediated environments support language development.

Based on above observations, the following are the key advantages of using technology-based language tasks.

- Text-based CMC permits anonymous contributions and enables students to greater amount of language
- Students produce greater amount of language during online task performance when interacting via synchronous CMC than in asynchronous CMC (Pérez, 2003)
- Multimedia CMC with audio, video and text, helps learners boost language usage
- Text-based CMC leads to greater grammatical accuracy in students' task performance than in face-to-face contexts (Salaberry, 2000)
- When engaged in a collaborative project-based tasks in a wiki, students are able to express creativity in writing using more complex language structures over a period of time (Mak & Coniam, 2008)
- Intercultural email discussions around cross-cultural topics help students move towards syntactic development and incidental vocabulary learning (Stockwell and Harrington, 2003)
- Cross-cultural and project-based task performance via blogs leads to the development of intercultural competence (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Elola & Oskoz, 2008)
- Blogging helps learners to develop their writing with greater formal grammatical accuracy (Hourigan & Murray, 2008)

2.4.7 Principles of Designing Internet and Computer-based Tasks and the Present Study

Developing Internet and computer-based tasks is a challenge as it has to cater to the needs of students with different levels and needs. Chapelle (1998) presented the following principles for development of computer-based tasks.

1. The linguistic characteristics of target language input need to be made salient for "input enhancement."
2. Learners should receive help in comprehending semantic and syntactic aspects of linguistic input.
3. Learners need to have opportunities to produce target language output.
4. Learners need to notice errors in their own output, and they need to correct these errors.
5. Learners need to correct their linguistic output.
6. Learners need to engage in target language interaction whose structure can be modified for negotiation of meaning.
7. Learners should engage in L2 tasks designed to maximize opportunities for good interaction.

The above principles are used for developing appropriate computer-based language teaching tasks with a focus on:

1. enabling the production of target language by placing learners in interactive conversational situations;
2. negotiating and accomplishment of tasks;
3. understanding of syntactic and semantic meaning of the language.

The present research aims at utilizing the Internet-based tasks to strengthen the productive skills of the post graduate management students. It has a combination of face-to-face and online learning that aims to provide the participants with Blended learning experience. The interactive tasks to develop speaking and writing skills of the students are based on the TBLT approach and are designed by considering the tasks and tools utilized by different researchers worldwide. The key Internet platforms utilized for the study are blogs, podcasts, social networks and online videos.

ICT does not alone develop Critical Thinking skills. Critical Thinking skills are reflected in the way language is used. Therefore this study also aims to investigate whether Critical Thinking of students get reflected when writing and speaking skills of students develop.

2.4.8 Rationale for using Internet and Computer-based Tasks for Present Study

A. Ease of Access

The networking of computers and their capability to offer the possibilities of sharing and greater level of interaction has proved to be a boon for language educators. The Internet is responsible for the emergence of wireless learning environments which allow students to learn and practice different concepts from anywhere at any point of time. It has enabled a higher level of collaborative environment for the students where they can work as a team sitting at different places (Sotillo, 2002). The adaptations of the technological environment and technology-based tasks have helped students in improving their productivity. In addition to practicing the basic and advanced language functions, students can also develop their intercultural competence which helps them in their overall development. The key elements that bring ease of access to the process of language learning are online brainstorming session, online collaboration, online testing and analytical tools etc. They do not require the students to be confined to a particular place and allow them to work in an independent manner at their

own place and pace. Today' highly interactive Internet environment enables students to create their own virtual learning environments and increase their level of productivity (Olsen 2000).

B. Interactivity and Flawless Communication

With the emergence of social networks and the additions of new features to the IMs the level of interaction has reached a high level. Several agencies have started operating their language teaching businesses over the Internet which suggests the possibilities of exploring the same free technologies in the language classrooms anywhere in the globe. Also the improvement in the speed and performance of the Internet contribute a greater share when it comes to incorporation of the electronic technologies in the language teaching process. This high level of interactivity and flawless communication can enable greater level of verbal exchange among the learners leading towards productive results in language learning.

C. Peer-review and Feedback

One of the major interactive features offered by today's technology is the simplicity in offering feedback and peer-reviewing. In the area of language learning, feedback and peer-review play a vital role. Peer review feedback makes it easy for teachers to help students improve their language by producing more and more pieces of language based on give tasks. Peer-editing has been employed in several research works as it leads the students to showcase their works to the real audience and engages them in great level of interaction (Bicknell, 1999). Language learning is made simpler with the applications of email-based peer response writing groups, chat rooms, and electronic bulletin boards (Sirc, 1989). The incorporation of collaborative writing technology influences the performance of students in L2 writing procedures. It also increases learner participation and allows teachers to stay focused on more students (Warschauer, 1996).

In such ICT environments, as it becomes one-to-one communication, students are more likely to receive more focused responses from their peers and evaluators. CMC increases the practice of writing and all the students of a class gain from the collaborative learning experience (Sullivan and Pratt, 1996).

The core advantage is learner engagement which leads to effective outcomes as far as language learning is concerned. The present research work employs the peer-review feedback strategy to help students improve their language.

D. Autonomy, Control, and Responsibility

The biggest advantage of using technology in education is 'autonomy' for learners. The application of ICT in language teaching leads towards Autonomous Language Learning (ALL) which incorporates structure, control and responsibility as its core components (Murray and Kouritzin, 1997). Technology gives language learners an opportunity to exercise control over their learning and complete the tasks with proper responsibility (Holec, 1981). Increasing use of computers and other technologies has promoted learner autonomy in the language teaching situations. It shows the widespread popularity gained by the technology in language teaching / learning procedures.

Language teaching with the use of technology promotes higher level of learner autonomy in the learning cycle (Schwienhorst, 2003; Luke, 2006). Proper utilization of online communication tools for imparting language lessons can lead to better results in the process of language teaching.

In the next chapter research methodology of the present study is discussed. It highlights research design and methods of measurement used to conduct this research.