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ELT Quarterly

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Volume: 24 | Issue: 4 | December – 2025



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H. M. Patel Institute of English Training and Research

Vallabh Vidyanagar, Dist. Anand, Gujarat, India.

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Chief Editor

Dr. Mayur Parmar

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Post-truth Pilgrims: Lies, Hoaxes, and Narrative Fakery in Chaucer's Metafiction

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Abstract

*Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales stages a remarkably modern contest over truth. In tales like the **Pardoner's Tale**, **Nun's Priest's Tale**, and the **Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale**, Chaucer deliberately employs exaggeration, hoax, and unreliable narration. These pilgrims' stories become proto-"post-truth" performances: their speakers spin fictions and half-truths to advance desire or power, disregarding objective fact. Drawing on theories from Harry Frankfurt, Jacques Rancière, Arjun Appadurai, and others, this article argues that Chaucer anticipates a medieval epistemology of instability. In Chaucer's heteroglossic pilgrimage, "the distribution of the sensible" is disrupted by a carnival of voices; each teller's truth claims are acts of power. Ultimately, Chaucer's metafiction probes how narrative authority can distort or construct reality, making *The Canterbury Tales* an early mirror to our own "post-truth" age (Chaucer famously "diagnosed" the problem in the 14th century).*

Keywords: Chaucer; *Canterbury Tales*; narrative truth; post-truth; metafiction; deception; epistemology; Frankfurt; Rancière; Appadurai; Foucault; Bakhtin.

Introduction

In the cacophonous pilgrimage of *The Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer creates a microcosm of conflicting truths. Though written in the late 1300s, the Tales brim with conscious falsehoods, boasting, and ruses that read strikingly like our own "**post-truth**" phenomenon. (As historian Parker observes, "'post-truth'" may sound modern, but Chaucer "diagnosed the problem at the end of the 14th century".) Chaucer's pilgrims often lie, embellish, or play tricks as they tell stories, suggesting a medieval theory of knowledge in which "reality" is always contested by rhetoric and desire. Each narrator—be it the greedy Pardoner boasting of false relics, the clever Nun's Priest recounting a fox's flattery, or the world-weary Wife of Bath twisting scripture—performs a willful unreliability. This essay argues that *The Canterbury Tales* uses **metafictional** strategies to stage an epistemological battlefield: narrative itself is a contest between truth, illusion, and power.

This argument is framed by contemporary theories of truth and illusion. Harry Frankfurt's notion of "**bullshit**" (language uttered without concern for truth) vividly describes how Chaucer's speakers often behave. Jacques Rancière's concept of the *distribution of the sensible* reminds us that every aesthetic regime controls "what is visible and sayable" – a perfect lens for how Chaucer's tales redistribute authority over meaning. Arjun Appadurai's analysis of the "**post-truth epistemic regime**" shows how fact and fiction now mutually reinforce each other, a dynamic we will trace back into Chaucer's frame. Finally, thinkers like Foucault and Bakhtin offer tools for reading authority and carnival. Foucault's insight that *power produces knowledge* helps explain why Chaucer's clerical and secular narrators promote their own "truths" for influence. Bakhtin's theory of carnival emphasizes how festive inversion can suspend official truth.

Taken together, these frameworks reveal that Chaucer's pilgrims do not simply lie by accident. Their fabrications are *performances* – sometimes cynical, sometimes playful – that test the limits of narrative authority. The tales become riddles of veracity, with each storyteller wrestling not only for the laughs or morals they supply, but for the very definition of truth in their little world. In this premodern "post-truth" laboratory, truth is fragile, always begging interpretation, and constantly under threat from the desires and power plays of the narrators themselves.

Pilgrims at Play: Carnival, Polyphony, and the Struggle for Truth

Chaucer's pilgrimage is structured as a **carnival of voices**. The General Prologue gathers nineteen pilgrims – from noble knight to rude miller – in one crowded inn, setting a polyphonic stage. This "heteroglossic gathering" is **not** the orderly, monologic narration of an authoritative medieval chronicle. Instead, it *invites* the interplay of conflicting perspectives. As Pal observes, Chaucer deliberately contrasts a multiplicity of pilgrim-voices with the singular authorial voice. No tale-teller

simply “submits” to an overarching truth; rather, each speaks with his or her own accent of bias. In Bakhtinian terms, the carnival of Canterbury temporarily “*liberates [itself] from the prevailing truth and from the established order*”. Hierarchies tumble – a bawdy Miller can outshout a pedantic Reeve, a hypocritical Pardoner challenges Church doctrine – and the rules of belief are suspended.

This world of the Tales exemplifies Rancière’s “distribution of the sensible.” Rancière defines that distribution as the set of assumptions that make certain things visible, sayable, and thinkable within a social order. In a given regime, some narratives count as legitimate “truths” and others are silenced. Yet *The Canterbury Tales* troubles those boundaries. In Chaucer’s frame, even a fool or a woman is given a mouth to articulate an alternative truth. The pilgrims’ storytelling game allows every speaker, no matter how “untrustworthy,” to construct meaning. Rancière notes that the distribution of the sensible “*discloses the existence of something in common and [also] the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it*”. Chaucer’s text explicitly exposes those divisions: truth for the church, wisdom for the scholar, cunning for the tradesman – each pilgrim occupies a “part” of a divided social cosmos. Yet by mingling them all, Chaucer suggests that no one part holds a monopoly on truth. Instead, the Commons of the pilgrimage must negotiate it in the open. Chaucer’s carnival text thus enacts a mini-politics of perception, where authority and knowledge are constantly reallocated.

In practice, this means Chaucer’s pilgrims tell tales that counter-balance or “pay back” one another. A good example of this pragmatic “quyting” is found in Zedolik’s analysis of the Tales’ structure, where he notes each teller often delivers a story that inverts or critiques the one before. For instance, a bawdy fabliau might follow an austere sermon; a moralizing Church figure may precede a hedonistic knight’s tale. This “pragmatic harmony” arises not through agreement, but through **discord**. Such interplay dramatizes a fundamental point: *truth is not a given; it is hard-*

won through struggle among voices. Chaucer gives no privileged position to any one narrator. Even the author-figure (Chaucer himself, who appears rarely beyond the Prologue) admits ignorance and error. In sum, the Canterbury pilgrimage is a **vernacular parliament** of tale-tellers, and its travelers are engaged in an ongoing jurisdictional dispute over what counts as true.

The Pardoner's Tale: Bullshit and Holy Hoaxes

The Pardoner epitomizes the Tales' brazen relationship to untruth. In his frank prologue he admits openly to a supreme hypocrisy: the very virtues he preaches – greedlessness and piety – he privately scorns. He famously declares he cares only “for gold and silver”, even while drawing gullible pilgrims into his scam. Academically, Kim Zarins notes that the Pardoner “sells access to holy relics that are actually shams”. In other words, he traffics in frauds: cattle-bone fragments he sells as a piece of Saint Paul's sail, a pig's shoulder he pronounces Abraham's ribs, trinkets he calls nostrils of saints. He is not shy about revealing this deceit to his audience – indeed he boasts of it. The Pardoner parodies the idea of confession: he invites the host and pilgrims to laugh at his own insincerity even as he preaches their damnation if they give in to greed. His song of Iniquity — which proclaims that “*Radix malorum est cupiditas*” (greed is the root of evil) — is as much a stage for his own “bullshitting” as a sermon.

This candid chicanery strongly aligns with Harry Frankfurt's concept of **bullshit**. Frankfurt argues that the “essence of bullshit is not that it is false but that it is phony”. The Pardoner is the consummate bullshitter: he speaks without any genuine concern for truth, only for the effect on his listeners' wallets. By Frankfurt's yardstick, the Pardoner does *not even bother to align with falsehood or truth* – he simply improvises whatever will bring him profit. Frankfurt illustrates how bullshit requires only a “lack of a connection to a concern with truth... indifference to how things really are”. The Pardoner personifies this indifference. His pilgrimage con-

game is so flagrant that it shocks us even as it entertains. Thus Chaucer gives us a cleric whose honesty is revealed only through his own cocky dissembling.

The Pardoner's tale (about three rioters who meet Death, then murder each other for gold) compounds his performance. Its explicit moral — that avarice leads to ruin — is ironically what the Pardoner profits from undermining every day. He concludes his tale by demanding more silver for another rendition of it. The entire episode dramatizes a medieval theory of economic truth: what the Pardoner sells is *not* spiritual protection (the supposed purpose of relics) but a narrative of manipulation. In a Foucauldian reading, power and knowledge meld here: the Pardoner's ecclesiastical office grants him the platform to produce a gospel of greed (knowledge), and that knowledge itself *feeds* his power (cash). As Foucault reminds us, power “produces knowledge as well as suppressed knowledge”. The Pardoner creates a knowledge (story) that strengthens his position of control over pilgrims. Everyone at the table knows he's a fraud – Zarins observes he “proudly describes his deceptions” to the fellow pilgrims – but within the Tales that does not disqualify him. Instead, it fits the open skepticism of Chaucer's carnival.

Ultimately, the Pardoner's sham relics and layered confession become a meta-commentary on narrative sincerity. He tells his audience precisely when he is **not** telling the truth. And yet, by the end he has convinced (or at least entertained) them with his tale. In effect, the pilgrimage game permits and even glorifies such duplicity. The Pardoner's success shows how easily a compelling (though dishonest) story can override official doctrine or moral truth. In Chaucer's world, the “holy” narrative can be a clever con. The Pardoner's mixture of lies and sermons stages an early example of the “battlefield” in which storytelling claims authority, a pre-echo of our modern fake-news landscape.

The Nun's Priest's Tale: Flattery, Fable, and the Limits of Trust

In the Nun's Priest's Tale, Chaucer shifts to the genre of the beast-fable, but the epistemological stakes remain high. The story of Chauntecleer (a vain rooster) and the sly fox is ostensibly a simple fable. Yet the Nun's Priest layers it with playful deceit and self-reference. Early on, Chauntecleer is flattered by Pertelote (his favorite hen) into dismissing his ominous dream: "Divers folk diversely meene a dreame" (people interpret dreams differently), she says, and thus he should not take it seriously. This hints that meaning itself is flexible depending on who tells the tale. Shortly thereafter, a cunning fox uses a similar tactic: praising Chauntecleer's voice and beauty, he tricks the cock into closing his eyes and forgetting to flee. The fox then captures him by reinterpreting the situation as one of friendship. Both scenes show how *flattery* – a sly narrative – can overpower caution.

Chaucer thereby dramatizes a fundamental truth about persuasion: those who *spin a good story* often win. The moral explicitly delivered at the end of the tale warns against this practice. The Nun's Priest admonishes his listeners to beware of "recke-leuss desi-siouns and of truste on flaterye". In other words, one should distrust those who use sweet words to gain trust. This final line is self-conscious: it is addressed to Chaucer's own pilgrim-audience (and by extension to us, the readers), reminding us of the Tale's layers. It suggests that the Tale we have just heard may itself be a kind of flattery – a clever but potentially misleading fable wrapped in entertainment.

Rancière's terms help unpack this. The Nun's Priest's Tale is formally a *mock-epic*, replete with learned references and high diction. By framing trivial barnyard trickery as grand story, Chaucer is playful about who gets to tell what as "true." The pastoral world of the widow and her animals is contrasted with the courtly tone of the narrative and the colorful language. Through all this, the Nun's Priest implicitly asks: which perspective is real? Do we side with hard-headed Pertelote or with

dreamy Chauntecleer? Do we trust the obvious narrative (the fox is an enemy) or the fox's spin (he's a friend praising Chauntecleer)? In Chaucer's view, *both* and neither: all are debatable.

Harry Frankfurt's discussion of sincerity resonates here too, even though he's writing six centuries later. Frankfurt concludes that even sincerity – the belief one is speaking truth – can itself be a kind of bullshit. Chauntecleer at one point actually believes the fox, and thus speaks earnestly about friendship (“‘Thanked be God’,” he says, “‘that I have an alibi’”)—but this sincerity yields no truth. When the Tale ends and Chauntecleer escapes through trickery of his own (his wife's help), the lines about flattery show the Nun's Priest recognizing that *every* narrative in this Tale has been a kind of bluff. The Tale does not simply deliver a didactic unmasking of the fox. It performs the very mistrust it preaches, inverting the epistemic order for humorous effect.

In short, the Nun's Priest's Tale treats storytelling itself as unstable ground. The “world” of Canterbury is one where even animals must compete in the politics of interpretation. Flattery is a form of narrative power, and Chaucer shows that trusting words without scrutiny can be fatal. The Tale thus dramatizes a premodern lesson: in a world of rhetoric and deception, truth is something one must fight for, not assume.

The Wife of Bath: Performative Knowledge and Sovereignty over Truth

Few *Canterbury* pilgrims embrace self-fashioning like the Wife of Bath. In her prologue and tale Chaucer hands us a narrator who **doubles as a performance artist**. She tells stories about herself – five marriages, all triumphs – that blend fact and fiction so seamlessly the audience cannot tell which is which. While her unbridled personality suggests authenticity, her rhetoric is highly strategic. She openly manipulates biblical exegesis (e.g. abusing Paul's words) and folklore to justify

female power. "Experience, though none authority," she claims, is her guide. In effect, the Wife of Bath **constructs her own truth**: sexual, theological, and narrative. Her entire persona is a lie of convenience that serves her ends.

This is epistemological play. The Wife's storytelling satirizes who gets to define authority and honesty. As one critic notes, she "gives her life up to be interpreted," inviting the reader to question every claim. When she speaks of her youthful beauty or her skill at managing her husbands, we suspect there is exaggeration. Yet Chaucer does not correct her; instead he frames her as sincere in her version of truth. This raises the question: in the pilgrimage's republic of stories, can any narrator be "objective"? The Wife's determined ownership of her narrative undermines the static hierarchy of knowledge: she insists a woman's lived experience carries as much weight as a man's scripture.

Rancière's notion of what is *sayable* comes into focus. The Wife of Bath seizes the public space of the pilgrimage to say what medieval sermons might forbid: that wives can dominate husbands, that kings once owed their lives to their wives, and that feminist sovereignty is natural. In this way she *redistributes the sensible* by speaking truths the official order would silence. The carnival scene of the pilgrimage (low-born Bath tiler telling a high-minded "loathly lady" story) itself inverts the hierarchy of who traditionally narrates sacred tales. Each time the Wife of Bath flouts convention (and, indeed, the letter of scripture) in her tale, she reenacts Bakhtinian carnival: laughter and inversion on behalf of the oppressed (in her case, medieval women) break the norms of "prevailing truth".

Frankfurt's framework applies here too, albeit indirectly. The Wife's rhetoric is not "bullshit" in the Pardoner's sense (she *believes* her experiences). Yet she uses language in a hybrid way: she both sincerely shares and strategically reshapes her life-story. The result is a narrative that is at once highly personalized and performative. It enacts what Rancière calls a "self-evident fact of sense perception"

of female agency, turning private desire into a communal question. The Wife's tale about the knight who must learn what women most desire ends by granting a ridiculous truth: that women want sovereignty over their husbands. By the narrator's reckoning, that is the "true" answer, forcing the male-dominated order to acknowledge a subversive insight.

In sum, the Wife of Bath plays the same game as the Pardoner and Nun's Priest, but on her own terms. She alters "truth" for empowerment, expecting both laughter and acquiescence. Chaucer treats her narrative fakery not as failure but as a valid way to contest dominion. Her "version" of truth becomes yet another voice in the pilgrimage's polyphony, reminding us that even identity and belief are up for negotiation in the Canterbury assembly.

Chaucer's Retraction: Irony and the Uncertain Apology

At the end of *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer unexpectedly turns serious with his **Retraction**. In the voice of the pilgrim-poet, he begs forgiveness for the "vain and worldly" stories he has told. He claims to "revoke" all his translations and compositions, from *Troilus* to *The Legend of Good Women*, and even *the tales of Canterbury... that sowed into sin*. This final confession masquerades as a sincere act of piety; he prays for God's mercy and promises to study "salvacion" henceforth.

Yet Chaucer's contemporaries and modern critics debate the **sincerity** of this gesture. As the Wikipedia summary wryly admits, "It is not clear whether these are sincere declarations of remorse... or a continuation of the theme of penitence from *The Parson's Tale*." The tone of the Retraction is ambiguous: at once humble and almost legalistic. If taken at face value, Chaucer suddenly disowns most of his life's work. But if seen as another performance (perhaps the most ironic of all), it is a final layer of metafiction.

We might interpret the Retraction through Frankfurt again. Frankfurt argues that even “sincerity itself is bullshit” when it becomes an act. In this light, Chaucer’s contrition can be read as a piece of narrative cunning. It “suspends” the pilgrimage’s comedy in a moment of solemnity, only to leave us uncertain if the masquerade is over. The reader is left to wonder: after hearing every kind of lie and jest, can we trust even this last pledge of truth?

Foucault’s idea that truth is produced by power can also shed light here. By writing a retraction, Chaucer aligns himself with the Church’s discourse on sin and confession. In effect, he conforms to the “police” order of his society, affirming its moral categories. This move can be seen as the narrative balancing act – another form of “quyting,” as Zedolik would say. In the fragmented chorus of tales, the Retraction is Chaucer-the-Pilgrim paying back authority with his own comedic form of repentance. It wraps up *The Canterbury Tales* by stage-managing its truth: Chaucer assures readers that any offense was his alone, and that divine truth stands unchanged.

Whether we take the Retraction sincerely or as an ironic capstone, it reinforces the Tales’ epistemological theme. Chaucer does not leave us with a single, unquestionable message. Instead, his final words remind us that repentance itself can be performed and that at the end of storytelling, truth remains slippery.

Medieval Post-Truth and the Battle of Narratives

The cumulative effect of these tales is to dramatize a **medieval theory of unstable knowledge**. Storytelling in Chaucer’s world is a dynamic arena. Each narrative is a gambit in a larger game about who controls meaning. The theories of Appadurai and Rancière capture this well. Appadurai describes our era as one of “post-truth as an epistemic regime,” where “fakes operate simultaneously with their others, the stage props of which the real is built”. Remarkably, *The Canterbury Tales* operates on the

very logic Appadurai identifies. Chaucer's fake relics, cunning flattery, and contrived confessions *coexist* with genuine moral reflections and pious intent. In this sense, each tale's fiction is a "stage prop" supporting the reality of the pilgrims' world. The female voices of Bath and Pertelote, the coarse interjections of the Miller, the gibes of the Summoner – all these "fictions" help construct the collective reality of the pilgrimage.

Appadurai goes further to say post-truth is "not relativistic, cynical or opportunistic" but rather a world "which has lost interest in both communication and miscommunication". Applying this back to Chaucer, the Tales imply a world in which *both* truth-telling and falsehood have been institutionalized as part of human exchange. The shift from linear sermonizing to overlapping simultaneity of narratives means that no one frame of reference reigns. Chaucer's pilgrims don't wait their turn to hear a single truth; they speak in chorus and cross-talk, much like Appadurai's description of an era of "pure synchrony".

Frankfurt's insight ties this together: the Canterbury pilgrims often speak without regard for an objective standard of truth. We see this in every boorish jest and sinful anecdote. The narrator of the *Miller's Tale* shrugs off veracity; in the *Prioress's Tale*, the Prologue voices bigotry with blind conviction; even Chaucer the Pilgrim laughs and moves on. In the chorus of voices, one person's "truth" is another's absurdity. Indeed, Chaucer stages epistemological relativism in comedic form. The moral of one tale is overturned by the context of another. The Miller's bawdy licentiousness rebutted the Reeve's grim righteousness; the Cook's vulgar comedy offsets the Physician's logic. Each shifts the distribution of the sensible by mocking or supplementing the previous tale.

This is precisely a **battlefield for truth, desire, and power**. Power here is not limited to political might but includes social authority and narrative skill. When the Knight delivers a chivalric epic, he commands decorum and prestige. When the Wife of Bath

counters with ribald pragmatism, she seizes authority with her sexual storytelling. When the Pardoner expounds greed, he exercises moral power over the cheap piety of his audience. Foucault would say each of these narratives *produces* a certain knowledge that serves specific interests. For example, a sermon against hypocrisy (the Parson's Tale) produces a "truth" that underpins Church authority; the Cook's tale of student mischief produces a reveling truth valued by the urban underclass.

What is crucial, as Rancière's politics suggests, is that in Chaucer's art the suspension of a single order permits *politics* to emerge. Each tale's existence momentarily suspends the "police" – the rigid structures of class and orthodoxy – and creates space for a new configuration. In that interstice, a woman can speak truth to power, a fox can enact wisdom, a fool can seem wise. Chaucer's Tales do not present a unified ideology; they revel in the very dissent they stage.

Conclusion

In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer constructs a **premodern post-truth theater**. His pilgrims, with all their lies, jokes, and fictions, enact a complex epistemology: truth is not given but wrested through narrative. Metafictionally, Chaucer hints at an awareness that stories shape the world they describe. By letting every character lie, exaggerate, and deceive, he dramatizes the instability of knowledge. The very act of pilgrimage becomes a metaphor for the journey of interpretation.

Viewed through modern eyes, Chaucer's creativity anticipates our own doubts about fact and fiction. The voice of the Pardoner echoes the frustrations of today's cynics: he sells lies as truth with brazen confidence. The talking animals of the Nun's Priest's Tale forewarn that seductive language can cloud judgment. The radical self-fashioning of the Wife of Bath foreshadows how narratives serve identity and power. Even Chaucer's penitential Retraction plays a paradoxical role in our understanding of sincerity.

Ultimately, Chaucer's Tales teach us that storytelling itself is a contest. Each narrative stake claims to reality, and the pilgrim-audience must choose what to believe. In doing so, Chaucer unfolds a medieval vision of a world where consensus is never assured, where authority is always disputed, and where *post-truth* conditions are as old as narrative itself. **Storytelling becomes the battlefield for truth, desire, and power**, and Chaucer's pilgrims are its first combatants.

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The Role of Classic Literature in Modern Classrooms: Relevance, Challenges, and Pedagogical Approaches

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Abstract

In a time of cultural transformation, digital revolution, and shifting educational standards, the place of traditional literature is at a crossroads. This paper engages the timely discussion of the ongoing significance of Old School texts in the new millennium curriculum, and whether such antiquated texts retain the power to illuminate and motivate our increasingly diverse student population of scholars. It critically examines the long-standing literary, moral, and intellectual appeal of classics and the increasing claims that they are culturally elitist, linguistically bewildering, and unrelated to the lives of contemporary students. Moreover, the study considers cutting edge, culturally responsive pedagogies that aim to rejuvenate the canon, turning it from a vestige of the past to a ripe source for critical inquiry, empathy, and cross-cultural interaction. Lastly, the paper brings to the forefront that the flourishing of classic literature in education for new generations does not rely uniquely on tradition, but rather on its innovative adaptation, new relevance and engagement with unique readers.

Keywords: classical literature, classroom, education, teaching

Introduction

For generations, classic literature has held a prominent place in educational curriculums. From Homer's *The Odyssey* to Shakespeare's plays and 20th-century novels such as *The Great Gatsby*, these works are often considered not just great works of art but essential components of a broad education intended to cultivate cultural literacy, critical thinking and moral reasoning. Many of them are considered to be masterpieces with everlasting value, providing us not only with the deep meditation of human nature but also manifesting the context of history, philosophy and politics in their time. From this perspective, the reading of "classics" are not simply a matter of reading old books; they're about reading texts that have played a formative role in that society, that have contributed to shaping ideologies, in forging language and narrative forms.

But the relevance of these venerable texts in today's classroom is coming under scrutiny. The population served in schools has diversified immensely, the students represent many different cultures, languages, homes and funds of knowledge. Meanwhile, educational demands are changing due to globalization, the impact of the digital world and social justice movements. These shifts have led to important conversations about whose stories get told, whose voices get heard, and what other texts deserve a place in the curricular canon.

Critics say that many classics promote obsolete social relations, exclude a contemporary range of identities or simply do not reflect the lived experience of today's students. Supporters, however, argue the classics are relevant explicitly because they provide historical context and intellectual challenge. This tension, I believe, demonstrates the difficulty of teaching literature in the modern classroom, a place where we must simultaneously honor tradition and strive toward substantive inclusion, representation, and engagement.

The aim of this paper is to address the changing concept of classic literature in the contemporary educational context. It will focus on three primary concerns: the relevance of traditional texts in guiding student learning, the complexities of making these works accessible to a wide range of student populations and the types of instructional accommodations that can better connect classical content to students. In the end, this work intends to suggest that, although the canon may need to be rethought, great books, when taught critically and inclusively, can still be a powerful means of making the modern classroom spring to life.

1. Relevance of Classic Literature

Even as contemporary curricular trends lead to devaluing the Canon's inclusiveness to a diversity of reading audiences, classic literature remains a keystone of value to educate in today's classrooms. Introducing students to universal human experience,

historical and cultural literacy, and academic critical facility is a relevance for intro-level world arts courses. Students may first find this material remote, irrelevant, or obsolete, but with the help of good teaching, these old texts can be critical bricks in the process of self-reflection, critical thinking, and intellectual maturation.

1.1 Through Timeless Themes and human Condition

One of the reasons that these gems of old literature endure is that they touch on timeless topics—love, power, self, ethics, and freedom. These ideas and conflicts travel across centuries and national borders, in ways that many readers would find to be literally close to home. Take *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, it remains popular among students because it depicts young love, family interference, and hasty decision-making – all themes that are still relevant to teenagers today. Likewise, *Frankenstein* speaks to issues of scientific morality and human drive and ambition, while *Of Mice and Men* tackles isolation and the pursuit of the American Dream.

Such texts ask students to think about their own lives and the world in which they live, to face the philosophical and moral challenges that we have not yet solved. In that sense, then, classic literature functions as a mirror, enabling students to see themselves and their peers reflected back to them but also placing them in the broader context of history through the lens of fiction.

1.2. Cultural Literacy and Historical Awareness

Classical literature is a primary mechanism for cultivating cultural literacy – the capacity to perceive and interact with the concepts, corresponding events, and originating or primary texts that gave shape to civilization. Classics reading familiarizes students with historical backgrounds, social mores, and ideological systems of other periods. For example, *To Kill a Mockingbird* places students into the American South during the Great Depression and discusses themes of racism,

civic responsibility and moral courage. On the other hand, The Iliad and The Odyssey depict ancient Greek attitudes towards values, war, heroism, and mythology, which have shaped Western thought and literature.

In analyzing these works, students will gain an appreciation for the historical backdrop that has shaped the way we think politically and institutionally today. Through this historical literacy they can think through present day things in a much more critically informed contextual way.

1.3. Language Development and Analytical Skills

Some linguistically complex texts, in fact, with proper support, aid greatly in students' language development. Complex sentence structure, advanced vocabulary, and figurative language encountered in the works of authors such as William Faulkner, Jane Austen, or Nathaniel Hawthorne challenge students to expand their reading and analyses skills. When students learn to understand metaphorical language, irony, symbolism and allegory, they not only develop their literary analysis, but they also hone their close reading and interpretive skills that are transferable to other content areas.

Furthermore, working with classic literature's themes and structures helps students develop critical reading, essay writing, standardized test prep, and future study in the humanities and social sciences. It promotes intellectual grit, too, challenging students to persevere and cultivate the discipline necessary to maneuver scholarly works.

1.4. Shaping Ethical and Civic Understanding

Plenty of great literature is edgy and thought-provoking; classic works have been written about ethical issues and inherent flaws within society, causing students to ponder justice, power and mankind. By teaching books such as Animal Farm, The

Diary of Anne Frank, and Native Son students are introduced to political philosophies, oppression, and the impact of individual and collective choices. They become entryways into discussions of empathy, morality, and civic responsibility; each is a vital part of democratic education.

These works, when approached with guided inquiry and open discussion, allow students to form a moral lens through which to view and dialogue with real world topics and civic engagement. They foster empathy and understanding as a means of transcending the cultural and historical borders—skills that become ever more crucial in our interconnected world today.

2. Challenges in Teaching Classic Literature

Old time classics are undoubtedly educational literature, but bringing them into today's classrooms for educators and students alike is problematic in a number of ways. These barriers arise from the intricacies of the language, the exclusivity of the culture, a generation shift in interests, and the out-of-date goals of education. It is important to meet these challenges in order to make classics relevant and readable for a modern, diverse student population.

2.1. Language and Accessibility Barriers

A lot of older lit is in literary or syntactically non-modern language. This can be old words, long sentences, or weird idioms. For example, despite their poetic and dramatic values, Shakespeare's plays are not always easy to understand because they are written in Early Modern English. In the same way, the thick prose and philosophical overtures of novels like Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* or Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* can be a turnoff to students, including those with less reading experience or those for whom English is a second language.

These language barriers may discourage students from participating and feel frustrated or excluded. When students can't understand the meaning of a text, valued educational outcomes like literary study, thematic analysis, and cultural insight go out the window. Hence teachers need to expend extra time and effort into scaffolding instruction in terms of providing translations, summaries, glossaries, and modern-language adaptations." without burdening the modern second-language classroom which already has a full curriculum load⁴⁹50.

2.2. Cultural Representation and the Canon of the Western

One critique of standard literary curriculums are that students are flooded with Western, Eurocentric texts, mostly from white, male writers. These texts have created literary traditions whose significance we honor, yet which also often embody the attitudes, perspectives, and hierarchies, such as those of race, gender, and class, that were prevalent in their time of production, some of which remain contested today.

Books like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or *Othello* feature racial epithets and depictions that can cause hurt or offense for students, especially for those from marginalized communities. Also, a lot of classics present experiences of women, LGBTQ+ folks, native folks, and people of color in ways that are shallow or inauthentic. This failure to reflect the student body can leave students feeling alienated from the material, or, worse, misrepresented by it.

Teachers must tread carefully in discussing the offensive content of classic literature; the project does not condemn these texts but acknowledges them as valuable historical and literary texts. This is a job for critical pedagogy that allows students to enter into dialogue with texts rather than simply accepting them — and a task that requires skill, sensitivity and institutional encouragement.

2.3. Perceived Irrelevance and Student Engagement

In a climate where young people are constantly bombarded with short forms of media and digital stimuli, slow narratives and outdated settings can understandably feel out of touch with the tone or tenor of the day. It is difficult for teenagers to relate Jane Austen's England in "Pride and Prejudice" or the existential angst found in "The Metamorphosis" to their own day-to-day experiences.

This gap between generations tends to cause disengagement, especially when texts are taught without sufficient ado to make the text seem relatable. Teachers might also have trouble getting students to take the time to think about stories that don't directly link to modern day life. In other words, the issue is not only how to transmit the content of the literary classics, but also to make them relevant to readers' own lives.

2.4. Curricular Constraints and Standardized Testing

The main mode of public education is test-driven accountability. Consequently, many teachers find themselves teaching toward the test, with little time to delve into complex literature. Longer, more complex texts that we know are classics due in part to the time and discussion we know it generally takes to read them and consider them in a classroom may be glossed over – shorter, more straightforward material that more directly lines up are likely to replace the classics.

In addition, inflexible syllabus or prescribed reading lists can limit the degree to which teachers are able to tailor content to meet the specific needs and interests of students. Teachers who want to add to, or change the complexion of, the canon may lack the independence or the means to achieve that goal — thus strengthening the grip of a small set of classics, to the exclusion of more diverse or current voices.

2.5. Controversial Content and Censorship

A lot of those classics have material that can now be controversial — violence, racism, sexism, colonialism, and so on, or just what counts as “coarse language” now, compared to back then — and can get challenged by parents, or administrators, or school boards. For instance, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Color Purple*, and *Beloved* are often challenged because of mature content.

Some educators have come under increased pressure to shelve or issue content warnings for graphic novels. On the other hand, we need to confront the reluctance of the silenced and in this case of those raped, to see their memories and fears reflected back to them by universities, textbooks, and administrations that did nothing to prevent the situations they lived through, and have often learned nothing as yet. And of course, this is the difficult work of educators, to address the horror, the titillation, and the ways in which a good efficient horror story masquerades as some kind of justice. It is in responding to and addressing these tensions that requires forethought and strategic planning, as well as thoughtful and open communication with stakeholders and pedagogical transparency.

3. Pedagogical Aspects of Teaching Classic Literature

In order to successfully teach the classics in a contemporary classroom, effective, adaptable and pupil-centric methods of teaching need to be planned for. Educators struggle to reconcile the depth and rigor of these texts with linguistic obstacles, cultural disconnects, and student engagement. The teachers can make classic literature accessible and relevant to today’s students by using inclusive and inventive pedagogical techniques.

3.1. Contextualization and Scaffolding

Much of the difficulty, in fact, that arises when reading older literature is due to the unfamiliarity with the historical, contextual and even linguistic issues involved. Teachers can scaffold these texts to make them legible by foregrounding for students the experiences that give students agency to approach the text.

Strategies include:

- Lessons on the historical context of a text to consider the social, political, and cultural time period the text was written (e.g., teaching about Jim Crow laws before diving into *To Kill a Mockingbird*).
- Pre-teaching vocabulary and complex literacy devices to build comprehension.
- The use of multimedia resources (i.e. documentaries, podcasts, historical images, and film adaptations) that conjunctionally help “see” and frame the world and characters.
- Guided reading questions that assist students in making sense of dense or unfamiliar sections.
- This scaffolding allows the text to be accessible for learners of different skill levels and backgrounds so they are not turned off by the complexity of the text.

3.2. Comparative Literature and Thematic Pairing

One way to help students to access these kinds of classic texts is to teach them in conjunction with more accessible modes of representation such as, for example, literature, film or media broadcasting of a similar theme. This approach encourages students to recognize linkages between time periods, cultures, and genres.

Examples:

- Matching *The Great Gatsby* with a contemporary novel such as *The Hate U Give* to discuss the American Dream, class and race.
- Teaching *Antigone* in class with the aid of the current posturing of civil disobedience and state authority.
- Comparing *Othello* by Shakespeare with a modern movie or news article about racism in othering.

Having students examine these same issues in a different framework helps them understand the text more fully and make connections to the modern day. These matches also prompt comparison and critical thinking.

3.3. Student-Centered and Discussion-Based Learning

Students will appreciate the greats of the literary world when they are “forced” to make sense of a text on their own. Student-centered pedagogy focusses on learners at the center of the classroom experience and promotes dialogue, reading, and critical thinking.

Methods include:

- Discussion in the form of socratic seminars and literature circles are tools for fostering collaborative dialogue.
- Argument, role-play or hot-seat based on characters’ driving motivations, conflicts, or moral quandaries.
- Personal reaction journals or creative projects that require students to draw on their own experiences and perceptions of the themes.

This emphasises shifted emphasis from passive consumption to active participation and 'guidance of learning'. It 'gives students the opportunity to push back against the text, to ask questions, to interpret it themselves.

3.4. Critical and Inclusive Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy requires that students read literature not only for its aesthetic, but also its ideological value. This approach interrogates the canon itself — why such and such texts are “classics,” what values they represent, and whose voices, if any, are being excluded.

Techniques include:

- Reading texts with the aid of various theoretical frameworks like feminism, postcolonialism, critical race theory or queer theory.
- Urging students to question the dominant narratives and investigate the way power, identity and language operates in the text.
- Offering counter-narratives or scriptural supplements by voices on the margins. For example, teaching *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe as a response to colonialist representations in *Heart of Darkness*.

This focuses on developing critical literacy along with cultural awareness, prompting students to pay a questioning reading and to become aware of the socio-political effects of literature.

3.5. A wider look at literature: Adding diversity to the classics

A movement among educators to broaden the definition of "classic" beyond the works of the European tradition. Expanding the Literary Canon What it is: By broadening the literary canon, teachers can give students more inclusive and representative reading experiences.

Implementation may involve:

- Among them are foundational texts of African, Asian, Indigenous and Latin American literary traditions.
- Reading early- and mid-20th-century works by writers including James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Rabindranath Tagore and Gabriel García Márquez.
- Emphasizing oral traditions, non-Western epics, and defining religious or philosophical works from diverse world cultures.
- This expansion not only honors students' cultural roots, but also introduces them to a more diverse, intricate literary past. The current culture of education, at least in public schools, tests students and is accountable to tests. As a consequence, many teachers must succumb to "teaching to the test," and there isn't the time to travel further into complex literature. A classic may be traded in for something shorter, less challenging, and more likely to be strictly on the test.

Additionally, entrenched curriculums or forced reading lists can stifle a teacher's ability to customize content for their students' requisites or interests. Even where instructors are looking to supplement or diversify the canon, they often lack the freedom and resources to imagine and integrate alternatives, and so the narrow range of classics continues to dominate at the expense of other more representative or more current voices.

2.5. Controversial Content and Censorship

Most of our classic literature contains elements that are considered controversial today, be it violence, racism, sexism, colonialism, "offensive" language, you name it. These elements could form the basis of challenges from parents, administrators, school boards. For instance, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Color Purple*, and *Beloved*

are commonly challenged because of language that some people believe is unsuitable for minors.

This has, in turn, produced an increase in requests for book banning or content warnings, putting educators in tough spots. Teachers have to walk the line between the imperative of addressing painful truths and the necessity of maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment. The management of these tensions must include careful planning, open communication with interested parties and pedagogical transparency.

Conclusion

Classic reading still has a strange and necessary import in the contemporary classroom. Its timeless issues and literary depths not only provide excellent possibilities for in-depth study but also allow for a great deal of critical thinking. These texts also encourage students to confront ethical quandaries, historical events and philosophical conundrums that influence human societies to this day. But classic literature cannot simply be experienced through tradition. Just as the educational landscape shifts to better address the needs of a diverse, digitally connected, socially conscious learner, so too should our strategies for teaching the literary canon.

The problems with the classics—language difficulty, cultural elitism, lack of representation, perceived irrelevance—are all very real and need to be faced head-on. Unchallenged, they can take literature education out from the realm of possibility or make the introduction too boring, especially for bodies/ individuals from marginalized communities. Merely working through pieces of canonical texts, without engagement in a critical discourse or any awareness of the cultural specificities, is likely to drive learners away rather than add to their understanding.

In order to maintain the vitality and inclusivity of classic texts in the curriculum, teachers need to develop thoughtful and innovative pedagogical approaches. These techniques include placing historical material in context, scaffolding instruction, matching canonical texts with contemporary works for comparative purposes, supporting student-generated inquiry, and transforming the curriculum to include a wider, more global array of voices. These are not only ways for students to “get in touch with” the literature but also to actively interrogate the ideas and ideologies encoded within.

Ultimately, the application of classic literature to the classroom should not simply be an exercise in upholding a static canon, but a means of training informed, empathetic, intellectually curious readers. When handled with respect, imagination, and a critical eye, canonical texts can be useful instruments for educational growth, cultural literacy, and personal development. So old books are not just dead artifacts of the past, they are live science and technology for learners today.

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**Literature as means to unlock the 21st century Learning Challenges in the light of
NEP 2020: Recontextualizing Tennyson's *Ulysses***

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Abstract

Learning is a time-honoured, inexhaustible and a dynamic possession of human beings. It synchronizes with progress and fuels the transformation of mankind from primitivity to ultra-modernity. 21st century learning is completely in contrast with the past, cluttered with distractions that equate erudition and create serious learning challenges. NEP 2020 is a comprehensive policy intended to revamp the educational framework in India by aligning it to the 21st century requirements and to bust the learning challenges of the century. Literature a major domain of Humanities has contributed in the development of all the time-tested learning skills. It also helps gain the 21st century learning skills. Poetry is appraised of delivering the cognitive, meta-cognitive and soft skills relevant in handling the learning challenges of the 21st century. Alfred Tennyson, a Victorian poet is reminisced for his stimulating poem Ulysses. This poem depicts the zeal of Ulysses, the titular character, for learning and knowledge. He stands tall among the literati as an incarnation of self-motivation and an icon of undistracted learning. The skills demonstrated by him in search for new knowledge are truly appropriate to unlock the 21st century learning challenges and interestingly they are in line with the framework of NEP 2020.

Keywords: Learning, 21st century learning, intellect of the society, NEP 2020, Literature, Humanities, Poetry, literati, new knowledge

Introduction

Learning is a perpetual process which upskills and elevates any individual. Learning and applying the knowledge gained into reality have helped humans evolve as the wisest of all creations. Learning sharpens knowledge and when it is put into use, it creates wisdom. It also stimulates the learner to improve one's quality of life and help make a better living. Henry Ford appraises learning and says "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young."
(<https://www.brainyquote.com/>)

The process of learning is quite dynamic and ever-changing. It transforms from time to time under the influence of socio-cultural nuances. Every era has displayed its

own requirement of knowledge and thus ushered the evolution of varied pedagogy for gaining knowledge. The significance of the process of learning is that it proliferates on sharing and is a lifelong process. Reshma Patel (2023) reiterates the same by quoting the remarks of Jiddu Krishna Murty, an Indian philosopher, writer and speaker which goes “There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.” Incidentally, with the passage of time, a paradigm shift in the mind set of learners has set in and metric outcomes are being considered as the end of learning process. This mindset has hampered the holistic development of an individual creating a serious imbalance in life. Anushree Rastogi (2024) opines

In today’s fast-paced world, where academic success often dominates, holistic education reminds us of the essential balance needed for a well-rounded upbringing. It emphasizes not just what we learn but also how we grow as individuals, fostering skills that go beyond the classroom and into lifelong success. (Rastogi 2024)

Holistic development becomes important as it emphasises on a spectrum of skills which tap the human potential to the fullest and focuses on strengthening physical, emotional, social, and cognitive skills resulting in evolution of “... well-rounded individuals who can thrive in the complex world they will inherit.”
(<https://schoolofscholars.edu.in/blog/holistic-development-in-schools/>)

Dynamics of Learning– From Past to Present

Learning process in previous eras have been much simpler in contrast to the contemporary system of education and was primarily utilitarian. Referred to as “Traditional Core Skills” (Kivunja 2015), the learning progression of the by gone days engrossed on literacy and numeracy as key components. In these times, the thrust has been laid on acquiring skills like reading, writing and arithmetic. These skills proved appropriate to the people of those times as much of their careers were traditional and rooted in their lineage. Additional or special skills were irrelevant to

them and gave a scope for developing life skills through their mundane activities – termed in modern times as the holistic development – and led the people to live a satisfied and successful life. The relevance of such learning is rightly mentioned as “Holistic development instils age-appropriate skills to nurture all of the vital talents that contribute to the creation of a functioning and moral human being.” (ALLEN 2023)

But the current world has altered beyond comprehension in comparison to the preceding century and the requirements of the knowledge and the sources of learning also have changed. In 21st century, the prominence on learning has grown as the learners of this century are to bridge a huge gap between life skills and career skills. This gains significance since the catalogue of skills required for a successful career in this century are diverse from life skills. So, a situation has evolved where in the learning needs of the contemporary times are divided into four types. Trilling and Fadel (2009) enlist the four skills as “Traditional Core Skills, Learning and Innovations Skills, the Career and Life Skills, and the Digital Literacies Skills.”.

On further scrutiny it is vivid and clear that the capabilities required by the youth of the existing times to thrive in their lives and career comprise of extensive variety of competencies. Modi (2023) include “critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, and global awareness as the essential proficiencies. “Adaptability, Modi (2023) considers “Problem-Solving, Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, Ethical Decision-Making and Lifelong Learning” as the pre-requisites for achieving work-life balance.

So, it can be decrypted that the learning model of 21st century is quite intricate and needs undivided attention and continuous self-motivation to make learning smooth and a lifelong process.

**National Education Policy 2020 – A new era in educational framework of India:
Thrust on 21st Century Skills**

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive policy document which addresses the myriad pre-requisites to navigate the dynamic educational landscape of India to raise to the changing needs of the 21st century. NEP 2020 also aims to empower teachers and students for the 21st century to become global leaders through quality education. Shukla (2020) further expedites the purpose of this policy as

One of the stated aims of the policy is to instil a “deep-rooted pride” in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 works towards transforming the system of education system by strengthening creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. This policy document also foresees a “skills-centric approach” Seth et al. (2023) with an aim to build holistic individuals who can succeed in their personal and professional spheres of life by handling the modern-day challenges and also contribute to the society they live in. NEP 2020 proposes extensive reforms in all levels of education, from primary to higher, while emphasising on multidisciplinary education, flexibility in choosing courses in order to attain holistic development. In order to attain the enlisted, NEP 2020 aims at restructuring the curriculum in order to encourage experiential learning. The policy also recognizes the need to equip students with 21st-century skills like critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy. The policy document itself claims the above discussed and says...

This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, including SDG4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems. (NEP 2020)

These 21st century skills become relevant for the contemporary learner in the light of the multitude of changes which have evolved in the education and career goals and aspirations from the previous era. 21st century world is a complex, globalised and technologically driven world which seeks a unique orientation in the learners in order to attain their goals – both educational and professional. The increasing demand for such skills by industry has made the educational institutes too to integrate them in the curriculum and lay equal emphasis on curricular aspects and skill-orientation. The policy document of the NEP underscores the importance of these skills as follows. “The aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills.” (NEP 2020)

21st Century Learning Skills – Global Scenario and Implementational Challenges

The skills referred to as the 21st century skills have turned out to be highly significant not only in India, but across the globe. Jenna Buckle, an eminent educationist remark...

“In today's world, our schools are preparing students for jobs that might not yet exist. Career readiness means equipping students with a nuanced set of skills that can prepare them for the unknown ... new challenges in navigating social situations ... to learn how to process and analyze large amounts of information ... to be taught how to apply facts and ideas towards complex problems.”

21st century learning skills have been increasingly talked about and gained the prominence not only keeping in view the socio-cultural, political, economic and technological advancements but also in the view of adoption of the Sustainable Development Goal – 4 as prescribed by the United Nations. The SDG 4 prescribes to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In the light of Sustainable Development Goal-4, the Education 2030 agenda, obligates all nations to ensure that learners obtain knowledge and skills in areas such as sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, global citizenship, and others. Many other global bodies such as Global Partnership for Education (GPE) aims to strengthen the learning goals from academic to holistic purview.

Ramya Vivekanandan while writing for www.brookings.edu focuses not only on the list of 21st century skills, their relevance but also on the bottle necks in the process of integrating these skills into the educational frame work and imbibing them into the Gen Z learner. Her article alludes the implementational predicaments like replacing the existing skills sets with the new set of 21st century skills, availability of grants to revamp the educational framework to make it suitable for the new needs, inaction on part of the policy makers and decision-makers, and very importantly the lack of future-readiness in the teaching fraternity. Yet, the relevance of these skills cannot be ruled out. They are to be insisted upon, implemented and included across all nations for a holistic output. According to Vivekanandan (2019) the realization of the 21st century skills is not a distant dream and can be attained when

“... those who are committed to a holistic view of education have much work to do in terms of research, sharing of experience, capacity building, and advocacy around the potential and need for all countries, regardless of context, to move in this direction.”

Though “21st-century skills have gained recognition and adoption into traditional education models” (www.edalex.com 2024) there are many glitches

which are deterring the execution of the policies in revamping the educational scenario pan world. Education in many parts of the world is ever-evolving and still-in-making creating hinderances in the implementation of these skills in the curriculum. The teaching methodologies in vogue leave a huge gap for the learners to personalize the pedagogy which results in the variation in outcome. This is a paramount gap to be bridged and standardizing the instructional approaches can be a worthy remedy to wave off the gap.

“Success using these teaching methods has varied. Educators can facilitate effective learning as long as they follow some key precepts. Students are empowered to guide their own learning. Learners flourish in an inquiry-based classroom environment. They’re encouraged to collaborate, and they’re given the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills. Each course is designed to bring out the learners’ creativity.” (www.edalex.com 2024)

Another significant nuance in the implementational hardships of the 21st century skills is the disconcerted approach of the employers in considering the newly-earned micro-credential and technical badges as qualifications in the existing employees of their organizations. These professionals, who can be considered as adult learners, cannot suspend their regular jobs and connect themselves to the universities and classrooms to gain the much-appraised skills. The On-the-job trainings, flexible learning sponsored by reputed seats of education through various platforms and credits earned through participation in certain academic/professional activities relevant to their jobs are the sources for these adult learners to upgrade and upscale themselves. But Missman (2023) observes “Many employers still require applicants to hold a college degree, so micro-credentials aren’t necessarily a replacement for a traditional degree.”

This view of the employers is fuelled by the ambiguity related to the credibility of the courses, validity of these qualifications and the rigour of the assessment

conducted. Another crucial bottle-neck with these newly earned credentials is their mismatch with the existing Human resources and talent management system leading to disregard of such credentials during performance reviews. The whole scenario is deciphered by Rangnekar (2022) as “Micro-credentials can serve as a skills currency—but only if employers are aware of them.”

Challenges in learning 21st century skills

The process of learning is complex than any other processes. Challenges are inevitable constituent of life's learning process. These challenges can become fatal if left unaddressed or acted upon very late. Gerald Aungst (2016) in his article “Four Barriers to Learning 21st century skills” expedite on four inter-linked significant challenges which impend the process of learning. Aungst opines that jumping to solutions during the interface of a problem without proper analysis dampens the critical thinking and decision-making of the learners. Secondly, he considers avoidance of risk and loss limits the learners to think for alternatives and researching capabilities. Thirdly, appropriating opinions available both in traditional and social media as a serious hurdle in learning and trains the learners to conform to widespread opinions and affect their analytical skills. Poor listening skills close the list of barriers mentioned above. Aungst (2016) relates

“Too often we hear little of that they are really saying as we focus on formulating our own response. A great deal of conflict arises because we bring our own assumptions to a relationship and don't truly understand from the other person's perspective.”

In the 21st century, the learners are exposed to myriad factor which distract the attention of the learners. These factors not only distract but also fizzle out the interest in the learning process. It is an undoubted fact that distractions are perpetually present, but the concern in 21st century is the easy and frequent interface of the distractions. The distractions which spoil the learning process can be divided into External factors like friends, electronic devices, social media, Internal factors like

inability to remember, unable to manage time and activities and social factors like economic divide, digital divide and inaccessibility to the resources. These factors truly impact the learner's morale and create challenges.

The 5 most common learning challenges confronted by the learners of the 21st century are Concentration, Managing time, Retention, Resource Accessibility, Self-motivation. (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-learning-challenges-ways-overcome-them-learnasyougo>.) These challenges interfere the learning process and hinder the knowledge gained by the individuals.

Literature as a means to tackle the 21st century learning challenges

Literature, a body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. (<https://www.britannica.com/>) But literature holds immense significance beyond mere entertainment and shapes minds, hearts, and societies. Literature helps one to explore the intricacies of human experiences and the numerous ways in which people encrypt and decode their understanding of the society around them. Jenkins (2024) expounds "... it fosters empathy, challenges perceptions, and stimulates critical thinking, thus cementing its relevance in personal development and societal discourse." Also, it helps in fostering educational skills like critical thinking, interpretation, analytical skills and a serious rendezvous with socio-political, cultural aspects of the society.

Literature is a powerful tool which impacts social and cultural aspects of the reader. It helps hone skills like self-expression, emotional intelligence, managing relationships and conflict management. It improves the tolerance towards others and acceptance of others transforming an individual into a trailblazer of change. Ardaa (2023) opines

Literature frequently questions our presumptions and beliefs, forcing us to critically consider the world around us. It can assist us in challenging the

status quo and conceiving novel social possibilities. Literature can serve as a forum for social and political commentary that motivates readers to act and effect change.

Further, literature also embeds in the readers life-long learning skills and a rare curiosity which promotes the inquisitiveness of an individual. Carizal (2023) deciphers “The diversity in learning styles and preferences illustrates how literature accommodates and nurtures an array of learning journeys, contributing to a well-rounded, informed individual.”

Poetry, one of the oldest forms of literature holds the paramount position among all its genres. It encompasses a rich array of forms with specific purpose, style, and indelible impact on the readers. While expressing myriad themes, poetry remains a perpetual source for human expression and learning. Hannah (2023) opines “There are many benefits to learning and understanding poetry, making it an enjoyable, worthwhile pursuit for people of all ages.” Associating oneself with poetry is considered to be the best source of improving self in multitude of ways. Reading poetry enriches education by providing cultural exploration, language development, critical thinking, and emotional connection and so this genre of literature remains a timeless and powerful source of learning. Apart from the thematic concerns as source of knowledge, much erudition happens by understanding and analysing the different elements of a poem. The following elaborate quote expedites the significance of poetry as a source of perpetual learning.

Poetry is a condensed art form that produces an experience in a reader through words. And though words may appear visually as symbols on the page, the experience that poems produce in us is much more physical and direct. The elements of poetry permit a poet to control many aspects of language—tone, pace, rhythm, sound—as well as language’s effects: images, ideas, sensations. These elements give power to the poet to shape a reader’s

physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experience of the poem.
(<https://human.libretexts.org/>)

In other words, Poetry, ranked second by Aristotle as the best of all literature, helps the readers to develop language, phonetics, critical thinking, creativity, empathy, cultural exposure, lessons for life-time and transcendence in the personality of an individual.

Tennyson's *Ulysses* - A Vade Mecaum to deal the challenges in learning 21st century skills

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809 - 1892) is a renowned English poet who belongs to the Victorian Age. He is popular as the Poet Laureate of England during the regime of Queen Victoria being appointed after the demise of Wordsworth. According to Alfred et.al (2019) "He was the longest-serving laureate of all time, serving until his own death in 1892." In the literary circles, he is often considered as the representative of the Victorian age who embodied the multiple facets of the age in its true sense. Tennyson is celebrated as...

More than any other Victorian-era writer, Tennyson has seemed the embodiment of his age ... In his own day he was said to be—with Queen Victoria and Prime Minister William Gladstone—one of the three most famous living persons, a reputation no other poet writing in English has ever had. (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/alfred-tennyson>)

Tennyson is known for his patriotism and poetic excellence. His use of simple diction, short length and musical rhyme scheme made him an oft-quoted poet amongst his contemporaries. Use of blank verse, clarity of thought, beautiful imagery are some of the noteworthy facets of his poetic excellence. Use of Victorian England as a setting or as a source of inspiration for his poetic output clearly demonstrates his patriotism. Thomas (2020) appreciates that

“He was a patriot as he had great love for and pride in his country and its rich heritage ... and with great success to portray in his poems the Victorian England ... With utmost sincerity he captures and recreates the very essence of the same through his wonderful poems.”

His works depict a unique fusion of poetic creativity and social involvement. His poetry mirrored the dynamics of Victorian era in all aspects. They represent the religious faith, scientific developments, upsurge in materialism, deep seated melancholy, scepticism and criticism which are very characteristic of the age. His works are frequented with the characters from Classical literature.

Tennyson's poems involve a bouquet of themes dealt by him in perfection and primarily revolving round Victorian England and its exclusivity. Some of the major thematic concerns of his poems include spirituality, courage, time, death, grief, nature and action. For Tennyson, poetry was not a mere art but an art with purpose. With his poems, he intended to inspire the Victorians who were caught in the crux of transformation to evade struggle for peace and inaction to attain progress.

Being a true Victorian poet Tennyson played the role of a moral teacher ... the role of a philosopher. According to Tennyson the poet's function was not to delight only but to teach the masses, the statesman and even the intellectuals ... He taught people to be moderate patient and tolerant. His message of action is truly represented in his poem *Ulysses* ... (<https://vikramuniv.ac.in/>)

Ulysses is Tennyson's distinguished and oft-quoted poems. It is penned in 1833 and published in the year 1842. The poem is inspired by *Ulysses*, a Greek warrior from Homer's *Odessey* and is the titular character of the poem. Some literary critics opine that Tennyson designed his narrative roughly based on Dante's *Inferno* are also in vogue. Tennyson writes the poem as a dramatic monologue, the widespread and a befitting genre for the motif which Tennyson wanted to convey

through this poem. 20th century iconic poet T. S. Eliot in his *Selected Essays* (pg 210) acclaims as *Ulysses* a "perfect poem".

In *Ulysses*, Tennyson incarnates the Greek hero Ulysses as a mighty, unrelenting courageous individual. The poem underscores the undying spirit and inexhaustible thirst of the aged warrior turned to be the king of a peaceful country. Tennyson's portrayal of the will and determination of the aged Ulysses to travel through the oceans and to visit new landscapes summons tribute and appreciation for both the character of Ulysses and Tennyson. Langbaum in his book *The Poetry of Experience* (1957) opines that the poem deals "with the evolution of a soul, with a man's quest for knowledge through self- realization" (57)

This poem is considered to bear a poignant autobiographical element too. It is wide spread notion that Tennyson penned this poem to force himself out from the boundless grief he was in due to the untimely death of his dear friend Arthur Hallam. Hallam's death left Tennyson devastated and his poetic output came to still. But Tennyson's realization about the concept of death, nature of God and immortality of soul urged him to express his new understanding. During this period, he composed many heart-wrenching elegies to project his loss and agony. Simultaneously, he also wrote some master pieces like *Ulysses* in the process of recouping self from the tragic depression. This attempt not only bolstered his spirit but also inspired generations to keep their spirits exuberant and broaden their horizons perpetually.

... this poem is also an elegy for a deeply cherished friend. Ulysses, who symbolizes the grieving poet, proclaims his resolution to push onward in spite of the awareness that "death closes all". As Tennyson himself stated, the poem expresses his own "need of going forward and braving the struggle of life" after the loss of his beloved Hallam. (<https://www.mmdcollege.in/>)

Tennyson's *Ulysses* to bust the Learning Challenges in acquiring 21st century Skills

Ulysses is an exceedingly inspiring and stimulating poem which lifts the spirit of the readers and often provides them with an impetus to rise to new heights in their lives. The poem also encourages the readers to see the bright side of the things and derive courage to face the grey aspects and keep moving forward in their lives. The poem starts with the confession of Ulysses, the king of Ithaca about the boredom underwent by him after his return to Ithaca post Trojan war. He is greatly troubled to spend time without any learning as he strongly believes in experiential living rather than a routine life.

It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags (Ulysses)

Unable to spend an idle life, he decides to start new adventure over the sea and expand the horizons of his knowledge. He gives least priority to his old age and fear of death during the expedition and gives priority to learning which according to him is the most meaningful act for fulfilment of human life. This spirit for life-long learning is a strong message sent across by Ulysses for all generations and especially for 21st century learners underscoring the significance of concentration and time management. Also, these lines encourage the contemporary learners to overcome the fear of risk and loss and imbibe ethical decision-making skills.

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;

Death closes all: but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done (Ulysses)

He explains clearly that these intentions are not just a display of his bravado, but a sequel to this long trail of achievements. He expedites on his adventures during the Trojan war and how he has learnt about new places and new knowledge and also how he has become a part of the places which he has been to. Here Ulysses underlines the importance of retaining the learning of past times. This is a key take

away for the 21st century learners who are facing the problems of retention of the past knowledge in the light of myriad distractions. Ulysses' mention of his past knowledge which becomes the beacon light for his present quest again reiterates the significance of retention and adaptability.

*Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all; (Ulysses)*

Ulysses lays emphasis on courage and self-motivation as key factors which helped him to overcome his inhibitions and became a name by himself. He further highlights the role his undying zeal to learn in achieving great heights in his life. This mention by Ulysses is again an important takeaway for the 21st century learners who experience lack of motivation to achieve familial, academic, career or social goals. Self-motivation as mentioned by Ulysses drives an individual past the difficulties to attain the goals. Here resilience is another important lesson to be learnt from the mindset of Ulysses.

Additionally, Ulysses' humility to consider all his mammoth achievements as just an entrance to his new learning endeavours highlights how significant it is to make learning a lifelong process. This Ulysses was able to declare with many criticisms thrown at him. Yet his persistence to follow knowledge 'forever' amidst all these upheavals is a strong message to the 21st century learners to sideline all inequalities and have learning as a major preoccupation. Also, the role of Emotional intelligence is very emphatic to maintain such disposition which will certainly lead to great and utilitarian learning.

*Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move. (Ulysses)*

As an answer to the doubts about his waning age, Ulysses says his experience and the support of his like-minded peers can very well substitute his weakness. He

assures of his success in the future endeavours and adventure as he is adept in using the resources available, rather than cribbing for what he does not possess. This nature of compliance with available resources to make the most learning is again a very strong message sent to the 21st century learners as they claim of many depravities and divides. In other words, Ulysses recommends the learners to be adaptable to make learning their priority.

you and I are old;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;

Death closes all: but something ere the end, (Ulysses)

Ulysses also adds a note to his listeners that his plans of new learning are possible as he knows well how to manage time and do the best within the time which is left in his life. This reiteration clarifies that self-motivation, time management and best use of resources available will always navigate a learner towards wisdom. This is again an important recommendation for the learners of 21st century who claim of numerous hardships in their journey towards knowledge. In short, concentration and problem-solving become key to overcome all hurdles towards learning.

Life piled on life

Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains: but every hour is saved

From that eternal silence, something more,

A bringer of new things (Ulysses)

As a conclusion to his monologue, Ulysses says that his aspirations are truly achievable as he is still brave at heart, though made weak by age and carries an unstinted determination to work hard and succeed in his undertaking of learning and never give up. In other words, Ulysses speaks about defying the irrational social implications which impend one's growth. His will to follow knowledge sidelining the criticism of his fellows and countrymen again is a valuable snippet for the 21st century learners which directs them to snub the forcible conformity to which they

are attuned to and mark down the implications of criticism which hamper one's progress.

To follow knowledge like a sinking star...

...Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. ((Ulysses)

Conclusion

To conclude, Tennyson's poem *Ulysses* is indeed an appropriate panacea to demystify the 21st century learning challenges like concentration issues, time-management gaps, inability to retain the previous knowledge, cribbing about the unavailability of resources. The poem is also a strong recommendation of self-motivation to make learning easy. Also, this poem clearly shows various ways out for the various gaps of learning mentioned by many experts and in NEP 2020. The key learnings from the poem like adaptability, problem-solving nature, strengthening Emotional Intelligence, resilience, ethics in decision-making and a zeal for lifelong learning clearly paves the path for undeterred learning for all enthusiasts.

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Mechanized Minds: Dehumanization in Orwell's 1984, Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*

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Abstract

This article investigates the representation of dehumanization in George Orwell's 1984, Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, and Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451. To be more precise, this research article examines how people are transformed into programmed or mechanical citizens/machine who must obey government and technology directives. In Orwell's Oceania, The Party and Big Brother are the programmers of the population. With a combination of ideological brainwashing, coercion, and surveillance, the programming apparatus substitutes citizen conformity for individual freewill. In Huxley's World State, hypnopaedia, drug-based peacefulness, and eugenics form a population psychologically and physically inclined to enjoy being enslaved labourers. The Mechanical Hound is comparable substitutes in Bradbury's world of enforced mass media and censorship. The research article reveals that all three novels are set in a dehumanized future where the characters feel able to more robotically comply with state directives rather than when they are given free will. While they serve somewhat different functions, Bradbury deploys distraction, Huxley leisure, and Orwell terror in ways that restrict citizen agency. This comparative investigation highlights that as society continues to see growing algorithmic governance regimes, AI, and overwhelming mediated experiences that consume more of people's lives, the stories of all three are as relevant now as the time of their publication.

Key Words: Dehumanization, Totalitarianism, Surveillance, Loss of Individuality, Technological Control, Dystopian Literature, Social Conditioning, Mechanization of Society

Introduction:

In dystopian literature, the inartfully engineered human mind either is in conjunction to the loss of individual freedom, or has multiple opportunities to recast itself as a programmed component of a vast socio-political system instead of being an autonomous entity. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and George Orwell's *1984* all redefine the human subject who has been made a part of the system, and holds no moral agency, spontaneity, or ingenuity, but must abide by the comprehensive system. Huxley's World Controllers utilize medicinal

stupor and genetic conditioning to take away human agency, or at least lessen its impact; Orwell's Big Brother incognito operatives enforce compliance using thought police and surveillance; and Bradbury's state uses wealth enough to enforce media saturation and technology enough to disrupt free thinking.

As posited in this paper, these three books read logically as literary accounts of dehumanization as mental machine. In analysing personality, symbolic form and narrative voice, this study explains how Orwell, Huxley, and Bradbury obscure the line between human and machine, creating fictional realities in which the identity of living human beings degenerates, foreshadowing their own historical situation and, offering prophetic insight on the declining efficacy of human agency in technology-controlled society.

Research Gap & Significance:

Many analyses of *Fahrenheit 451*, *Brave New World*, and *1984* have been situated in their historical and cultural milieu. Most people perceive Bradbury's text as employed as a warning about censorship and a dying society, Huxley's as a fable about consumerism and too much technology, and Orwell's as an indictment on totalitarianism. However, scholarly investigations that look at these three great dystopias as an integrated study of the automation of the human mind are egregiously absent. First, the extensive theme of citizen-as-machine explores has not been exploited as a narrative strategy, a symbol, or characterization. This analysis fills this gap by providing a cross-textual analysis based on literary theory rather than just political theory.

The value of this research is being able to connect mid-twentieth century literary static dystopias, with current calls of automation, artificial intelligence, and algorithmic supremacy. It demonstrates that these texts can be re-examined in terms of humans-as mechanized minds, signalling pattern of that literature while asking questions about current realities. This is also a good way to re-read them and assess

the value of the original dystopian literature and what that literature means to current researcher's occupations.

Orwell's 1984: Humans as State-Programmed Machines:

In *1984*, George Orwell presents Oceania as a political and psychological factory, a place for the manufacturing of obedience. Although, Big Brother may be fictional himself, he serves as the highest-order "programmer" of human minds, and The Party functions as the apparatus that will process and standardize its citizens. Every Ministry; the Ministry of Truth, Ministry of Love does not simply control behaviour, but instead, controls what the mind can do. As noted in the first line of the book, "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU," the reader finds themselves in a robotic world (Orwell 3). Like a command line in an operating system, we are constantly reminded that our own ideas are surveyed/hyper monitored and can be modified. The Party creates a "reality [that] exists only in the mind" (Orwell 35), by conditioning people to accept paradoxes (i.e., "War is Peace" and "Freedom is Slavery") using telescreens, Thought Police, and mass rallies.

Even if he was at first responding non-conventionally to the mental conditioning process, Winston Smith, the protagonist, loses his autonomy in the course of his undertaking. While literary critics Laud Winston's different responses to oppression as a staged heroic struggle, we supplement it to serve as evidence of the Party's ability to rewire and deterministically designate a predetermined destination even for biologics like Winston. O'Brien gives a distorting explanation. In discussing the power of the Party, he boldly states, "we make the brain right before we smash it." In other words, psychologistic perfection is the described goal of the Party before they physically destroy their subjects.

The utilization of a description of "two minutes hate," in which members of society exhibit well-coordinated emotional responses to predetermined targets, reinforces the notion of humans-as-machines. Orwell borrows his description of the pace and repetition in the words of his protagonists to simulate the mechanical, rhythmically

timed emotional response of the crowd. The Party is able to shape the psyops and propaganda in a way that automatically adjusts their target programming of human emotional energy and ideated beliefs into interchangeable parts of an ideological engine.

Winston's final psychological evolution from an inquisitive mind to a loyal subject is the quintessential example of human automation. "He loved Big Brother" (Orwell 311), the realization he comes to, is more a result of the mind doing its job with effective finality as opposed to true loyalty. Seeing this conclusion, one could see it literally, and as a literary device, Orwell's sudden, absolute ending reflects the abrupt conclusion of a machine finishing its last task. In the world Orwell envisions in Oceania, the population are not only repressed, but also engineered. The genius of the Party is they recognize that while power over your body is only temporary, power over the mind creates a condition of mindless obedience that is permanent. In this sense, *1984* offers a thorough presentation of the human being as programmed computer, fully incapable of independent thought or moral decisiveness.

Huxley's *Brave New World*: Engineered Obedience through Pleasure

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* employs pleasure, in a manner reminiscent of Orwell's *1984* vision of humanity's mechanization through repression and terror, to accomplish the same task. In the World State, citizens are not merely governed; they are manufactured. Each person is meant to fill an assigned function in the caste system from the moment they are created. Reproduction is treated like an assembly line, as the Bokanovsky Process is capable of producing "ninety-six identical twins" (Huxley 6). The motto of the state, which the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning offers as the mantra of "Community, Identity, Stability" (1), serves as a processing instruction in a society that has no disagreement.

The conditioning process is illustrated in Huxley's novel as an effortless harmony of biology and ideology. In the novel, hypnopaedia, or sleep-teaching, operates like

Orwell's propaganda machine, only instead of horror it uses a soft rhythm of repetition. Because they are lurking in the subconscious, the phrases: "Everyone belongs to everyone else" (Huxley 43) and "Ending is better than mending" (49) result in an unopposed compliance. Instead of Orwell's sense of coercion, this is the formation of a population who wishes to be oppressed.

Soma, a happiness drug supplied by the state, is the most potent example of this pleasure-based control, with "all the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects" (Huxley 54). Like a chemical reset button, soma removes pain, unhappiness, or engagement of the mind. Soma makes complex feelings into mechanical satisfaction at determinate times of potential discomfort. The populace turns into a well-oiled machine of continual consumption, enjoyment, relaxation, and stupor.

Huxley's characters are hardly able to acknowledge the system, as the system has shaped their desires in accordance with its own needs. Bernard Marx's unease seems to be an outlier, though even he cannot conceive an alternate social formation. John the Savage, on the other hand, who arises outside the World State, is the only character who expresses any real emotional human engagement throughout the text, and his infamous statement, "But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger..." (Huxley 190) is a repudiation of mechanized existence. However, his tragic fate suggests that attempting to resist a system that has perfected the manufacture of consent is mostly pointless.

Huxley's prose, as a literary genre, is also analogous to the cold precision of the society he critiques. The Hatchery scenes read more like technical documentation than literature, as the sterile language offers an unmitigated insight into the process of "hatching." Likewise, hypnopaedic slogans that repeat in hype and rhythm are akin to the hypnotic patterns of machine coding that the narrator likely equated it to both in creative irony and meta, as he describes the words in exactly those terms, perhaps seeing the ambiguity in either the meaning or the virtue of the

programming. Hence, the text literally becomes a metaphor. The reader becomes aware of how programmatic everyone/everything is in an environment where human disposition is as modifiable as the electronic chip that drives our machines.

That means that Huxley's *Brave New World* provides another, albeit complementary direction, to Orwell's negative utopia with *1984*. Huxley's citizens are conditioned to obey abdicated authority from the moment they are born and Orwell's citizens are coerced into doing the same. The outcome is the same in either case; people stop acting as independent beings and instead become cogs in the zero friction, self-generating machine of the state.

Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*: Mechanized Minds in a Fireproof Society

Cultural sterilization is the technique used by Ray Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451* to dehumanize civilization. Bradbury emphasizes the mechanization of mind through media saturation, censorship, and technological coercion; while Orwell and Huxley's totalitarianism focuses on political and biological control. The goal of the state is simple; get rid of books, the last remaining bastion of complex or critical thinking, and replace it with a population that values instant gratification and senses overload. At the beginning of the novel, we see Guy Montag, a firefighter, "grinning the fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by flame" (Bradbury 1). Montag's job is to destroy, to burn books, and consequently, to burn history, memory, and individuality, not to save like a firefighter. Bradbury begins the story in medias res, and Montag dutifully and happily committing to the act of destroying shows the degree to which the society has automated human motivation. Firefighters are just state robots whose job is systemic denial of intellectual opposition. Firefighters are not public servants.

The Mechanical Hound is a more egregious example of modern mechanization; an enforcer robot that can be programmed to pursue and execute anyone deemed a threat. Bradbury obscures the distinction between organic and artificial by

describing the Hound as “a thing that lived but did not live” (Bradbury 21). Like the blind acceptance of state doctrine to which the masses subscribe, the Hound is completely void of moral agency.

Technological distraction also plays a central role in this society’s dehumanization. Mildred, Montag’s wife, spends her days immersed in the “parlor walls,” giant television screens broadcasting endless streams of meaningless chatter. Bradbury writes, “Nobody listens anymore. I can’t talk to the walls because they’re yelling at me” (Bradbury 93), capturing the noise-saturated atmosphere that suppresses reflection. Citizens no longer engage in meaningful dialogue; instead, their minds run on scripts dictated by entertainment media, much like a machine executing preloaded programs.

Clarisse, a young lady, has successfully shaken Montag awake by utilising deceptively straightforward questions-for example, “Are you happy?” (Bradbury 7) that disrupt everything about his programmed routine. Montag’s frantic attempt to memorize a few sections of books before all of them are burned serves the purpose of demonstrating his search for knowledge as a result of Clarisse breaking his program. Although Bradbury makes Montag’s shift a complicated process rather than an uncomplicated success, the burning city at the end of the story shows that building mankind up from robotic debris is a process, not a success.

The struggle between human imagination and programmed life shows itself stylistically in *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury’s language varies from lyrical passages to mechanical images. In the later chapters, the recurring theme of fire is employed as both a source of warmth and growth, but also as a force of destruction. This double meaning reinforces the way technology can, like fire, either mechanize or free the human mind.

In Bradbury’s vision, mechanization is not achieved through genetic engineering or constant surveillance but through the voluntary surrender of thought in exchange for comfort and entertainment. Citizens choose to become cogs in the machine,

making Fahrenheit 451 a unique but complementary companion to Orwell's and Huxley's darker blueprints of totalitarian control.

Comparative Literary Analysis

Fahrenheit 451, *Brave New World*, and *1984* have distinct settings, tones, and methods of control, yet they all represent the same literary vision: to move humanity towards a programmed, machine-like existence. Even if each of them will tell the story a different way, they all have a similar perspective that uniquely will no longer exist in their futures. The system of control in *1984* operates mainly through fear, surveillance, and ideological violence. Orwell uses a regime of continuous surveillance and shaming; routine public executions; and Newspeak as a way to eliminate language to shape and control its citizens. This brutality is evident in its narrative mode; Orwell's language is sombre, declarative, and bearing clear resemblance to uniformity that is foisted upon one's thinking.

In Huxley's *Brave New World*, however, pleasure and biological engineering take the place of terror. In this case, basically, the human machine is constructed pre-birth and programmed with predisposed desires to maintain the longevity of the state. Orwell's cruel torture cells become Huxley's hypnopaedic indoctrination, while the telescreen gives way to soma, the ultimate pacifier. Huxley's text furthers the impression of society scripted with the alternating hypnotic repetition of the slogans and clinical distance of the Hatchery scenes.

A third paradigm, this one based on cultural amnesia and distraction, is proposed in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. Bradbury offers a depiction of a society that willingly gives up thinking for amusement rather than reprogramming biology or imposing dogma through terror. In the absence of explicit coercion, this voluntary mechanism through media saturation and transitory pleasure yields a population as controlled as the Orwellian or Huxleyan. More poetic and allegorical in nature, Bradbury's text employs contrasting imagery between organic symbols of rebirth (books, fire as solace) and mechanical (the Mechanical Hound, the parlour walls).

The employment of symbolism is a central feature of all three works. Bradbury's parlour walls, Huxley's soma, and Orwell's telescreen represent the main "control units" in their respective societies, both intellectually and emotionally. In each society, the complexity of the human mind is reduced to the predictability of a machine, and the struggle over human option and pre-programmed behaviour is demonstrated through the stories' protagonists, Winston Smith, John the Savage, and Guy Montag, that become the "test subjects" of the stories. As the three take different paths despite their resistance, John chooses death before living in a machine, Montag takes off in an uncertain direction to form an alternative counterculture, and Smith is left completely reprogrammed.

In relation to their overall theme, Bradbury warns readers against self-imposed submission, Huxley warns against internalized submission, and Orwell warns against imposed submission. Yet, the three authors all fundamentally share a fear that the human mind will not be human if it becomes entirely predictable. Moreover, readers will likely appreciate the tensioning of embodied potential through these distinctions in literary expression, whether it be Bradbury's lyrical urgency, Huxley's satirical distance, or Orwell's coldness.

When you put together all these images, you have a composite dystopia where culture is evacuated (*Fahrenheit 451*), the mind is fragmented (*1984*), and the body is fabricated (*Brave New World*). Thus, a society which is stable, orderly, and totally absent of the jagged spark of human awareness operates with the uniformity of a machine.

Conclusion:

Combined, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and George Orwell's *1984* have been used to issue a cautionary tale against the auto suggestion of human consciousness. Each text delineates a different form of control voluntary distraction in *Fahrenheit 451*, conditioning of pleasure in *Brave New World*, and fear and surveillance in *1984* but they each ultimately reveal a concern of not

allowing for the still and quiet human being to press forward towards their potential. The state or culture in all three texts turns an individual into predictable and programmed creatures whose emotional and cognitive habits are socially constructed.

In Bradbury's America, we see how the systematic decline of critical thinking reflects in passive consumption of entertainment, Huxley's World State demonstrates how individuals are lulled into willing compliance through appealing criterial desires, and Orwell's Oceania exemplifies the brutality of imposed ideology. Collectively, they send a composite literary signal: the systematic extinction of the turbulent, inquisitive being, which is the hallmark of human existence, is a larger danger than merely losing political liberty. What is left in its absence may be organized and functional, but it is not human.

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Using Animation Videos on Promoting English Learning among Engineering College Students in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Teachers are always looking for new and better ways to educate the young learners. At present, they teach the students by introducing text books along with verbal instructions which is the traditional method of teaching. As technology is developing rapidly, it is time to teach students with interactive learning system, so that they can improve their learning, memorizing capabilities and enhance knowledge. Animation is a brilliant and innovative way to encourage learners especially learners of English to communicate stories, ideas, concepts and to learn grammar, in a creative way. It is observed that animation learning to improve English offers exciting possibilities for meeting the needs of 21st century learners. In the current era, the student can communicate with community, work together with peers and validate their learning through technology. This paper explains that animation learning approach in engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu can promote the level of proficiency in English.

Key words: animation, teaching method, communication, engineering students

Introduction

It is obviously true that English is a World Wide Language. In India, engineering students are forced to a condition that their communication skills in English should match with the expectations of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) companies. It is quite interesting to note that India, a multilingual nation, is the third largest English-speaking country after the US and UK. In 1834, Lord Macaulay recommended studying English is better than Arabic and Sanskrit which is beneficial to Indians who pursue higher studies. At that juncture, to gain roots in the educational system, English gradually spread wider in India. Starting from kindergarten until higher secondary level, all students in India have to learn English as one of their subjects. Therefore, it has become a compulsory subject in Indian educational system. Moreover, it is taught as a common subject and not as a language. In spite of

learning English language for the past 12 years in schools, the students who opted for engineering course still find it difficult to communicate effectively for job or other purposes. The paper depicts that animation-based learning environment is very effective to transfer knowledge and motivation to speak effective English.

Literature Review

Teaching is a gratifying profession and considered to be one of the difficult processes in the current scenario, because the students browse the course in online. Classrooms across India are having increasing numbers of students whose primary home languages are not English. At present, the students are technologically brilliant as they use the latest gadgets, hence teaching and learning should both be carried out in technologically enabled environment. Hoeffler, & Leutner (2007) says that, A meta-analytic findings show that dynamic animations have significant advantages in promoting of learning success. Animation is a dynamic representation that can be used to make change and complex processes explicit to the learner, Schnotz, & Lowe (2003). As the use of technology becomes an integrated part of a college education, animation has a high potential to enhance students' understanding and learning motivation. Multimedia education offers an alternative to traditional education that can enhance the current methods and provide an alternative. Shis, C. Papa, M. Chang, and T. Hsin (2012) depict that Language learning classrooms can be vibrant, with the help of innovative methods like materials with animation videos. Therefore, it also gives more supportive for students in the language learning process in engineering colleges.

Sun and Dong (2004) portraits that Animation is considered as one small part of the computer revolution which is a very important part of high technology. Moreover, David and Dan (2002) state that this issue points to the fact that a successful and contemporary animation curriculum should not only be interdisciplinary, but also should encourage students to develop effective skills and activities. Language teaching/learning is one of the areas that have been feeling the impact of the changes

afforded by technology. As Chapelle (2007) points it out, not only are these changes going to lessen, but also technology will continue to influence every aspect of the lives of language learners, including their formal as well as informal language learning experiences. One of the aspects of the new technologies that have become prevalent in language learning contexts is the use of audiovisual materials. McNulty & Lazarevic (2012) describe the ubiquity of audiovisual materials has never been more obvious than it is nowadays for the new generation of language learners.

Teaching Language in Engineering Colleges

The standard of English among today's engineering graduates is unfortunately disappointing. A fresh or an experienced teacher may observe that the students keep silent all the time during the teaching and learning process. The main reason for this situation is the fact that the students do not want to speak in English and a few may be from vernacular medium schools. In most of the English classroom teaching, the teacher tries to explain and make the student's to speak but the teacher is unsuccessful in making the students to speak in English. Even when the students know the answer to a simple question, they still hesitate to open their mouths because of unfamiliar in English language. Having confidence to speak the language is considered necessary in the present scenario. Animation video learning teaches language learners to observe how to listen, speak and continuously watch the video till they understand the stories, concepts and ideas. The study projects animation teaching will enable students to use English for their daily life, knowledge acquisition and to prepare them for future jobs.

English language learning is not mere quest for information, it is skill acquisition. However, it is not enough that learners are made to listen to the lecture; they need to be engaged in the session to learn a language and not a subject. Engineering admissions in Tamil Nadu has a picture of diversity in enrollment. Although the state is more highly urbanized than most other states in India according to Government of India statistics, majority of the students seems to come from rural

parts of Tamil Nadu. First generation learners represent a significant portion of students enrolled in engineering colleges. Even though the college entrants may have opted English as the medium of instruction in their high school and higher secondary classes, their competence in English even for purposes of classroom instruction and learning is not impressive.

The English teachers working in engineering colleges seem to focus more on the transmission of content than on the skills in English. Students coming from remote areas are not trained to write a few sentences correctly. While English is present as part of the curriculum, language learning does not take place in classrooms. English is a compulsory subject of study in engineering course where a student learns two theories and a laboratory course. All the English courses are taught as a subject and not as a language. After learning English with certain language tools and qualifying the English exam, still it is a big question on acquisition of language skills among engineering colleges. According to a survey by Hindustan Times, 97% engineering graduates cannot speak English fluently.

The teachers teach Communicative English in the First semester, Technical English in the second semester followed by Language lab activities of three/two credit course respectively. The following illustrates some details of English language patterns in engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu.

Theory Classes

- ✓ Students mostly attended theory classes but are not interested because they think that they can pass the course.
- ✓ Those who want to score grades preferred to attend theory classes and study voluntarily.
- ✓ Teachers preferred the lecture method in theory classes as it is difficult to conduct learner-centered activities.

Lab Classes

- ✓ Maximum students get a first time opportunity to attend language labs. They feel excited to do activities in pairs and groups but gradually the interest is declined, however the students score good marks.
- ✓ Teachers try to design and conduct lab activities but due to lack of appropriate resources they find it difficult.
- ✓ Teachers feel the challenges in conducting lab classes because the software is not updated or they use the basic software for language teaching.

Purpose of the study

The study aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- ✓ Effectiveness of using animated videos in English language in engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ Familiarizing English language teachers with the basic principles of designing, selecting and using animated videos in teaching English language as a multi-disciplinary activity.

Students' Academic needs

According to Anna University Curriculum, the students are taught Listening, speaking reading and writing with the traditional method preferably with a workbook. To meet the present generation expectations in teaching, technology related teaching activities along with personality development sessions is much necessary. Pransky (2001) accepts that the use of technology in students' lives has increased so much that the students of the contemporary era should aptly be called digital-natives or the net-generation. By teaching the curriculum in the traditional method in engineering colleges, students can pass the course, but the outcome of the course may not be attained as per the curricula & syllabi.

Outcomes: At the end of the course, learners will be able to:

- Read articles of a general kind in magazines and newspapers.

- Participate effectively in informal conversations; introduce themselves and their friends and express opinions in English.
- Comprehend conversations and short talks delivered in English
- Write short essays of a general kind and personal letters and emails in English

In order to attain the outcomes of the course, the students should be taught with various animated video clips, comprising dialogues and songs, grammar exercise, and ask to identify the use of tense, prepositions, adjectives and other grammar related exercise. The students will learn very responsive during the whole lesson. More importantly, authentic videos help students learn the language features in their real context. They can even do the same exercise in their leisure time and enhance their language skills.

Language Learning Animation resource

Animation websites to learn English as a second language

- Littlefox, Fluentu, Udemy, [British Council](#), *multimedia-english.com*, *youtube.com*, *dailymotion.com*, *educatorstechnology.com*.

Animation in Learning Language

Rapid display of images to create an illusion of movement is called animation. Animation has the power to gain the attention and generate interest in a learner. To illustrate clear content and challenging grammar topics, the talk and chalk method usually lacks effective approaches. Animation teaches the same thing through the use of new software and hardware techniques. Animated stories, video and lectures bear many prospects for an effective and meaningful language instruction. It can also help to contextualize the new language providing audio-visual input along with the story narration.

Traditional method of teaching English using text books and blackboards do not really convey the complete gist of a lecture. Often students are disturbed and diverted in listening to lectures due to various physical and mental distractions. However, a learner can easily remember a scene in some animated videos which he

watched long time ago. Researchers have proven language learning using animation has more retention of information because it is transferred using both visual and verbal communication. Birbaumer & Schmidt (2006) points that Teachers and students can benefit from incorporating fun and animation videos into the classroom and to all types of students. By adopting animation students learn through what they prefer to see in a classroom environment.

The process of teaching and learning gets a new experience when animations are used during the process. Humans have a very good pictographic memory; the more it is used the better the information is stored. Adopting to animated video both the teacher and the student find it more comfortable to explain or understand a topic; and believe that no class will be boring. This process not only makes the characters in the novel and drama, grammar clear but also helps the students memorize them for a longer time.

Why Animated Video

Present day students have grown up with gadgets and live in a world where digital technology is part of the texture of their daily existence. They never saw the world without technology. Technology is their native language and they expect to use technology in education. The animation boom extends, not surprisingly that benefits the students. As Nicola Davies asserts, "If you want people to emotionally connect with your content, animated video is an investment worth making." Animated movies provide significant content from which students can learn different aspects of grammar, thus facilitating learners through interesting content while at the same time encouraging them to acquire English language.

In the present era, students have access to laptops and computers, they are utilizing them to chatting with friends and to surfing the Web. Hence, video learning is now the preferred medium of communication for students all over the world. The YouTube Generation relates better to video than to text or spoken presentation, and

studies suggest that many of them retain information better when presented as video. This requires the students to examine a scene in depth, understand staging, and create an interpretation of the work. It gets the students engaged, and requires them to stop thinking about drama, novel or poetry in written form and think about it as performance. The students examine the grammar in depth and better understand by taking it beyond the written word. Adding multimedia content enables the student to approach the subject in a richer way than just using written text and still images. The student has a chance to visualize the character.

Benefits of Animation as an Affective Learning Tool

- The abstract ideas and complicated grammar can be visually capture using animated video.
- 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text. – [Source](#) by [Amanda Sibley](#)
- 40% of people will respond better to visual information than plain text. (Source: [Zabisco](#))
- Animated videos are psychologically appealing.
- Animation is inspired and interactive way for flexible education and training, learners will be more motivated to learn more and more.

Conclusion

The study concluded that animated movies are a very effective mode of teaching English in engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu since they provide entertainment and add pleasure to the learning process. Students learn on both conscious and unconscious levels while enjoying the movie clips. The process also helps them recall the learned concepts more efficiently due to the link between the learned concepts and the animated images in the movie. Offering engineering students the opportunity to develop adequate and comprehensive English language skills is increasingly becoming a necessity and it can be concluded that this method will

improve the language skills. The animation method can help the students to enhance the LSRW in engineering colleges which at present is in the lower level in language proficiency. It is observed that animation can reduce learners' time and make more practical and task-oriented. The language learners who have learnt English language in schools through chalk and chalk will feel happy of seeing animation videos as a way of learning English grammar. Indeed, students will remember much more when learning through animated videos than learning from a workbook.

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**Investigating the Effects of Topic Familiarity, Proficiency, Gender on the Task
Performance of ESL Learners' Listening Comprehension**

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Abstract

In the academic contexts in India, language performance plays a crucial role. The challenge is even more when learners have to listen to a text in English and work on tasks based on the same. Literature in the domain avers that several variables affect learners' performance (whose second language is English) while they work on a task. According to Bui (2014), topic familiarity is one of the 'task-internal readiness' factors that affects the learners' performance while they work on a task. Understanding the effects of various task variables is crucial as it can lead to a better understanding of learner performance. Based on Bui's (2014) theoretical framework of task-internal readiness, this study investigated the effects of topic familiarity, proficiency in listening skills, and gender, on ESL learners' listening skills. Participants with different proficiency levels listened to excerpts whose topics were familiar and unfamiliar to them. The findings of the study indicated that proficiency did affect the performance of the learners while topic familiarity and gender did not. The findings of this study support ESL teachers, test developers, and material producers in designing tasks that support the enhancement of language skills and gain better results in the teaching and learning processes.

Keywords: topic familiarity, performance, listening comprehension, gender

Introduction

In 1996 the International Listening Association (ILA) defined listening '...as the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages (Purdy & Borisoff, 1997, p. 6, cited in Adelman (2012, p. 515). ESL learners have to practice different types of tasks and are tested periodically. Performance in second language learning is also termed as the language output or communicative language ability. According to Bygate (2001), it involves "the ability to express ideational, interpersonal and discoursal meanings through the use of formal linguistic resources"(Bui, 2014). Many factors affect task performance in

listening comprehension. Among them, the length of the text (Carrell(2002) Demirkol (2009) Brindley and Slatyer (2002) Chen (2005), the speed of the prompt (Révész and Brunfaut, 2012), the accent of the presenter Chomsky (1965) (Kachru, 1994). Yildiz (2017), lexical density, Bloomfield et al. (2011),and Buck and Tatsuoka (1998), to name a few. Along with these, other factors such as familiarity in terms of topic, task type, and text type also affect learners' performance. Research investigating the effect of these task-internal readiness factors on learners' performance while working on tasks that aim at developing listening skills is scarce. Hence this study aimed to investigate one of the task-internal readiness factors, i.e., topic familiarity, along with the proficiency levels of learners in listening comprehension skills, and gender.

Review of Literature

Task-readiness framework

Planning as a construct or task-implementation factor operationalized as strategic planning, with-in-task planning, and rehearsal have been well-researched in task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Bui, 2014). Ellis (2005) states that planning conditions fall into two broad categories (pre-task planning, also termed strategic planning) and within-task planning (also referred to as online planning). Ellis, in 2009, modified this categorization and added rehearsal to the task planning conditions. Rehearsal prepares learners by allowing them to practice before the actual task performance. Unfortunately, the term planning is referred to as an umbrella term for strategic planning, within task planning, and rehearsal which fails to capture other generic features that may affect the performance of the learners. This seemed to fall short of demonstrating ways and means to prepare students to deal with tasks effectively. Hence, Bui (2014) proposed a theoretical framework considering both the factors that affect the external and internal readiness of the

learner which is otherwise termed task readiness as an alternative, to the framework of planning devised by Ellis (2005, 2009). The framework as advocated by Bui (2014) comprises task-internal readiness and task-external factors (Bui, 2014). One of the key aspects of this framework is the inclusion of task internal readiness which comprises four dimensions with empirical backup. They are also termed implicit and explicit planning, which consist of topic familiarity, schematic familiarity, task familiarity, task repetition, rehearsal, strategic planning, and within-task planning. A broader perspective on the idea of planning as task readiness or preparedness to enhance one's capacity to perform a task was extended beyond the task-external readiness factors because whether or not pre-task was facilitated or within task planning was provided, the familiarity of the content, the schema of the task, the preparedness or the knowledge that the learner or participant adds to the task performance, may affect the outcome. Hence familiarity with the content, schema, or task type was added to the construct of planning. In this study, topic familiarity is taken as the variable.

Schemata is one of the most important factors that affects listening comprehension as listeners during the process of interacting with the text activate a range of aspects within themselves which enable them to derive meaning and thus comprehend better. These aspects can be linguistic knowledge, prior knowledge, or background knowledge which can be patterns, or stories that link the text to the world of one's knowledge that eases one's comprehension. This claim is backed by research evidence in several studies, including those of Shin (1992), Safamanzar (1994), Berne (1995), and Zhang (2006). Thus, topic familiarity is one of the important variables that affect learners' performance. Bui (2014) examined the effects of task-internal readiness factors on learners' speaking performance. The results indicated that topic familiarity affected learners' performance. Leeser (2004) explored how familiarity with the topic, mode, and pausing affected the reading comprehension of the

subjects. Results showed that all three variables influenced the performance of the 266 Spanish as second language learners in terms of comprehension.

Language proficiency in common parlance is the ability of a person to perform in any language. It is often defined as “a person’s overall competence and ability to perform in L2” (Thomas, 1994: 330, footnote 1), Mojavezi (2013). The proficiency of the participants or the group plays a very important role and hence this has become an important variable in research in TBLT. In this study, the participants comprise both learners with low proficiency as well as learners with high levels of proficiency in listening comprehension.

Similarly, a few studies have examined the effects of gender on the performance of learners while working on tasks that aim at developing language skills. For instance, Owolewa (2017) examined the effects of attitudes and gender of the participants on the listening comprehension abilities and found that attitude towards listening and gender have a profound influence on performance. Results indicated that apart from attitude, gender impacted performance, where women performed better than men while working on tasks that aimed at developing listening comprehension. Jie and Fenglan (2003) in their study found that the performance of the female participants was better than the male participants in listening comprehension. However, Dang (2010) contradicted this and found no correlation between gender and the performance of the learners in listening comprehension.

Research in listening concerning the task-planning conditions, task-implementation factors, and their effects on performance is a relatively unexplored area. Familiarity is the extent of the task where it draws on the readymade and pre-packaged solutions. It is implied that accessing relevant schematic knowledge is key to performance. (Skehan, 1996: 97). This may be already existing and relevant knowledge of the task. However, the concept of topic familiarity draws its

theoretical backup from schema theory and needs to be revisited because it is operationalized in different ways. Bui (2014) adopted topic familiarity by taking familiar and unfamiliar topics to understand their effect on tasks that assessed speaking skills. There are hardly any studies that attempted to examine the effects of familiar and unfamiliar topics on the performance of learners in listening comprehension tasks.

Research Methodology

Adopting a mixed-methods design, the study aimed to investigate the extent to which proficiency in listening skills and gender affected the performance of learners when they worked on tasks based on listening texts whose topic was familiar and unfamiliar to them. The sample chosen for data collection for this study comprised one hundred and forty-seven participants, i.e. seventy-six from the second year of Engineering and seventy-one from Pharmacy who shared common linguistic, regional, and cultural backgrounds. The data collection tools used in this research were a proficiency test, listening tasks, recall protocols, questionnaires, and focus group interviews. Through a survey questionnaire topics that were familiar and unfamiliar to the participants were arrived at.

It was ensured that a topic that was familiar to the participants from the engineering stream was unfamiliar to those from the pharmacy stream and vice-versa. The selection of tasks was made after a series of consultations with experts, a survey on topic familiarity, and reference to standardized materials from websites like BBC Learning English and 6 Minute English. The tasks were finalized after thoroughly examining the content, duration, speed of the prompt and other factors such as the accent of the presenter, lexical density, and difficulty level keeping in view the context of learning of the participants. Idea units of each text were arrived at and were revised after consulting the experts in the area. Participants were identified as

having low and high proficiency in listening skills based on their performance in a listening test. The sub-skill of listening for specific information was selected to assess the performance of the learners throughout the study.

Subsequently, participants from the B. Tech listened to a text on *Wind Energy*, a topic that was familiar to them, and then recalled the main ideas. Then they listened to a text on *Diseases*, which was unfamiliar to them, and recalled the main ideas of the text by writing them down in points. Similarly, participants of B. Pharmacy listened to the text on *Wind Energy*, which was unfamiliar to them, and a text on *Diseases*, a text that was familiar to them.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The findings of the study from the data collected through quantitative and qualitative tools are presented in this section.

Test of proficiency in listening skills

A test of proficiency was administered to the participants pursuing B. Pharmacy and B. Tech courses to group them into those with high and low proficiency levels in listening skills. The performance of the participants was scored and the mean scores and SD were calculated. A total of seventy-six participants from the B. Pharmacy stream and seventy-one participants from the B. Tech stream took a half-hour test of proficiency in listening comprehension skills. All the students who secured below the average mean were considered participants with low proficiency in listening. Participants who secured above the average mean were considered participants with high proficiency in listening comprehension skills. In this context, participants whose scores are 7.5 and above are participants with high proficiency levels while the participants whose scores are below 7.5 were considered as participants with low proficiency levels. Sixty percent of the participants from B. Pharmacy scored below

the mean; hence they were grouped as learners with low proficiency in listening comprehension and the others as the ones with high proficiency in listening. Thirty-seven percent of the participants from B. Tech were grouped as learners with low proficiency in listening and the rest as learners with high proficiency in listening.

Proficiency, topic familiarity, and performance of the participants: An analysis

Analysis of participants' performance on an unfamiliar topic

As mentioned, participants listened to an audio and recalled the main points of the texts. The number of ideas recalled by them was scored. Then the mean and SD were calculated. As mentioned in the previous paragraph participants from B. Pharmacy listened to a text on 'Wind energy' and the participants from B. Tech listened to a text on 'Diseases'.

The table given below shows the performance of the participants with high and low levels of proficiency in listening comprehension on topics that are unfamiliar and familiar to them. FT stands for the familiar topic and UFT stands for the unfamiliar topic in all the tables.

Variable	Low proficiency			High Proficiency			t value	Difference	Df	p- value	Inference
	N	Mean	Std	N	Mean	Std					
UFT	88	7.78	3.728	59	8.47	3.664	1.108	0.690	145	0.270	NS
FT	88	8.6	0.436	59	9.02	5.75	0.584	0.415	145	0.560	NS

Table 4.3. Performance of the participants with high and low levels of proficiency on topics that are unfamiliar and familiar to them.

The number of participants with low linguistic proficiency in listening comprehension skills is eighty-eight. The mean of the scores of these participants in the topic unfamiliar to them is 7.78 and S.D 3.728. Similarly, the mean of the fifty-

nine participants whose proficiency in listening skills is high is 8.47 and S.D 3.664. The calculated t-value is 1.108, $df=145$ and $p=0.270 > 0.05$. This implies that the difference in the performance of the participants with low and high proficiency levels while working on a text whose topic is unfamiliar to them is insignificant.

Analysis of participants' performance on a familiar topic

Participants from the B. Pharmacy stream listened to a text on '*Diseases*', which is familiar to them, and recalled the main ideas. Participants from the B. Tech stream listened to a text on '*Wind Energy*' and recalled the main ideas. These were scored and the mean and SD were calculated. The mean of the scores of the eighty-eight participants, (N=88 comprises of participants from both B. Pharmacy and B. Tech) with low proficiency in listening comprehension skills, while working on a text whose topic was familiar to them is 8.60 and S.D is 4.087. The mean of the performance of the fifty-nine participants, whose proficiency in listening comprehension skills is high, while working on a text whose topic is familiar to them is 9.02 and S.D is 4.416. The calculated t-value is 0.584, $df=145$ and $p=0.560 > 0.05$. The difference is insignificant which implies that the difference between the performance of participants with low and high proficiency levels in listening comprehension skills while they listened to a text whose topic was familiar to them is insignificant.

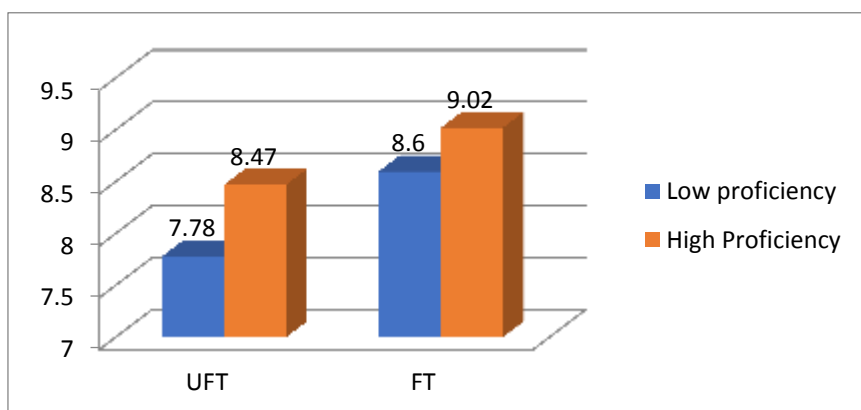


Fig. 4.2 Performance of the participants with low and high proficiency in familiar and unfamiliar topics.

It can hence be concluded that proficiency did not show an impact on the performance of the participants while they listened to texts whose topics were familiar and unfamiliar to them.

One of the incidental findings of the study was gender and performance. The next section presents the performance of boys and girls in listening comprehension of topics that are familiar and unfamiliar to them.

Analysis of the performance of the girls and boys on topics that are familiar and unfamiliar

The mean and SD of the performance of sixty-five girls while working on a listening text whose topic was unfamiliar to them are 8.08 and 3.488 respectively. The mean and SD scores of eighty-two boys while working on a listening text whose topic was unfamiliar to them were 8.05 and 3.890 respectively. The t-value and the difference in mean and p-values are .046, .028, and .964 respectively. The calculated p-value is greater than 0.5. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls when they listen to a text whose topic is unfamiliar to them.

The mean and SD of the performance of sixty-five girls while working on a listening text whose topic was familiar to them are 8.48 and 4.416 respectively. The mean and SD of eighty-two boys while working on a listening text whose topic was familiar to them are 9.00 and 4.055 respectively. The t value, and the difference in mean and p values are -.747-523, and .456 respectively. The calculated p-value is greater than 0.5. The difference in the performance of boys and girls when they listen to a text whose topic is familiar to them is insignificant.

The following table presents the performance of the girls and boys in topics that are familiar and unfamiliar.

Group Statistics

Gender		N	Mean	S.D	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Diff	p	Inference
UFT	Girls	65	8.08	3.488	.433	.046	145	.028	.964	Insignificant
	Boys	82	8.05	3.890	.430					
FT	Girls	65	8.48	4.416	.548	.747	145	.523	.456	Insignificant
	Boys	82	9.00	4.055	.448					

Table 4.4 Performance of the boys and girls in familiar and unfamiliar topics

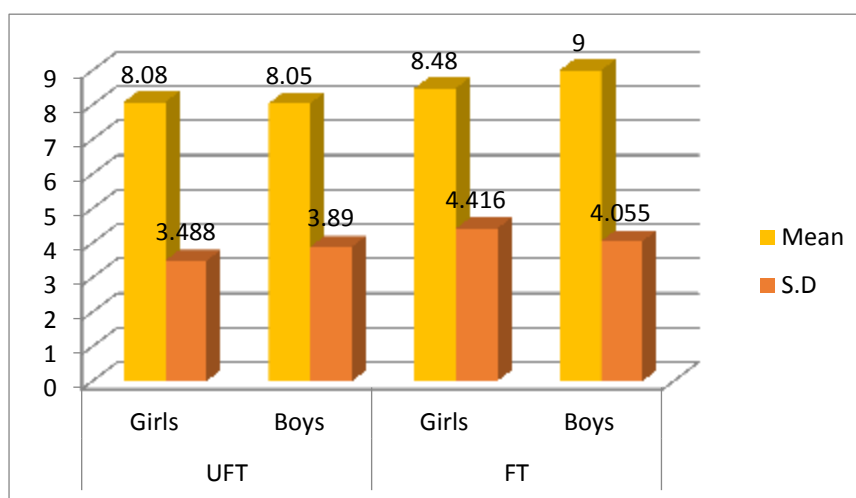


Fig 4.3 Performance of the boys and girls in familiar and unfamiliar topics

Discussion

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that proficiency in listening skills did not affect the participants' performance while listening to texts that were familiar and unfamiliar to them and recalling the main ideas of these texts. To corroborate the effects of proficiency in listening on the comprehension of the participants, research in this area is scanty. However, Schmidt-Rinehart (1995) examined the effects of proficiency (in terms of course level) on the participants' listening

comprehension and stated that proficiency did affect the listening comprehension of the learners.

Several studies explored the effects of topic familiarity on the learner's performance. For instance, Olivia (2018), found that the listening comprehension of the learners and topic familiarity are positively correlated. Apart from this, the results of the studies of Schmidt–Rinehart (1995) Chiang and Dunkel (1992), William and Thomas (1991), and Othman and Vanathas (2004), reported that the scores of participants on topics that are familiar to them are higher than those on unfamiliar ones. Thus, it can be noted that topic familiarity influenced learners' performance in listening comprehension. However, there are hardly any studies to corroborate the results of the current study as most of the studies examined either the effects of proficiency or topic familiarity on the listening comprehension of the learners but not both.

One of the aims of the study was to investigate the effect of gender on performance. Owolewa (2017) examined the effects of attitudes and gender of the participants on the listening comprehension abilities and found that attitude towards listening and gender have a profound influence on performance. Results indicated that apart from attitude, gender impacted where females performed better than males in listening comprehension. Jie and Fenglan (2003) in their study revealed that the performance of the female participants is better than the male participants in listening comprehension. However, Dang (2010) contradicted this and found no correlation between gender and the performance of the learners in listening comprehension. The findings of Dang (2010) are in tune with the findings of this study where there is no correlation or relation between gender and performance.

Conclusion

The findings of this study inform that various task-internal readiness factors influence ESL learners' performance in listening comprehension in different ways. However, further studies are necessary to examine the impact of task-external

readiness factors on the learners' performance in listening comprehension. There is scope to research further the effect of both task-external readiness as well as internal readiness factors. Research in this direction may also be taken up. To conclude, this study primarily focused on listening comprehension abilities of the learners, further studies to examine the perspectives of the teachers would be very useful and helpful. This would facilitate insights into the opportunities of creating and implementing cross-curricular learning, to transfer listening comprehension abilities at a classroom as well as institutional level.

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Effectiveness of Language Laboratory in Developing Receptive and Expressive Skills of Non-native Speakers of English Language

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Abstract

The aim of our research is to develop the receptive and expressive skills of non-native English students. The study was experimental in nature. It was designed as 'Two groups only post-test design'. The students of grade XI from Shri Om Vidhyalaya High School, Rajkot, were selected for conducting the experiment. The researcher selected the school purposively. The Experimental group was given treatment through English Language Laboratory language and the control group was the no treatment group. There were 25 students in both the groups. The data were collected through the use of language ability test. When comparing the results of the post-test, t-test was used. A level of significance of 0.01 was obtained while the testing of the hypothesis. The comparison of the scores obtained control group and experiment group demonstrated a statistically significant gap between the score of control and experiment groups. It is therefore possible to draw the conclusion that the Language Laboratory plays a significant role in developing English Language Ability of Non-native speakers of English Language.

Keywords: ELT, Language Lab, Non-native speakers, Receptive Skills, Expressive Skills

1.0 Introduction

Modern education aims to equip students with employability skills. English is a language of opportunities, it enhances employability of students however, at the same time it demands a high-degree of proficiency. It plays a vital role in success of a candidate in the interview and in the career. Professional success will be decided by the effective communication skills in English. Effective communication ensures success and defective communication leads to failure. In fact, many students are unable to get command over English language. Communication through technology has emerged as indomitable academicians and technologists have been continuously

striving for novel methods, which paved a way for the innovative setup of language laboratories. They play a key role to equip students required proficiency with effective communication skills. They enable students to accelerate the process of improving effective communication skills with special emphasis on language skills (LSRW).

2.0 Review of related literature

Karatay (2016) studied AN INVESTIGATION ON MULTIMEDIA LANGUAGE LABORATORY IN TURKISH STATE UNIVERSITIES.

The main aims of the study were: (1) to investigate students', teachers', and administrators' attitudes towards the use of multimedia language laboratories (MLLs) at Turkish state universities. (2) to explore the factors that affect the respective stakeholders' attitudes towards using MLLs in English language instruction. (3) to reveal the reported use of MLLs in Turkish EFL context and the reasons of teachers for not using them.

The sample comprised 510 EFL learners, 61 instructors, and five administrators at 16 state universities in Turkey. The data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and emails. The data were interpreted by employing the one-way ANOVA test with the help of SPSS software.

The results of the study indicated that students, teachers, administrators are positive in general to the integrating MLLs into language teaching and learning. One-way ANOVA test conducted showed that age is an important factor in students' liking MLLs, and the type of the software used in MLLs is a key determinant of teachers' positive overall attitudes towards the MLL use. The study also revealed certain issues to be considered for a successful integration of MLLs in English language teaching.

Nadjah (2013) studied IMPROVING STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL THROUGH THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY.

The chief objective of the study was to establish the effectiveness of the language laboratory when used in English language teaching especially in developing EFL students' listening skill. The sample of the study comprised 42 students. The data were collected using a questionnaire which consisted 16 items. The data was analysed by statistical graphs.

The findings of the study were: (1) the students are aware of the significance of listening skill in language learning to the problems that they are coming across. (2) Students' use some strategies to improve their listening. They are conscious of the use of language laboratory sessions provided by the teachers to enhance their aural abilities. (3) The students have favorable attitudes about the language laboratory use such as they consider the length of time of the laboratory sessions as being not enough.

Shyamala Bharathy (2016) studied TEACHING AND TESTING OF SPOKEN ENGLISH IN THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY – A STUDY IN THE AFFILIATED COLLEGES OF ANNA UNIVERSITY, CHENNAI, INDIA.

The primary objective of the present study was to evaluate the use of the language laboratory to teach speaking skills as part of the fifth and sixth semester course in Anna University, Tamilnadu, and its affiliated colleges.

In the present study, 200 students and 20 teachers were selected as a sample. Two questionnaires were developed for the data collection. The collected data were analysed with the help of pie chart and descriptive statistics.

The major findings of the study were: (1) The implementation of the syllabus in the language laboratory is not significantly different from the proceedings in the traditional classroom. (2) Though most of the teachers answered that they liked facilitating the development of speaking in the language lab most teachers are very uncomfortable using technology to teach language. (3) The teaching and testing of

spoken English in the language laboratory does not follow a set of parameters that have been formulated in the line of some of the international language tests / exams that are computer adaptive. This in the language lab means that teachers in different colleges use different criteria to evaluate students' performance in the exams thereby reducing the validity and reliability of the test itself. (4) Surprisingly, teachers in the southern districts of the state, (where it is normally assumed that they will not have the awareness, knowledge and creativity to be very innovative) were found to produce practice materials for use in the language lab, to develop the speaking skills of their students.

Ashish Shukla (2015) studied ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LABORATORIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: A STUDY.

The chief objectives of the study were: (1) To find out a faster and effective way of teaching English as a second language. (2) To define the right utilization of Language Lab. (3) To check the effectiveness of visualization and audio listening in ELT. (4) To define the use of English Language Laboratories in teaching communication and Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. (5) To define the use of English Language Laboratories in teaching grammar, vocabulary. (6) To find an effective way to improve pronunciation.

The sample comprised 50 students. Two groups were formed each of 25 students. One was the treatment group and the other was control group. A teacher made test was conducted after the experiment for the data collection. The data were analysed by employing t-test with the help of SPSS.

The major findings of the study were: (1) In controlled group there is a possibility of distraction if learner gets any interruption where in treatment group learner can focus properly because of the help of separate computers in cubicles. Computers keep learners active as continuous interaction happens. For good progress of learner, it is advisable to give students a space for individual progress and keep an eye on

one's work. (2) The best result can be found in pronunciation improvement. Language lab has a facility of MTI removal tool. It has word practice according to sound, so it helped a lot. The common and remarkable improvement is in the pronunciation of words like Potato, Tomato, Bowl and Pan. For a trainer it is very important to focus on pronunciation so in daily class regular time could be fixed for pronunciation practice. Through this regular practice learner can properly pronounce many similar words.

P. Kusumal (2011) studied AVAILABILITY AND UTILISATION OF LANGUAGE LABORATORIES.

The major objective of the study was to find out the availability and utilization of Language Laboratories in Govt. Higher Secondary Schools in selected districts of Tamil Nadu.

The sample of the study comprised 1024 students and 107 teachers and head masters. Questionnaires were given to them for the data collection. The collected data were analysed by pie chart and percentage as a statistical technique.

The findings of the study were: (1) a large majority of Heads, teachers and students have uniformly stated that Language Laboratory activities should be given in earlier classes itself. (2) There is an agreement among Heads, teachers and students in their response to no adequacy of time. All of them want more time for Language Laboratory activities. (3) Similarly, all the three groups have pointed out the non-availability of Language Laboratory user-manual. (4) More than 80% of the teachers and students have uniformly stated that they require additional time for Language Laboratory activities. (5) Again, a similar percentage of teachers and students have expressed the need for introducing Language Laboratory at earlier classes.

Joel Joselin (2015) studied FUNCTIONING OF LANGUAGE LABORATORY IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: a STUDY OF GOVERNMENT AND AIDED COLLEGES IN CHENNAI DISTRICT.

The chief objectives of the study were: (1) To examine the conditions of a conventional instruction classrooms in the selected schools. (2) To find out the existing language lab and its functioning in language teaching (3) To find out facilities available in the language lab to facilitate students learning lab. (4) To find out utility aspects of the language lab to meet the needs of the students. (5) To evaluate the attitude and involvement of language teachers in Government colleges in using this language lab facilities.

The sample of the present study comprised around 400 students from 14 government and grant-in-aid colleges. A detailed questionnaire was given to the students for the data collection. The collected data were analysed by bar chart and statistical techniques like mean and standard deviation.

The major findings of the study were: (1) The research finds that there is no significant difference in functioning of Language Laboratory with respect to the Gender of the in charge of the language laboratory. The standard deviation of Male and Female shares the value as 113.3636 VS 113.9143(SD value 4.0153 Vs 4.1841). This may due to the 156equal opportunity provided by the Government and Aided colleges to its students. (2) The research finds that there is no significant difference in functioning of Language Laboratory with respect to the locality. The mean value of Rural and Urban share the value as 113.5588 VS 113.5893(SD value ratio as 3.6071 Vs 3.7580). This may be due to the equal facility available in the Government and Aided colleges with respect to locality.

Sunilkumar Shah (2012) studied A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF DIGITAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LABORATORY PROJECT WITH A VIEW TO ARRIVING AT A SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT.

The chief objectives of the study were: (1) To evolve a set of criteria for critically evaluating the DELL project. (2) To identify the problems in the conceptualization and implementation of the project. (3) To arrive at a set of recommendations for improvement of the functioning of DELL.

The sample of the study comprised 111 students and 102 teachers. Separate questionnaire was prepared for both teachers and students for data collection. Five teachers were also interviewed for data collection. The collected data were analyzed by graphs and statistical techniques like mean and standard deviation.

The major findings of the study were: (1) the study indicates that most DELL coordinators have been using computers for teaching. However, there are several coordinators who were not covered under the professional training imparted. It is therefore recommended that an intensive training program in well-equipped laboratories under the guidance of competent trainers be accorded top priority. (2) The analysis of teachers' questionnaire, Google groups and DELL status report reveals that most of the laboratories have not been able to enroll adequate number of students. The reasons that surface is related to timing and financial constraints. At the same time lack of proper incentives for DELL coordinators seems to have affected the enrolment of students in DELL. It is therefore important that economically disadvantaged groups be provided financial support. DELL classes should be incorporated in the regular timetable. Moreover, along with DELL certification, it is recommended that DELL courses should carry some additional credits which may motivate the learners.

3.0 Objectives of the study

The present research is carried out with the following objectives.

1. To study the effectiveness of Language Laboratory in developing English Language Ability of Non-native speakers of English.
2. To analyze the relation between receptive skills and expressive skills of English Language of Non-native speakers of English developed through English Language Laboratory.

4.0 Hypotheses to be tested

The following hypotheses are formulated for the experimentation.

1. There would be no significant difference between the average scores on English Language Ability Test of the experimental group and the control group.
2. There would be no significant correlation between the average scores on Receptive Skills and Explanatory Skills Section of English Language Ability Test of the Experimental group.

5.0 Variables involved in the study

The present research is an experimental research. Variables involved in the study are...

1. **Independent Variable** Language Laboratory is the independent variable in the present research.
2. **Dependent Variable** Students' mean scores on teacher made post-tests i.e. educational achievement will be considered as dependent variable.
3. **Control Variables** the Variables Gender and area were controlled during the experimentation.
4. **Moderate Variables** Receptive Skills and Expressive Skills were used as moderator variables.

6.0 Operational definitions of terms

The following terms used in the research have been defined with a view to clarifying the connotation in which they are used in the present research.

Language Laboratory: In the present research, the term language laboratory means a laboratory equipped with basic English Language Training Modules, a Projector, microphones with input and output system.

Experimental Group: the group receiving the treatment during the experiment will be considered as an Experimental Group.

Control Group: the group not receiving the treatment during the experiment will be considered as Control Group.

English Language Ability: The scores obtained by the students on English Language Ability Test will be taken as English Language Ability.

7.0 Significance of the study

The significance of the present study can be pointed out as under:

1. It will bring novelty and interest in routine learning process using educational technology.
2. In the twenty first century, the focus of the language teaching has been diverted from grammar and memorization to the development of oratory and explanatory skills. The language laboratory can be the best medium to improve these skills.

8.0 Delimitations of the study

In the present experimental study, the experiment was conducted on 11th grade students of Gujarati Medium Schools with a view to improving their English Language Ability with special focus on their receptive and expressive skills.

9.0 Sample

During the experiment, the students are to be taught for at least two months in the language laboratory. Another important consideration in the selection of the sample is willingness of the school authorities to allow the experiment to be conducted for the students. So, a volunteer school is selected purposively.

The students of grade XI from Shri Om Vidhyalaya High School, Rajkot, were selected for conducting the experiment. The researcher selected the school from Rajkot city purposively. Students studying in grade XI will be the subjects of the study. The divisions of grade XI in the school were selected by randomization.

From the selected division two groups were made equal by their scores of English subject in SSC Board exams. The Experimental group was given treatment through English Language Laboratory language and the control group was the no treatment group. There were 25 students in both the groups.

10.0 Research design

The present research is experimental in nature. It is designed as '*Two groups only post-test design*'.

Pre-test was not the part of the study. The data was collected by administering the post-tests on both the groups on one and the same day. After the treatment phase the scores of the students obtained on the post-test were analyzed by employing t-test and correlation as statistical technique. Effectiveness of language laboratory and the correlation between receptive and expressive skills were found out by testing the null hypotheses.

11.0 Tools of research

To measure the independent variable after the treatment phase a language ability test was employed to test English Language Ability.

12.0 Execution of the Experiment

In the present experiment, the students of the experimental group were given the treatment through English Language Laboratory for about 60 hours. The student will be provided experience in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English Language throughout the experiment. Different Language Learning Activities were the part of the treatment. Each of the students were provided experiences in each of the skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

13.0 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The prime aim of the present study was to study the effectiveness of Language Laboratory in developing English Language Ability of Non-native speakers of English. 't-test' of the collected data was found using SPSS to assess the same. The observed result is as under:

Table: 1.1 Classification of scores obtained by the Students on English Language Ability Test

	No. of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value
Experimental Group	25	22.70	4.55	5.28*
Control Group	25	15.85	3.58	

*Significant at 0.01 level

It is visible in the table 13.1 that the average score of the experimental group was 22.70 and control group was 15.85. The Standard Deviation of both is 4.55 and 3.58. The t-value was 5.28 which is significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, the null hypotheses "There would be no significant difference between the average scores on English Language Ability Test of the experimental group and the control group" was not accepted. The observed difference was in favor of the experiment group so, it was concluded that

Language Laboratory does impact significantly in developing English Language Ability of Non-native speakers of English Language.

The second aim of the study was to analyze the relation between receptive skills and expressive skills of English Language of Non-native speakers of English developed through English Language Laboratory and to overcome the said objective, correlation of the score of receptive and expressive skills of the students of experimental group was computed and found to be 0.89 which is very high correlation. Therefore, the null hypotheses *"There would be no significant correlation between the average scores on Receptive Skills and Explanatory Skills section of English Language Ability Test of the Experimental group."* was not accepted which means there was highly significant correlation between the average scores on receptive and expressive skills section of English Language Ability Test of the Experimental group.

14.0 Findings

After analyzing the data, the following conclusions were made according to the present study:

1. Language Laboratory play a significant role in developing English Language Ability of Non-native speakers of English Language.
2. There was highly significant correlation between the average scores on receptive and expressive skills section of English Language Ability Test of the Experimental group.

Discussion

It was found out from the present study that the learners facing difficulties specially in speaking English Language can be given experiential learning through Language Laboratory to develop communicative English Skills. It was also found that it student masters' receptive skills of language then it can also be beneficial in

mastering the expressive skills of the language. It was concluded from the students' feedback that English was never found so interesting and easy until they got experience in the language laboratory. The fear of the foreign language was overcome with different activities.

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