

THE IMPACT OF WEBINARS ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH TO THE SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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Abstract

Due to the technological reformations, there have been considerable shifts in education system in the cybernetic epoch. Teachers have been advancing their knowledge and enhancing their teaching skills using diversified resources. The internet has become the paramount source for them to retrieve materials and adopt variegated pristine techniques. With the onset of the internet, the pedagogues of English language have got the virtuous opportunity to streamline their knowledge and use the avant-garde and bottommost techniques in their teaching in order to exhilarate and quench the yearnings of the novices. Attending seminars and conferences is one among the skills of modernizing the newfangled trends in the English language teaching. As webinars serve the purpose, most of the teachers of English have been attending them at home or in their offices without travelling great distances. Since the cardinal objective of orchestrating webinars is to enlighten the teachers with the modernistic trends and modi operandi of the English language teaching, they have become indispensable for the newfangled teachers to execute the state-of-the-art technology efficiently and productively in the English classrooms. This paper throws a light on the impact of webinars on the teaching of English to the speakers of other languages.

Key words: English language teaching (ELT), innovative, latest techniques, speakers of other languages, teachers, webinars.

Introduction

Technology has brought fantabulous changes in all spheres and education has no exception. In the twenty-first there have been drastic vicissitudes in the arena of education and it resulted in for the latest developments in teaching and learning field. When we consider English also, there are many novel techniques and methods that have been taking place from time to time. The teachers of English in the modern days are almost saying goodbye to chalk and board and using the latest available technological devices such as digital and smart boards in their classrooms to attract the attention towards the teaching content.



Due to the technological changes, people are accessing the required information through the internet anytime and anywhere. In this regard, search engines are helping a lot and people are retrieving the data without any difficulty. People are doing a lot of business using the internet. Now-a-days, the concept of e-business has been gaining more popularity. The present generation of people are even ordering for the required things online and getting them home. It saves their not only time but also energy and money. Moreover, most of the business organizations hold their meetings, conferences or seminars by conducting them virtually so that the participants can attend from all over the world just by staying in their offices. This prodigious opportunity is provided to us only with the advent of the internet. Furthermore, one can travel to any country just by booking their tickets and hotels and enjoy the trip without any hurdle. GPS is another advantage of the internet. By using GPS, people are in a position to travel comfortably to their desired places without taking assistance or guidance from anyone.

It is a known fact that the internet has transformed the entire world and it has brought tremendous changes in the lives of human beings. Since the internet is so powerful in all the fields, it has been used in the education system to bring drastic changes in teaching and learning system. The present education system has benefitted a lot since the inception of the internet. The teachers have been using the internet in the modern era in order to present their lessons in an entirely different way. With the advent of the latest technology in education, one can witness the developments that have been taking place from day to day.

The internet has been very much useful for the entire community of teachers as well as students. The twenty-first Century teachers have been utilizing the state-of-the-art technology in order to bring drastic changes in the learning process. In this regard, a majority of teachers adopt various teaching techniques to satisfy the needs of the learners. Since the main objective of the teachers is to make the learners understand the content in an easy way, they use the latest technology such as computers, laptops, mobiles and so on. As a result, the

learners are also in a position to use them in the classroom. It also moulds the learners to make use of these devices and become independent learners.

As the learners are given freedom in using the electronic gadgets, they can not only make miracles in learning the given content but also work on their own and learn many more things beyond the given content. At this juncture, the teachers should take care as more independence leads to misuse of the available technology. Hence, the responsibility of the teachers is to check the work of their wards to prevent them in misusing the modern technology.

The introduction of Webinars

In order to motivate the learners towards their learning objectives, first off all, the teachers should always know the reality that they have to continue learning new things and enhance their teaching skills. Since there is a high impact of introducing faculty improvement programmes by arranging seminars, conferences, workshops, refresher courses and so on, the teachers will be in a position to grasp and understand the ongoing trends in education. As the teachers have to spend a lot of time and money to attend such kind of programmes, most of them do not show more interest in attending them. With the introduction of webinars in the educational system, there is no need to spend more time and money and the teachers can attend them just by sitting in their offices. As long as they have powerful internet, a laptop or mobile and a headphone, they can attend these webinars. Since the concept of webinars is to bring online seminars nearer to the attendees, especially, to the doorsteps of the teachers to develop their teaching techniques, approaches, methods and strategies, the modern dynamic teachers must show more attention towards these webinars.



Webinar and its definition

There are a number of definitions given in the modern dictionaries to the word 'webinar'. According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, "A webinar is a presentation or seminar which is a meeting for training or discussion that is conducted over the internet".

Another online dictionary named dictionary.com defines a webinar as, “A seminar or other presentation that takes place on the internet, allowing participants in different locations to see and hear the presenter, ask questions, and sometimes answer polls”. Collins dictionary gives its definition for a webinar, “A webinar is an interactive seminar conducted over the internet”. According to Cambridge Dictionary, “A webinar is an occasion when a group of people go on the internet at the same time to study and discuss something”. According to Techtarget, “A webinar is an educational, informative or instructional presentation that is made available online, usually as either video or audio with slides”. The word ‘webinar’ has been created from the phrase “web seminar”, which is frequently held over the internet as a seminar or workshop that involves a demonstration, discussion, presentation or any other instructional event. Some linguists termed webinar as an online seminar or workshop that is presented over the internet. Generally, a webinar is a virtual and live event that is performed online. So, a webinar is a live, virtual event that is executed online and it is an educational or instructive session that includes audio and visual communication between a speaker and the participants.

The duration of a webinar

Many researches have been done on the duration of a webinar and they have revealed their reports on it. On the survey conducted by BigMarker via Medium on the webinar attendees on the length of the ideal webinar and found out that 44% attendees are very much interested in attending a webinar which holds for 45 minutes and another 41% interested in 30 minutes length of a webinar whereas only 10% attendees are interested in 1 hour duration of a webinar and 5% are interested in a 20 minutes of duration of a webinar. While speaking about the ideal time of the webinar, The BigMarker cites, “The ideal length of a webinar should be 30 to 45 minutes long, with 41% of people choosing a 30-minute webinar, and 44% performing a 45-minute webinar”.



Data Source: BigMarker via Medium

(<https://medium.com/@BigMarker/12-webinar-statistics-you-need-to-know-b3e28b275abe>)

In a survey report conducted on the webinar viewing time by ON24 and their 2018 Webinar Benchmarks says, "The average webinar viewing time in 2018 was 56.4 minutes and most webinars run for an hour". These survey reports stated that the ideal webinar should last for 40 to 45 minutes.

The Significance of Webinars in Education

In this digitalized global world, everything is possible for a common man to reach it with the help of the internet. The same is in the case of webinars. Almost all the passionate people are experiencing the fruits of them by utilizing these webinars in various ways. Since they are cost effective and save more time, many business organizations as well as educational institutions have been utilizing them in training their staff with the latest available techniques. Especially, in the field of education, they are more useful as the teachers have to be always trained with the latest techniques, novel approaches, innovative ideas, ground-breaking and unique strategies. As most of these webinars aim at training the teachers with renewed and modern trends in education, the teachers should grasp the new ideas instantaneously and try to implement the same in their classrooms. Consequently, the learners also find interest in their subject of learning and they succeed in achieving their learning goals. This really reduces the burden of the teachers and they always try to invent many more new techniques and methods in a way that their students can grip the content more effortlessly.

The impact of Webinars on the Teaching of English to the Speakers of Other Languages

Webinars have become more successful in promoting the teaching skills of the teachers in general and the teachers of English in particular. As there is no scope for all the English teachers to attend the conferences, seminars, workshops that are conducted at different and far-off places, webinars are very much convenient for them in whittling their career and modernizing their knowledge. Since most of the speakers of the other languages think that English has become a burden for them and they try to avoid learning it, the teachers of English can get revolutionary ideas in changing the behaviour of the learners by getting the innovative techniques that are discussed in the webinars. Moreover, the teachers of English find it very easy in getting touch with all the trends that are useful in motivating and attracting the learners in learning the English language by using very expedient guidelines.

In teaching of English to the speakers of other languages, the teachers of English have to put a lot of efforts in presenting the concept. For this purpose, they have to refer to a lot of books in order to satisfy the needs of the learners. Moreover, the modern learners are in a position to access all the available data since most of them have their own mobiles and they always use them to browse the net in getting the available information. As Rao, P. S. (2018) states, "Though these webinars last for a short period of time, they provide more detailed knowledge about the subject that is presented. So, the participants get valuable information about the

latest strategies, techniques, methods and approaches of English language teaching and learning from those webinars”. Thus, there is a need for the teachers of English to investigate and search for the needed information required for their learners. At this juncture, webinars are more suitable for them in getting the latest information on the English language teaching. Actually, webinars are frequently used as training or learning tools for both the teachers and the learners in ELT and ELL environment. Rao, P. S. (2018) further says, “Webinars are useful instructional tools to learn English language and understand or update new developments in English language in terms of vocabulary and usage. Webinars also help the learners improve their grammar and pronunciation”. As the teachers and learners have understood the nature and principles of learning the language, they have been trying to find out the optimum ways of learning the language in a meaningful and joyful way. In this regard, most of the teachers have been browsing for the useful websites that help them in developing their career so that they can teach their wards in an entirely different way. At last, they have come to a conclusion that webinars are of great use in developing their career and to enhance their teaching skills.

As the main objective of most of the webinars is to present latest concepts and innovative techniques in teaching and learning the English language, a majority of the dynamic teachers and learners pay their attention towards these webinars. They want to enhance their teaching and learning skills by grasping the utmost useful and working techniques which are presented through the webinars that are needed to improve their teaching and learning process. With the latest information and knowledge that they get from the webinars, they can ripen their teaching skills and utilize them in their classrooms in order to make the learners understand the teaching content easy and simple by presenting it in a different way. So, the organizers of the webinars think positively to meet the needs of the English language teachers and have been arranging many free webinars with various concepts and innovative thoughts that are more appropriate for the ELT and ELL environment. The prominent organizers who conduct these free webinars online are Cambridge, Oxford, the British Council, Pearson, Macmillan English, IATEFL, EF English and so on. Consequently, a few teachers of English have been attending some webinars that are conducted by these organizers and feel very much happy after participating in them. One of the main advantages of these webinars is that they are conducted with the most experienced faculty members who have enormous knowledge on the subject. That is the reason how the doubts of all the participants of the webinars are clearly clarified with proper explanation. It is the right time to discuss the various webinars presented by many organizations which are very much useful for the teachers of ELT and the English language learners who learn English as the second or foreign language.

The webinars organized by Pearson are free for all and the topics are also related to the needs of the English language learners, especially, for ESL/EFL learners. These webinars are conducted regularly on current issues in ELT and they are presented by the most experienced ELT experts in the field. The body language and the way of presentation impress

the audience since they deliver the talk with a lot of preparation and homework. Since the main aim of Pearson webinars is to present the programmes with new concepts in education and discuss various elements related to the topic, the teachers of English as well as the learners will surely enhance their language skills. The living example for the success of Pearson webinars is only its online participants and the number has been increasing year by year because of its qualitative information and innovative topics with lots and lots of new ideas to implement in the normal English classroom. Pearson offers very limited number of webinars a year, but they are all with high quality materials. Therefore, they are more useful for the teachers of English to motivate the learners of English as a second or foreign language.

Oxford Professional Development is another organization that conducts regular webinars to develop the teaching skills of the teachers of English. These webinars are presented by their most experienced authors and professional trainers who teach the world teachers and teacher trainers. The attendees of the webinar can have a live chat with the presenter and also clarify their doubts. Another advantage of these Oxford webinars is that the participants can utilize the online webinar library at their leisure time. Oxford webinars cover the hot topics in ELT such as “21st Century Skills”, “CLIL”, “Project Work”, “Problem-based Learning”, “The Flipped Classroom Approach” and so on. Since Oxford webinars always try to introduce new topics in their webinar series, the teachers of English will surely grasp the latest topics and implement in their classrooms. As a result, there is a possibility for the ESL/EFL learners to understand the English language in a different and more interesting way.

One of the major organizers of webinars in ELT is British Council and they have been among the highest number of webinar organizers in the world. British Council webinars covers all age groups such as kids, young teens, adults and teachers. The webinars presented for each category is entirely different and the way of presentation really attracts the audience and the material is also prepared very carefully by the experts of ELT. Since their main objective of conducting the webinars is to satisfy the needs of the participants to the maximum extent, they take up the ongoing issues in the area of ELT. Therefore, the webinars conducted by British Council for the English teaching fraternity include all the essential topics that are more useful for the teachers of English in order to involve the ESL/EFL learners more in the classroom activities. Some of the topics include in British Council webinars are: “An innovative way to teach ESL children phonics”, “Engaging Generation Y with technology”, “Early story writing for YLs”, “Using Picturebooks with Children”, “Writing stories for ELT Primary”, “Children’s apps you can trust”, “A Box of tricks: warmers, coolers and fillers”, “Spoken grammar/lexical approach”, “Ingredients for successful CLIL”, “Fostering learner autonomy”, “Effective use of video in the ELT classroom”, “Ten ideas for mobile learning”, “Creativity in the language classroom”, “Classroom-based teacher development” and so on. Furthermore, British Council also prepares webinars exclusively for kids, adults and young teens with a variety of topics and these are

presented with more fun and by keeping in view of learner-centred environment. Since the webinars prepared for the teachers of English cover a wide range of topics, the teachers will learn more and more new things and put them into practice in their classrooms.

Cambridge English is another pioneer organization to conduct webinars related to ELT that are more useful for both teachers and learners of English. These webinars are more beneficial for the teachers of English, especially, those who teach the non-native speakers. The main benefit that the teachers of English can get from these webinars is that they train the teachers to prepare relevant material that is more useful for their learners. "Making learning fun with apps and games", "The value of gamification for language learning", "Taking digital risks in the language classroom", "Preparing learners for the 21st century", "Immersive games and English language learning", "How communicative testing help learning?" and so on are some among the webinars conducted by Cambridge English. Furthermore, the teachers of English can also get a chance to refresh their knowledge and learn the ongoing trends and approaches in ELT through their Facebook Live Sessions. The teachers of English are benefitted with the latest methods and materials of teaching English, more valuable instructions to involve their learners in learning the content and also to assist them to develop their career in their teaching of English to the learners of ESL/EFL. The teachers of English also enhance their teaching skills by attending Cambridge online professional development programmes. These Cambridge webinars are so useful for the teachers of English in developing their learners' language skills. Therefore, the teachers of English have to adopt the newly learned skills in their classrooms so that the ESL/EFL learners can get better understanding of the subject taught.

Macmillan Education is another expert team in providing online support for the teachers of English to develop their teaching skills. The webinars organized by Macmillan Education are beneficial for the teachers, researchers, authors, educationalists and learners as all these webinars are presented by the most experienced and professional faculty of ELT. The webinars conducted under the label of "Advancing Learning Academic Programme" cover a wide range of the latest and hottest trends that are predominant in the field of ELT. Some topics covered in these webinars are: "Flipping the Classroom", "Boosting students' confidence to communicate in English", "Teaching English pronunciation for the real world", "Getting Teens to Speak and Write", "To Speak or not to Speak", "Leading to Success", "Happy Birthday", "Shakespeare Special", and so on. As long as the teachers of English implement all the learned skills in their regular classrooms, the second or foreign language learners of English will be highly motivated and perform well in the given tasks. Hence, the teachers of English should try to attend as many webinars as possible to make the teaching and learning of English in a learner-friendly environment.

There are also many more organizations that conduct these webinars. Education First, IATEFL, National Geographic Learning and so on are some among them. The webinars conducted by them always come with the current topics that are more suitable for the modern learners and their learning styles. They are also helpful for the language teachers in

enhancing their knowledge and instructional skills. These webinars promote the teachers' teaching skills which are helpful in blooming the knowledge of the budding learners. Rao, P. S. (2019) says, "The teachers of ELT should attend all the webinars available on the internet where they get the up-to-date information about the latest developments that take place in their field and also enhance their teaching and learning skills enormously". Therefore, the teachers of English are advised to watch all the useful webinars on ELT in order to demonstrate a variety of new teaching techniques in their classrooms.

Since the webinars on ELT provide the latest information on the current trends in the English language teaching, the teachers of English will gain good knowledge on almost all the topics. As a result, the teachers of English make their classrooms lively and the learners learn the English language in a joyful and friendly environment with a lot of fun and entertainment. So, the teaching and learning process takes place in a positive way and the learners become very active in the classroom and learn the things in a positive way.

Conclusion

The present paper brings to light the importance of webinars in ELT and also their impact on the teaching of English to the speakers of other languages. First of all, the introduction of webinars is discussed. Later, the definition of a webinar and the duration of a webinar have been explained in detail. Then the significance of webinars in the field of education has been elaborated. Furthermore, the impact of webinars on the teaching of English to the speakers of other languages has been expounded exhaustively. Finally, the teachers and learners of English have been advised to attend the webinars conducted by premier institutions expertise in ELT in order to improve their teaching as well as learning. Since the main purpose of conducting the webinars in ELT is to encourage all the teachers and learners of English to escalate their scholarship by saving their time and money, the teaching fraternity is advised to attend all the webinars conscientiously. As the main purpose of conducting the webinars is to educate the participants with the brand new concepts and themes, the teachers of English have more prospects to ameliorate their knowledge. As a result, they can implement the newly learned skills in their classrooms and the learners learn the content in a distinct way and in an amicable environment. In this regard, Rao, P. S. (2019) says, "The teachers have to attend these webinars as they can attend from home or office and refresh their teaching skills and strategies in order to make their classrooms lively and attractive. This results a positive learning attitude among the learners to learn the English language skills in a new environment". As the primary goal of organizing these webinars is to demonstrate, educate or instruct, the teachers of English should attend the webinars that are conducted by premier institutions that are specialised in English language teaching such as Cambridge English, Oxford Professional Development, British Council, Pearson, Macmillan Education, IATEFL, English First and so on. Consequently, the teachers of English will be able to inspire the modern learner and implement the latest techniques, methods, approaches and strategies in their classrooms.

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