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BLENDING COMMUNICATIVE AND AI-ASSISTED APPROACHES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A STUDY

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Abstract

The English Language has been playing a predominant role in the Academic and Professional world of an Undergraduate student life. It is a key language for academic success, professional advancement, and global employability. In this AI interconnected world, proficiency in English enables students to grab the opportunities in higher education, to get through in competitive exams and to get high salary package jobs. However, undergraduate learners from multilingual rural backgrounds often face challenges due to limited exposure and low confidence. It is the need of the hour for the Language Teachers to bridge technology and pedagogy to create enthusiasm among the learners by addressing learners' affective needs. This paper delves into a blended methodology integrating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with AI-assisted approaches in the undergraduate English classroom. It is clearly visualized that while CLT emphasizes interaction, fluency, and real-life communication, AI intervention offers personalized learning, instant feedback, adaptive practice, and exposure to authentic language use. The study also highlights how these two approaches support the learner to enhance the language skills for holistic development in an AI-enabled educational environment.

Key Words: AI interconnected world, blended methodology, AI - assisted approaches, holistic development, AI enabled educational environment

Introduction:

In the contemporary education system where AI is playing a vital role, the proficiency of English language is playing a predominant role not only in attaining academic success but also for employability for undergraduate learners. In spite of its importance, even today the majority of undergraduate students from rural India are experiencing fear and low confidence due to limited exposure to the language. In this context more than Conventional Teacher-Centric Methods, Student-Centric activity-based approaches help them a lot to overcome fear and anxiety and to meet their emotional and

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psychological needs, ultimately resulting in active learning. Addressing the needs of the rural students, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as a learner-centered pedagogy stressing fluency, interaction and real-life communication. Though CLT effectively encourages speaking and listening skills, its success is inhibited by heterogeneous proficiency levels of the students in the classroom. This happened mainly due to limited time for instruction and lack of personalized feedback. Simultaneously, the advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have introduced innovative tools that are capable of providing adaptive learning, instant feedback and desired language exposure.

Review of Literature:

The recent advancements in research highlights the effective impact of Communicative Language Teaching in enhancing communicative competence among students by giving priority for meaningful interaction instead of rote learning. Scholars such as Hymes and Canale stressed that language acquisition occurs when learners are actively engaged in meaningful interactions within authentic social contexts. As Hymes (1972) opined that the child acquired competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner, while Canale (Swain 1980) said that communicative competence not only involves knowledge in grammar and also the ability to use this knowledge appropriately in a variety of communicative situations. In Indian context, particularly the rural undergraduate classrooms, CLT enhances fluency and learner participation in spite of the barriers such as large classrooms and heterogeneous groups.

In addition to this, the current advances in AI assisted language learning highlights its capacity to modify instruction as per the learners' needs and proficiency levels. AI-powered applications like chatbots, speech recognition tools and adaptive learning platforms assist learners with immediate feedback and self-paced practice. Very importantly AI minimizes fear and anxiety among the students by giving non-judgmental learning space, which is highly useful in case of first-generation students from rural backgrounds.

However, scholars opine that too much dependency on technology is risky and inconvenient, as AI can never replace human sensitivity and understanding during interactions. Hence, recent advancements in pedagogical studies recommended for blended models, combining communicative pedagogy with AI tools. Such a combination is found to improve learner motivation, independence and confidence. This literature review creates a theoretical foundation for integrating CLT and AI to address both cognitive and psychological dimensions of language learning among the rural undergraduate students in Andhra Pradesh.

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This paper recommends a blended pedagogical framework that links CLT with AI-assisted approaches to encourage learner participation and motivation. This study aims to address the problems and needs of the learners and motivate them to learn English by combining human-centric strengths of CLT with the technological advancements of AI. Moreover, the paper highlights a hybrid approach that can support holistic language development by creating an encouraging environment for the rural undergraduate students.

CLT Methods blended with AI- Assisted Approaches to enhance interest in Rural undergraduate students:

Validation for Blending CLT and AI:

Undergraduate students from rural areas come from a language environment that is multilingual in nature and has less contact with the English language outside of their classrooms. Therefore, a rural student not only has language problems but also problems related to emotions like anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of negative evaluation can seriously inhibit second language acquisition. (Horwitz et al.,1986) It means learning environments that support meaningful interaction, learner autonomy, and minimal emotional risk are crucial. Therefore, CLT overcomes these problems by providing interaction among peers and meaningful communication in context. Meanwhile, AI helps to alleviate these problems in that it is emotionally sound because it provides learners with autonomy to learn at their own ease.

Reporting Affective Needs through CLT - AI Integration:

In the process of second language acquisition affective needs such as fear, reduced anxiety, motivation, self-esteem play a crucial role. CLT activities like pair work, group work, role plays, picture description, storytelling, task-based activities promote social interaction and collaborative learning. If supported by AI tools, these activities become less frightening because AI chatbots and speech tools give opportunities for students to rehearse conversations privately before their participation in classroom activities. This blended approach builds learner confidence by reducing the barriers.

Ai Supported Communicative Activities:

(1) Role Plays and Simulations: The role-plays based on CLT can be improved with the integration of simulations enabled by AI as it aptly represents the realistic situation of an interview and day-to-day communication as it provides immediate feedback on the pronunciation, grammar, and fluency of the speaking skills of the individual so that the learner gets adequate practice time to present the same. Technology-enhanced recreations allow the learner to have plenty of opportunity for purposeful, contextualized practice and

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immediate feedback, which are key to the successful accomplishment of communicative skills. (Chapelle, Carol, 2003)

(2) Group Discussions and AI Supporting Systems: AI-based systems greatly improve CLT-based group discussions, as they enable instant support in the form of vocabulary, connectives, phrase starters, and model answers. These aspects of AI-based systems aid in dealing with the hesitation experienced by rural undergraduate students due to a restricted vocabulary and the fear of making mistakes. Using AI-based systems, students will be able to organize ideas fluently, thus building confidence, achieving fluency, and developing autonomous communicative skills in a collaborative environment of CLT.

(3) Personalized Learning and Differentiation: The major drawback of CLT in heterogeneous classrooms is its inability to support individual learner needs. AI bridges this gap by providing suitable learning paths, while teachers facilitate communicative tasks. This personal space for learning retains the interest of the learner and reduces the gap between slow and advanced learners.

(4) Enhancing Listening and Speaking Skills through AI: Through AI-powered listening modules students can expose themselves to various accents and contexts of English. Speech recognition tools help them to observe their pronunciation. These tools in combination with CLT activities like pair work, Group work and presentations, enhance speaking ability among the students, especially those aspiring for better positions.

(5) Promoting Learner Autonomy and Motivation: Encouraging autonomy and motivation in the learner is enhanced through the use of CLT integrated with AI-based tools. Though CLT encourages the learner to assume ownership of the communication process through active engagement, autonomy is enhanced through self-paced learning opportunities offered by AI. Gamified AI-based learning platforms, quizzes, and trackers not only hold the attention of the learner, and also enable the rural undergraduate students to be motivated to track their own learning and be goal-oriented and self-assessed in language learning.

(6) Teacher's Role in a Blended CLT-AI Classroom: In blended learning contexts, the teacher's role gradually transitions from that of a traditional information provider to a facilitator who thoughtfully aligns AI tools with communicative objectives. Teachers design tasks, guide interactions, and select appropriate AI resources to support meaningful language use. However, their role in offering emotional support, encouragement, and confidence-building remains central, especially for rural learners. Teachers cannot be reduced to mere operators of instructional technologies as their pedagogic and affective roles remain indispensable. Thus, while technology enhances practice and autonomy, it cannot replace the human interaction essential to effective language learning.

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Classroom Implementation Strategies For Rural Contexts:

(a) Low-bandwidth AI tools and mobile-friendly platforms:

Due to lack of advanced digital infrastructure and poor internet connectivity in the rural areas, usage of AI tools in language learning is facing significant challenges. Hence, to overcome this barrier, the use of low-bandwidth AI tools/applications that function offline or require minimal data such as lightweight chatbots, mobile-compatible language apps, voice-recording tools will serve the purpose. In fact, the effectiveness of technology for second language learning is not determined by its level of sophistication but by its degree of usability, its match to educational goals, and its ability to support meaningful interaction. (Warschauer, 2003) As mobile phones are more accessible in rural areas than desktops, these mobile-friendly tools encourage participation of the students. From a CLT perspective, AI tools like Duolingo, Memrise GPT, Hello Talk, ELSA speak etc. help with communicative practice through vocabulary practice, dialogue practice, pronunciation practice and so on and so forth.

Thus, low bandwidth AI tools create a stress-free learning environment in support of the learning process. They encourage consistency of learning beyond the classroom and empower rural students through active participation in various activities to enhance their English communication in everyday contexts.

(b) Peer Supported Learning Models:

CLT highlights peer group learning that encourages interaction and collaboration. Here the learners are provided with opportunities to communicate and negotiate meaning, leading to productive discussions. These peer-supported learning activities play a significant role in blending CLT with AI-assisted approaches, especially in rural undergraduate classrooms. Actually, peer-supported learning is more efficient when combined with AI tools. Learning provokes a lot of internal developmental processes, which function only in the interaction of a child with people surrounding him or her and through cooperation with peers. (Vygotsky, 1978)

In these methods, students work with their peers in pairs or groups to complete tasks such as group discussions, peer editing, role plays, information gap activities, gallery walk, peer assessment, and inner and outer circle discussions, while AI tools support them with prompts, vocabulary suggestions, and feedback. Students who perform better can support their partners, thereby reduce fear and encourage a sense of belonging. This collaborative environment helps learners overcome anxiety, a major affective barrier for many rural undergraduate students.

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In addition, AI tools facilitate constructive peer evaluation. Such interactions enhance essential social skills such as empathy, teamwork, interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, and decision-making. Thus, peer group learning reinforced by AI scaffolding shifts the classroom from teacher dependency to learner independence, motivating students to communicate confidently and become socially engaged learners.

(c). Integration of Local Contexts and Experiences in Communicative Tasks:

Integrating local contexts and students' local knowledge and experiences into communication tasks is another significant area holding the interest of students in rural undergraduate English classes. CLT advocates authentic communication involving local contexts that represent the students' socio-cultural background, thus engaging students more actively. Topics like local jobs, agriculture, and local issues, and local festivities give the students ample content to talk confidently about. AI-assisted models can be modified to create prompt words and dialogues according to the situation and events prevailing at the local level, providing an opportunity for the students to practice English language as per their own context. For example, chatbots assisted by AI can replicate dialogues regarding the local fair, the local governance setup, and self-help groups, thus filling the gap between English as a language of academics and English as a language for living. The integration of this activity helps to develop greater confidence and reduce affective filters, as the students feel encouraged to talk about the context that interests and fascinates them.

(d) Blended Assessment Combining AI Feedback and Teacher Evaluation:

Feedback and assessment also significantly influence the motivational and confidence levels of the learners. If properly combined with a mix of assessment techniques, technology-enabled AI feedback can provide an effective and learner-centric alternative to existing techniques for the assessment of learners. This has significant advantages for the learners since AI-based assessment tools provide automatic and personalized feedback regarding vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. According to the CLT model, this formative assessment promotes continuous communicative activity rather than a one-off action. Students are able to take multiple tries without the fear of being failed and feel comfortable testing the usage of language. The assessment could be less sensitive to the situation and emotional context, making the teacher's assessment necessary. Language teachers are able to assess communication efficacy, confidence, and facilitative skills while engaging in classroom activities and deliver qualitative feedback, encouragement, and cultural nuances beyond the capabilities of the AI-assessment technology.

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Through the integration of the accuracy of the AI technology and the human judgment of the teacher, the process of assessment becomes less frightening and more developmental. Students would see the assessment as a developmental process and instill a positive attitude towards English acquisition in the AI-based environment. Thus, the above-mentioned strategies enable the approach to be applicable and sensitive to the needs of rural undergraduate colleges.

Impact on Holistic Development:

A combination of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) not only enables the language-learning process to be strengthened, but it also enables the students to be endowed with critical thinking, team-working, and self-confidence at the undergraduate level in the rural areas. In the context of an education system supported by AI, the students' focus shifts from receiving to giving, which enables the students to prepare well both for the challenges posed by education and the workplace and for effective engagement into society.

Apart from linguistic skills, the combination of CLT and AI develops critical thinking. For instance, the CLT approach in the form of discussions, debates, and problem-solving activities allows students to share views, interact over meanings, and think about ideas. On the other hand, AI applications provide guided questions, opportunities for guided practice, and instant feedback to facilitate critical thinking. As argued by Bloom, the use of critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate, and generate knowledge instead of the process of memorization promotes the development of higher-order thinking skills. (Bloom et al. 1956)

Interpersonal and teamwork skills, vital for academic and professional success, are further developed in collaborative learning environments. CLT encourages cooperation through pair and group activities, while AI platforms allow for interaction with peers, shared learning, and attainment of cooperative goals using discussion boards, collaborative tasks, and systems for peer feedback. Additionally, frequent practice with AI-assisted tools enhances the learners' digital literacy to use technology confidently in today's digital environment.

Importantly, this hybrid model serves to enhance students' confidence and emotional well-being. AI-supported practice offers a low-anxiety space for experimentation without fear of immediate judgment, while CLT ensures meaningful peer communication. The learners who thus emerge are confident, independent, and socially engaged participants who will be appropriately prepared to meet academic, professional, and societal challenges in the modern digital era.

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Conclusion:

In conclusion, the well-integrated application of Communicative Language Learning with the use of AI tools provides an appropriate and comprehensive framework for teaching the language requirements of undergraduate rural students, especially in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Through the integration of meaningful interaction and individualized and self-paced learning, the method maintains the interest and alleviates anxiety levels of English learning among the students. The method enables the students to confidently interact within and outside the classrooms, and it also prepares the students for an AI-powered and technologically developing world.

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