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Employing Technology in Teaching English Language to the Visually Impaired Students

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Abstract:

Human body is complex machinery which is still a mystery to the humans and thus rejuvenates its profound study. The sensory organs play a pivotal role in the appropriate functioning of the humans. Eyes are the most important of the sensory organs. If the vision is affected it intensely disturbs the day-to-day life. Education becomes a challenge, especially when one has to learn a foreign language. English came to India with the advent of British and since then it thrived as the second most used language in the country. The loss of education due to visual impairment can be coped up by resorting to technology. Learning English has become easy and interesting due to the modern computer aided teaching. The new innovative techniques aid the students particularly the special students to learn language with finesse. The constant use of techniques would provide an equal footing to all the learners despite of their inevitable frailties.

Keywords: visually impaired, techniques, bilingual learners, basic program

Human body is an inexplicable, astounding and phenomenal composition modeled by the Supreme creator. As in the words of Scott *"The human body is the best work of art"* (http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/body). The genesis of life on earth is a primal contingency. The fundamental tendency of human psyche is that it is magnetized towards the disinterring of the mysteries of the mortal world. Colossal changes from primordial era to this contemporary period are witnessed in every domain. Science has made an enormous progress especially in the study of human physiology.

It is righteously remarked by Evelyn Glennie *"The human body and mind are the tremendous forces that are continually amazing the scientists & society. Therefore, we have no choice but to keep an open mind as to what the human being can achieve"* (http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/human_body.html). The human body is a bewildering miracle and an incessant topic of research. The sensory system comprises of sight,

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hearing, smell, taste and touch. These constituents if become non-existent it would lead an individual in a vegetable state.

Eighty percent of the sensations are imbibed by the eyes. *"The face is the picture of the mind with the eyes as its interpreter"* (Cicero, http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/eyes? page=2). Eyes enable individuals to see and identify array of objects enveloping them. The sensory organs are like the input devices of a computer. The eyes perceive and send an input to the brain. The sensed information is processed in the cerebrum and the output is received as a reaction.

2

When this sensory organ's task is hampered in any manner the predicament which arises is known as visual impairment. Dr. Mandal explains *"Visual impairment is defined as the limitation of actions and functions of the visual system"* (http://www.news-medical.net/health/Types-of-visual-impairment.aspx). It is a situation which may appear in either of the following forms mild, moderate, severe, profound, near-total and total visual impairment. Apart from the first two, rest of them create a problem. When vision is impaired adversities crop up due to which the daily life suffers.

These hardships increase in the matters of education. In order to receive edification of any branch the knowledge of Language is an obligation. In the contemporary scenario English Language has emerged as a global language. This language is often treated as a foreign language. English arrived in India with the advent of British and since then it thrived as the second most used language in the country.

In India almost all curriculums except the particular language courses are imparted in English and Hindi mediums. Majority of the students choose English as their mode of learning, it is difficult to impart its lessons to bilingual learners. It becomes even more convoluted to impart it to students with special abilities predominantly the ones visually impaired. Routine teaching methodology will not cater the needs of every student without creating an unintentional discrimination. In the existing milieu technology has evolved as a boon. Its application principally in the education sector is revolutionary and brings all students at par. Usually it is observed that on loss of ability one ripens another talent.

Now-a-days youth are engrossed in usage of technology even for studying and feel bored with usual classes. Employing computers is the device which can furnish the needs of all the learners including the visually impaired. In order to foster an equal treatment and effective learning to the class a need to introduce a basic program is required. The basic scheme which can be developed is as under:

❖ Formulation of a language lab is mandatory

❖ Incorporation of computers specially the ones which would be modeled to assist the visually impaired students

❖ Apart from the usual computers the ones containing Braille keyboards, voice recognition software like Dragon Dictate, ViaVoice, Google Voice Search, Dragon Naturally Speaking software etc and Real Time Text to Braille scanner or Eye Pal scanners would aid as input devices

❖ Headphones would enable the students the ease of hearing

❖ Braille printers they will be helpful to convert e-text into Braille text

❖ Braille Display enables to read the text on screen in Braille

❖ A prep up lesson for using these techniques for the students as well as the mentors

❖ In order to learn English language one has to work on the oral and written skills

❖ Oral skills can be developed through listening to audio e-books, video clips, rhymes, tones of various audio contents and utilization of internet for more audios

❖ Enriching the vocabulary by boosting the use of dictionaries would throw light on new words as well as their meanings

❖ Watching and listening to news and speeches imparted in English language will inculcate the precise treatment of words

❖ Arrange lectures on grammar because the solid base and key to a language is its grammar

❖ Grammar practice sittings could be arranged by rapid fire rounds, quizzes, written and oral screenings

❖ Take the oral discussion on a next level like class reading sessions, extempore etc can contribute in the refinement of Spoken English

❖ After the listening sessions the writing practice can be done with the help of voice recognition software, in order to enhance clear pronunciation and help in learning phonetic transcription

❖ Writing skills can be polished by devoting time and effort to the proper framing of meaningful sentences which can be assessed by grammar and spell checker softwares

❖ Group activities like word games, essay competitions, speech, reading and completion of incomplete stories or one liners would shape-up team spirit and friendship.

❖ Encourage all the students to record these sessions and lectures so they can access it as per their requisites.

These techniques are much different than the traditional classroom teaching. The students usually find it boring to attend the usual lectures but this style of teaching would charm the learners. These techniques will generate computer aided learning and provide an opportunity to get acquainted with computers too. By this panache of learning a techno-savvy group of learners will emerge which would be equivalent with the global education system.

This methodology would facilitate to boost up the confidence of the visually impaired students. As truly articulated by Dean Karnazes *"The human body has limitations. The human spirit is boundless"* (http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/human_body.html). The persona of these special students would blossom as they won't feel excluded from the main stream. They

would spread the redolence of their knowledge with such an impact that they would be uncategorized as the special students. They would be able to break the myth that *"Almost nothing need to be said when you have eyes"* (http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1342975-ba-ten-om-kvelden). Even without their vision their eyes would speak eloquently and cogently.

Prior to 18th century the learners with special abilities were deemed as inept in every realm. They were daunted as abnormal beings. This stereotypic notion is shunned with the dawn of modern age. Innovative technology has fulfilled the task to assist them and associatively equate them with society. They ascertained their instinctive mental strengths and developed them as their forte. Due to their enhanced skills they have created a place for themselves in every sphere of life. The employment of innovative techniques makes them resourceful like others beings. This would also enable them to embrace and mature their language proficiency.

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