

# Adoption of Multiple Teaching Strategies for Effective Coverage of Vast Syllabus

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**Abstract:** *Pedagogy is an evolutionary field wherein new opportunities for effective teaching-learning processes emerge; new challenges appear, followed by the evolution of new solutions. The paper explains the effective coverage of a course with vast syllabus namely, Movements in British Literature. The author had followed several strategies and in the process had also used digital tools as a supplement. It is found that adoption of multiple teaching strategies supplemented by digital tools is effective in covering vast syllabus.*

**Keywords:** Pedagogy; Strategies; Flexibility; E Resources; Digital tools

## 1. Introduction

“....., the student must gain some general knowledge of the conditions out of which English literature has come into being, as a whole and during its successive periods, that is of the external facts of one sort or another without which it cannot be understood” (Robert Huntington Fletcher 1916)

The author handled a course titled ‘Movements in British Literature’ to 21 students of MA English programme. The objective of the syllabus is to make the students understand the cultural contexts of the literature of past and its lasting aesthetic power that makes it to be read even now. Literature portrays life at the time of writing and also casts an impact on the life at the time of reading. It’s indubitable that this dual life of literature should be kept alive while covering the syllabus by making the students recollect the literature’s story, themes and character analysis and also connect it to the movement it belongs (Robert Huntington Fletcher 1916). In her efforts to make the students understand the essence of the each movement and its place in social history of England the author faced the challenge of covering a period of 500 years of social and literary history of England that encompassed evolution and establishment of five different literary movements; the impact of society on the literature and the vice versa, which eventually led to the covering of a vast syllabus. The paper explains how the adoption of multiple teaching strategies supplemented by digital tools proved to be effective in covering the vast syllabus.

## 2. Literature Survey

The multiple strategies included ensuring the right mind set of the students. Researchers have proved that mind set and goal orientation in higher education help the students to respond positively to motivation and do well in academics (Dweck, 2009). Growth mind set encompasses gaining of knowledge by embracing challenges, by being persistent in face of setbacks, learning from criticism and drawing inspiration from others success. ((Dweck, 2009). Teacher talk method is used by the author for ensuring the right mind set of the students throughout the semester.

‘Setting the Right Mind’ is followed by the strategies adopted for the Content delivery and assessment of the learning. Assignments play a vital role in ensuring learning. In line with Robert Huntington Fletcher’s insistence on Penetrative and Interpretative approach to the literature (Robert Huntington Fletcher, 1916) students were guided to identify the Themes and are made to do Characters analysis as a part of the third Assignment.

Use of E Resources is one of the important strategies adopted by the author. Printed book publishing industry continues to thrive despite the advancement in Information Technology and the subsequent rapid digitalization of sources of knowledge, Hawkins (2000), However the drawbacks in using printed books like high production costs, consumption of space, difficulty in updating and searching (Cline 2000; Hawkins 2000) could not be overruled. The expenditure involved in acquiring printed books and journals has also made the electronic books as the popular choice in knowledge dissemination and acquisition (Darnton 1999; Lonsdale & Armstrong 2000).

Technology plays a significant role in providing an array of teaching methods that are interesting as well as interactive and participatory (Baid and Lambert, 2010). Progress (in education) is not in the succession of studies but in the development of new attitudes towards, and new interests in, experience. -- John Dewey (1897). Pedagogy is an evolutionary field, wherein it magnanimously incorporates innovative practices in line with recent trends. English teaching has always been adapting technology in both content delivery and assessment. The author has identified the use of digital tools as one of the effective strategies in teaching literature.

The paper identifies quizzes as a crucial formative assessment tool. Quizzes serve both as formative assessment (Hudson and Bristow, 2006; Koch et al., 2010) and also aid for better performance in summative examinations (Kibble, 2007). Quizzes also help the students to reflect on their level of preparation (Pollard, 2006) and thereby monitor their progress in learning (O’Hanlon and Diaz, 2010). Quizzes with multiple choice questions/ True or false/open ended questions were used by the author to ensure progress made in learning.

### 3. Methods

#### Teaching Strategies adopted

In line with the recent trend of using internet for knowledge dissemination, the author delivered the course content through lecturing supplemented by the use of digital tools. Formative assessments through quizzes, brainstorming sessions, group discussions, and assignments were used to ensure learning. Retention of the course content was assessed through open book tests and remediation of the errors made in internal exams was carried out with a grammar session on word order. The author had made use of lecturing for introducing the objective of the course and teaching of grammar. Lecturing method was also used in teaching excerpts of selective original texts with word to word explanation and in giving feedback to the students.

#### Strategy No. 1: Ensuring Right Mind Set of the Students

To make the students have the right attitude towards the syllabus, the author had made the students to write the objective of the syllabus and made each one of them to explain his or her understanding of the objective in one or two sentences. The awareness over the vastness of the syllabus and the scope of knowledge gain led to the creation of respect towards the course and which later turned into developing interest in it.

During the middle of their semester the students were abstained from the feeling of exhaustion by training them not to have the 'fixed mind set' of performing well in examination instead they were made to have 'growth mind set' (Dweck, 2009).

Towards the end of the semester students were made to understand that ensuring thoroughness of the individual text was the way to cope up with the vastness of the syllabus. The students were trained not to look at the syllabus as a one big unit comprising vast texts instead they were made to look at it as a compilation of smaller units comprising individual texts. This approach helped them to feel confident about their preparedness for the exam.

#### Strategy No. 2: Fixing 'Submission Week' instead of 'Submission Date' for Assignments

The syllabus encompassed five literary movements and the author had made the students submit a set of three assignments to each literary movement. Students were made to submit Assignment- 1 on the compilation of the introduction of the literary movement and a brief account on the literature of that movement. In Assignment- 2 students were asked to write summary and characters list of each literary work of that movement (as prescribed in the syllabus).

Submission of assignments was not fixed on a single date instead students were instructed to submit the assignments on any day within a week. The flexibility found in fixing of submission week rather than fixing of submission date relieved the students the burden of sticking to dates and provided enough time to prepare and submit the assignments. The assignments were evaluated and commented upon.

#### Strategy No. 3: Use of 'Customized Quizzes' as a tool for Formative Assessment

The author framed 'Questioning –Learning –Answering Quizzes' which involved providing a question and time to carry out 'focussed reading' of looking for answers to the questions which subsequently would lead to reading about the author, the primary and text secondary sources. After preparation time the students were made to answer the questions.

Questioning, Learning and Answering took place within 50 minutes of time. Answers were not elaborative however were good enough to establish the students' learning and understanding of the texts. A sample of questions that were asked to enable learning of Faerie Queene Book II is given in the Appendix

The author had also framed 'Two Slots Quizzes' in which the class period was divided into two slots, in the first slot the students were given the topic to be learnt, followed by the time for preparation and then in the second slot a quiz was conducted on the topic. 'Two Slots Quizzes' made the otherwise disinterested students to read with interest. A sample of 'Two Slots Quizzes' framed to facilitate learning of Neo –Classical Movement is attached in the Appendix

#### Strategy No. 4: Conduct of 'Modified Group discussions'

Group Discussions on selected topic were conducted to help the students to overcome fear and anxiety while sharing a point of view and to ensure their clear understanding of the texts. The author observed that the students were running short of ideas and some of them were remaining passive in the group discussion. So the author modified the format of GD. The author permitted the students to have the source with them and made it mandatory for each student to share a point of view or idea. Three to four rounds of sharing took place in 50 minutes (duration of one class session) of time. The 'Modified Group discussions' facilitated the silent and hesitant participants to open up.

#### Strategy No. 5: Formative Assessment Performance Based Grammar Teaching

The samples who were the students of I year MA programme had three internal examinations and an end semester examination. After the first internal exam the author noted that some of the students were making errors in the use of articles and prepositions and mixed tenses in their essays. The remediation started with making them aware of the mistakes they had made in their essays. Grammatically incorrect portions of their answers were rounded off and pointed out to them. A 'Teacher Talk' on difference between mother tongue and second language learning; committing mistakes in language learning and learning from mistakes was made before teaching articles, prepositions and word order. The space given to commit mistakes and learn from the mistakes and re-teaching of grammar helped students in improving their writing which was evident in the subsequent internal examinations

#### Strategy No. 6: Teaching Coherence through Worksheets

Internal Examinations also revealed that the students were lagging in achieving coherence in their essays. The author framed a set of subtitles that served as the frame work to

achieve coherence while explaining a literary movement. The frame work was handed over to the students as a work sheet. The worksheet helped the students to achieve coherence and also showed the way of writing the essay by identifying subtitles and elaborating it.

**Table 1:** A work sheet on the frame work of achieving coherence while writing on the characteristics of the literary movements

Name of the movement	
Period covered by the movement	
How it got its name	
About the ruler and his/her reign	
Political status of England – flourishing and expanding of England at global level	
Its impact on day-to-day life	
How people lead their lives	
People's perspectives on social and personal life	
Treatment of class and gender	
Literature of the period– popular genres/ themes/ renowned literary persons and their works	

#### **Strategy No. 6: Digital Tools as a supplement to teaching Audio visual aids**

Literary movements were introduced to the students through videos. A briefing of the content of the videos was given initially and in-between the video session oral explanations of expressions and ideas that the students found difficult to understand were given. After the video sessions students were made to answer questions framed on the content of the videos. Students were provided with a comprehensive E source that had videos and PDFs of research articles on the prescribed texts.

#### **E Library Hours**

E Library Hours enabled students to access internet to download primary and secondary sources. Students were given assignment questions beforehand and they browsed internet for the answers to the assignment questions and the E content compiled by the students served as the content in the preparation of the assignments. Each student was encouraged to share the E resources in the common Email ID created for the class. The author being part of the group periodically checked the uploading and sharing of E resources.

#### **Strategy No.7: Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) –using mobile phone as a teaching resource**

Upsurge of the use of smart phones could well be utilized for teaching English. Smart apps are designed for learners of varied proficiency levels also support in creating appealing and informative slideshows or presentations. Digital teachers could make use of Apps like WIBBU, and podcasts like Luke's English Podcast – Learn British English with Luke Thompson which is being nominated for an ELTons award in the category of digital innovation

Podcasts like The TEFL join 50,000 teachers from more than 200 countries. Teachers could hone up their teaching skills by watching webinars or videos of talks by TEFL teachers on EFL Talks. Both The TEFL and EFL Talks are nominated for ELTons award for innovation in teacher resources. Teachers promoting students using their

own devices for practice sessions and assessment is looked upon as the game-changer practice in ELT.

The author tried to channelize Gen Z's addiction to mobiles to teach literature. Tool like WhatsApp helped her to build channel of communication beyond the classroom. Use of mobile also relieved her from the need of infrastructure of the lab; the availability of systems and internet networking. Students could be made to access E resources in his/her classroom by making them use their own mobile devices for learning.

## **4. Result**

Students were administered with a questionnaire at the end of the semester. The questionnaire had nine statements. Each statement represented one of the teaching practices the author tried in facilitating them in their preparations for the course 'Movements in British Literature'. A consolidation of students' response to the questionnaire is as follows:

- 1) The entire class considered 'writing the objective' was helpful in developing interest in the course
- 2) 93% of students felt that 'Teacher Talk' method of setting the mind set was helpful in having the right attitude towards the course
- 3) The entire class found 'Customized Quizzes' as a useful and interesting tool for revision
- 4) 93% of students considered 'Submission Week' rendered flexibility in submission of assignments was helpful in relieving the academic pressure
- 5) 78% of students considered 'Modified Group Discussions' facilitated in learning and sharing of ideas
- 6) 78% of students felt that Grammar sessions after the Cycle test I were useful
- 7) The entire class considered Worksheet on cohesion simplified the learning of achieving cohesions
- 8) 93% of students considered E library hours allocation was fruitful in gaining knowledge
- 9) 80% of the class registered BYOD- using mobile phones to access E Resources as a convenient means of learning

The following is the pass percentage that the students secured in the internal and end semester examinations of the course 'Movements in British Literature' taught by adopting multiple teaching strategies supplemented by digital tools:

**Table 2:** Pass percentage in internal and end semester examinations

Cycle test -I	63%
Cycle test -II	72%
Model Exam	81%
End Semester Examination	89%

## **5. Conclusion**

Teaching a course like 'Movements in British Literature' has manifold dimensions; while it unfolds the content of the literary work; it should also introduce the literary devices and techniques that are used to create the impact; should appreciate the aesthetic beauty; should relate the literary work to the period it was written and also point out the impact it casts on the readers now. The challenge of



handling such a paper could well be achieved by the adoption of multiple teaching strategies supplemented by Digital Tools as the expanding digitalized environment has lead to the compelling need for digitalization of teaching. The paper has attempted to explain how the adoption of multiple teaching strategies in teaching the course, Movements in British Literature supplemented by Digital Tools had proved out to be effective both in creating interest among the students and also in improving academic performances.

## 6. Scope for Further Research

The limitation of the current paper is that it focuses on the overall learning and performance of the entire class and not on the individual's learning experience. That leads to the scope for future researchers to carry out Quantitative and Qualitative Research on the impact of 'multiple class-specific teaching strategies' on individual students. An analysis on the differences in the individual learning styles would aid in formulating effective teaching strategies. The analysis would provide useful insights on the psycholinguistic and socio-linguistic perspectives of learning styles.

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## Appendix

- 1) A sample of Questioning –Learning –Answering Quiz' conducted to ensure learning of Neo-Classical Movement
- 2) Write two sentences on Neo
- 3) Write one sentence on Classic
- 4) Frame two words starting with 'r' to explain Neo-classicism
- 5) What is the period of Neo-classicism?
- 6) Neo-classicism is the period of \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_( two literary persons to be mentioned)
- 7) Neo-classical poets traced the spirits of \_\_\_\_\_ Age
- 8) R\_\_\_\_\_m is the most essential feature of neo-classical poetry
- 9) Neo-classical poets disregarded \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) Neo-classical poetry can be termed as \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are dominant elements of neo-classical poetry

**II 'Two Slots Quiz on Neo-Classicism Movement'** Topics that are given in one of the 'Two Slots Quiz' that was conducted to ensure learning of Faerie Queene Book II

- 1) Purpose of writing Faerie Queene Book –II
- 2) Importance Spenser gave to his personal belief in Faerie Queene
- 3) Renaissance Man in Spenser with reference to Faerie Queene
- 4) A note on Spenser and his literary works
- 5) Depiction of Temperance in Book –II
- 6) Allegory in Book-II
- 7) Characters of Book –II
- 8) Spenser's portrayal of women is ahead of his time. Justify
- 9) Women characters of Book –II
- 10) Righteous characters of Book –II with a brief note on their encounters with evil characters
- 11) Negative characters and their characteristics
- 12) Arthur as depicted in Faerie Queene with special reference to Book-II
- 13) a. Palmer b. Amavia c. Blood stain staying stubborn on the new born baby of Amavia
- 14) Sansby and Huddibras as enemies of the temperance that Guyon represents

## III Questionnaire

- 1) 'Writing the objective' helped in developing interest in the course  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree
- 2) 'Teacher's Talk' on the right mind set was helpful in having the right attitude towards the course  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree

- 3) 'Customized Quizzes' served as a useful and interesting tool for revision  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree
- 4) Flexibility in submission of assignments was helpful in relieving the academic pressure  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree
- 5) Modified Group discussions facilitated in learning and sharing of ideas  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree
- 6) Grammar sessions after the Cycle test I were useful  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree
- 7) Worksheet on cohesion simplified the learning of achieving cohesions  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree
- 8) E library hours allocation was fruitful in gaining knowledge  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree
- 9) 80% of the class registered BYOD- using mobile phones to access E Resources as a convenient means of learning  
Strongly agree – agree- neutral-disagree- strongly disagree