

Educational Technology for Professional Development of English Teachers: A Case Study of the College Teachers of English in J&K

Dr. Syed Wajahat Hussain, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Educational technology has become an integral part of the teaching/learning process. It plays the role of a facilitator to boost the ELT (English Language Teaching) classes by optimizing the instruction to a great extent. The judicious use of internet has become a bridging tool for the teachers to adopt new techniques of instruction. Educational technology is, no doubt, influencing both the teaching and student fraternity to transfer knowledge and the intellectual abilities. At present, the communication system has changed the entire process of knowledge transfer. Efficient teaching procedures are primarily focused on the exchange of thoughts and ideas and educational technology has been accepted as an additional aid in the transfer of knowledge. There are various programmes that can be adopted for purposeful language teaching, like power point presentations, graphic designs to the words, animation and picturesque way of instruction, etc. These modes of teaching have contributed immensely in enterprising and enlightening the English language teaching to a great extent. Therefore, educational technology helps language teachers to be more competent and practical in language classrooms so that they may be able to teach in modern way to modern generation.

This paper tries to find out the major roles of the educational technology for the professional development of the English language teachers in Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords:

ELT in J&K, Educational Technology, Effective materials, Professional Development, Role of Teacher.

English Teaching in Jammu and Kashmir

The English Language is taught as a second or foreign language in Jammu & Kashmir. Most of the rural areas of this state lack the basic facilities for teaching of English. Today, the English language has become a global language. We cannot get access to knowledge of any field without knowing this language. It is very important for the English language teachers to use modern educational technology especially in the rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir in order to enhance the quality of teaching of the English language. Remote and far-off areas of Jammu and Kashmir are in need of trained resource –persons for better training in language skills. The goal of language teachers is to promote learners' competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. We cannot avoid teaching of English without the use of Grammar-Translation method, Direct method, Audio-lingual method or Communicative method but these methods are to be supported by the Educational Technology. Students of Urban areas enjoy maximum benefits of the modern Educational technology like the use of computer with internet facility where they can learn a lot of language related items. Rural teachers are to be trained in such language components so that they can meet with the requirements of the rural students. In this way the students of rural and far-off areas can compete with the urban students. In this paper an attempt is made to highlight certain basic uses and areas of the educational technology that can be used for professional development.

Educational Technology

Alan Hancock defines Educational Technology as:

Indeed the phrase Educational Technology has been coined principally to express the notion of men, machines and materials working together to improve the relevance of both teaching and learning process. (Hancock 5)

According to the definition given by Hancock it is clearly evident that there are three basic constituents which form the real concept of educational technology. One person or machine alone cannot perform any action if it is not directed properly. The role of the teacher still cannot be avoided. Teachers are to be professionally sound so that they can easily motivate the rural learners in acquiring communicative competence. Appropriate use of technology may actively

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assist the English language teachers to come to terms with content and ways of tackling with different learners

Human Resources

Hancock has made it very clear that by men he refers to human resources which consist of the learner and the teacher. The learner is the primary resource because his/her untiring efforts in language learning may create a good deal of influence during teaching learning process. The role of the teacher in any teaching/learning process is always central. The role of the teacher is always central in the sense that he/she guides and helps the learners by imitating, organizing, arranging and presenting the standard materials to them.

Instructional materials are used in language teaching for transference of knowledge. Instructional materials are added devices or supplementary materials which help the teacher to make his presentation concrete, effective, interesting, meaningful, and inspirational. These materials are those devices which help the learners in the assimilation and retention of ideas. (Dash 123)

Role of Instructional Materials

A teacher uses instructional material to aid in the learning of subject matter for a class. There are many forms of instructional materials like power point presentation, books with listening and reading audio/video CDs, articles, materials for project development, etc. They influence the content and the procedures of learning. The choice of deductive vs inductive learning, the role of memorization, the use of creativity and problem solving, production vs reception, and the order in which materials are presented are all influenced by the materials. Design and choice of materials will be particularly affected by resource availability, as well the capacity to teach effectively across a range of language skills. Technology such as slides, video and audio tape recorders, video cameras, and computers with projectors support instruction/learning. Hardware materials include computer, Epidiascope, film projector, overhead projector, etc. Software materials include Books, Magazines, newspapers, educational games, flash cards, etc. These are electro-mechanical equipments which can be used for effective instructions and help teachers to deal with more students with less expenditure. Software refers

to the programmes which hardware technology produces. Software technology utilizes the principles of psychology. These are the materials which stimulate students' interest towards the learning tasks, imagination of events, the power of observation and motivation for further knowledge. They help to reduce meaningless and excessive verbalism on part of the teacher and relate abstract concepts with concrete experiences. Use of instructional aids lead to introducing varieties in the teaching-learning process, make it joyful and thus, breaks up the monotony of the classroom instruction. The learners cannot be properly benefitted without the sincere cooperation of the teachers because it is the teachers who deduce various devices to explain the authentic materials and to instill in the learners the yearning for an efficient pattern of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Authentic Materials

Most of the teachers throughout the world agree that authentic materials are beneficial to the language learning process.

Authentic materials are appropriate in terms of goals, objectives, learner needs and interest and natural in terms of real life and meaningful communication. (Rogers 467)

Authentic texts are texts that are not written for language teaching purposes. They are significant and increase students' motivation for learning, make the learner be exposed to the real language. (Jordan 113)

Authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom. Considering this, it may not be wrong to say that at any level authentic materials should be used to complete the gap between the competency and performance of the language learners, which is a common problem among the non-native speakers.

Therefore, with the use of educational technology the teacher activates the learners' participation by arousing their interest. He/she is enthusiastic and wants to involve learners and make them interested. The teacher appreciates the students' efforts and evaluates them objectively. He/she has a sense of duty and emphasizes transmitting knowledge. He/she

identifies a task or activity on the machine that will help students learn the language needed in their particular context. The teacher plans how the task should be implemented including any necessary language items that may need to be introduced or reviewed for the students to perform the task or activity.

Use of Computers

As far as the concept of machine is concerned, the computer is an authentic electronic machine which can process very quickly coded information according to rule instruction fed into it. Computer is a device that processes information with great speed and accuracy. Computers process information by helping to create the information itself, by displaying, storing, recognizing, and communicating information to other computers. In general they process numbers, words, still or moving pictures, and sounds. The computer has changed the way people work, learn, communicate, and play. It is used by students, teachers, and research scientists as a learning tool all over the world, as well as by individuals at home to study, work and entertain. But computer is a human made tool which is incapable of action. It has no inborn or inherent ability to teach. It should be considered a teaching aid which is completely based on the instruction given to it by human users. In a language classroom it is the teacher who gives final shape to the material and instructional for its presentation.

Computers usually present speech, music, text, graphics, and video images on a screen.

If such components are graded properly they can motivate language learners properly.

(Hardisty 210)

Computers are also helpful in a language learning programme as they give appropriate feedback and answer a series of questions which test learners' knowledge of the rules of language and testing particular language items. If men, materials and machines are paid equal attention during the course of teaching English as a second or foreign language, it will mark a tremendous success.

Media Technology

Today, media technology is a powerful support to situational teaching, because it presents authentic speech of the native speaker and, the language is also introduced in the context of

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everyday situation. As a result of this the students learn by learning and seeing the language in action with regard to the scope educational technology as Sherrington says:

For the first time linguistic behavior could be set in its total extra linguistic context; student could observe language as it really occurs, instead of experiencing it through a series of artificially created examples. (Sherrington 2)

For listening comprehension, radio and tape or audio recorder are the two important audio equipments which can enhance learners' speaking skills. But today I-Pod and other latest audio equipments can be used in place of radio and tape recorder because these equipments have greater utility not for entertainment but for the judicious use in terms of learning language skills. However, the enormous utility which radio and tape yield cannot be overlooked. BBC English by radio is one of the sources of English language teaching. During the Second World War a number of language teaching programmes were prepared and transmitted. The ultimate purpose of these programmes was to get the detailed information about the ongoing war and these English language teaching programmes were proved successful.

Videos: Pronunciation and Comprehension of Meaning,

Today, there is a dire need to expose our learners especially the learners of rural and far-off areas to the comprehension of the meaning, contextualization and pronunciation of the English language. This is possible only if we train our teachers in the best use of audio-visual aids so that they may deliver in actual classroom situations. The use of television or data projectors has enormous potential in enhancing the learners' interest in learning the English language because the language can be seen on the screen where an action is taking place and heard in a better way. Learners can easily learn the moral and intellectual values of a particular class, age, sex and religion. Maclean rightly points out:

Television has the proper strength that it deals with what are obviously real life and stimulations. The situations are presented to the students and dealt with by the teacher and, to their manifest reality, is added the tremendous value of complete visibility. (Maclean 12)

Therefore, videos in the English classroom present a real life situation and complete communication.

Video brings a slice of real life into the classroom. It presents the complete communicative situation. Language learners not only hear the dialogue, they also see the participants in the surrounding where the communication takes place. The visual information not only leads to a fuller comprehension of the spoken language but can also benefit learners in a number of other ways. (Loneragan 1)

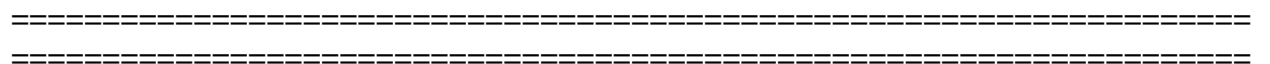
Videos and the Teacher

With regard to the video the teacher plays an eminent role in promoting active viewing and maximizing the instructional potentials of video materials. The teacher remains central in all teaching programmes taken up with the aid of media technology. Hence, video is a useful vehicle for language teacher to reinforce language teaching which does not mean to decentralize the role of teacher, but it provides the teacher with authentic teaching materials and thus promotes the teaching of language skills. It enables the teacher to make tremendous contribution in developing language skills and facilitates successful motivation for the acquisition of the target language by explaining video materials to the learners.

As in most language teaching situation the role of a teacher is the key one. It is the teacher who must harness the power of the video films; it is the teacher who has the praise responsibility for creating a successful learning environment. (Loneragan 5)

With a view to promoting learners' proficiency in language skills, the use of educational technology in present pedagogical scenario seems to be almost indispensable. Frequent use of media technology promotes learners' motivation and makes them more receptive to the visual presentation.

The main focus of this paper is on the media elements and their significance in English language teaching. These media elements can act as powerful tools in the hands of the teachers to achieve the objects advocated by the text.



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