A Study on Integrating Technology in Material Development and Task Design

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Abstract: *Teaching-Learning process involves five essential components namely student, teacher, teaching material, teaching methodology and the assessment process. Among them, 'student' plays the pivotal role since the entire process revolves around a set of learning objectives for the benefit of the student and the other components work towards the student's attainment of the stipulated objectives at the end of the process. Hence, the teaching material is expected to be predominantly a student –oriented one, catering to the requirements of the student. Today's educational scenario has been witnessing a massive transformation due to the multifarious facets of the modern Gen Y students who are the Children of Technology. Teaching materials designed using technology prove to be effective in attention grabbing, sustenance of interest, interactivity, reinforcement with involvement of all senses etc.Since English Language is acclaimed to be the best communicative language worldwide, English Language Teaching primarily aims to develop the communicative skills of the students by inculcating the four basic skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing which are indispensable for efficient communication. The present article proposes to study how these language skills can be capsuled into techno-form to facilitate effective Teaching-Learning process.*
Keywords*: ELT, material development, technology, language skills, task design*

I. Introduction

"English has become the medium of all relevant social interactions and the ability to use English effectively is considered an absolute essential for honorable existence". -Quotation from a retired Army Colonel, now working as a New Delhi text book publisher. English serves as the 'window on the world', a language in which nearly all contemporary knowledge is available. Now in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) , there is a paradigm shift from teaching to learning. The recent interest is more on 'what should be taught' than how things should be presented in the class room situation. The majority of researchers and course designers pay more attention to the 'content' or the 'material' of the language programme rather than the way in which this content should be taught. Curriculum materials should be student friendly, interesting, encouraging, enlightening and preparing them for employment. Materials should generate creativity among learners. Materials should be revised and made up-to-date at least once in every three years. In this modern era of technology, the multimedia tools are used to transform the subject matter into vivid, visual, audio and textual representation of e-content to stimulate the interest of the students and nurture their understanding.

Instructional Materials

The term "instructional materials" generally denotes text books and work books , but in modern connotation , it encompasses digital tools of multimedia as well. There is no clear cut criteria for the best material; even a letter to the editor, a blog or tweet or a video version of a literary work could prove to be effective in enhancing the Teaching-Learning process. Materials refer to anything which is used by teachers and learners to facilitate the learning of a language (Tomlinson,2011) Instructional materials are essential tools in the process of teaching-learning. They contain words, images, and ideas which are designed to develop various skills of the students such as reading, listening, viewing, thinking, speaking, writing, and using technology.

Classification of Materials

Materials can be classified as Printed materials (Textbook, student's worksheet, pictures, photographs, newspapers& magazines), Audio materials (Cassette & compact disc), Audio visual materials(Video, compact disc and film), Interactive teaching materials (Web based learning materials and computer assisted instruction), Authentic materials (teaching resources that are not specially prepared for pedagogical purposes),Created materials (textbooks and other specially developed instructional resources), produced materials (teacher

produced worksheets), Student-produced materials (Students using their own knowledge & personal background produce learning materials for their classmates) and Students as materials . To assess the effectiveness of materials, an evaluation process could be undertaken after implementing them to the selection group and the materials need to be tested for their effect on the people using them wherein their appeal to learners, validity, flexibility, ability to interest the learners, potential learning value, methods of delivery and assessment are considered.

Task Design

Task design refers to development of instructional tasks or activities for the application of materials to identify the goals or objectives. The consistent and pedagogically sound selection of materials is an acid test to achieve programme goals.The process of material development and task design should go hand in hand with the institution's annual schedule, and adequate time must be set aside for the work at hand. Depending upon the student levels, the teachers need to encourage students to explore new knowledge horizons by making use of extensive learning resources either through libraries or via internet.

Materials Development

Materials development refers to all the processes made use by practitioners who produce and /or use materials for language learning, materials evaluation, their adaptation, design, production, exploitation and research(Tomlinson, 2012).
1. The selection of materials should be relevant to the objectives of the course and the policies of the institution should also be considered in the material preparation.
2. It should cater to the needs of the students for whom they are intended.
3. Materials should be tested for level of difficulty with regard to students having different levels of proficiency. The materials identified as inappropriate for whole-class instruction might be suitable for small-group use or for independent reading by more capable readers.
3. Materials relevant to students' culture and backgrounds would be effective in enhancing their comprehension by enabling them get connected to their personal experiences with vicarious experiences.
4. In material development , the maturity level of the students should be considered more than the "Age-appropriateness" to avoid negative impact .
5. The views of all stake holders such as parents, teachers, students, professional experts of society and the members of the management hold equivalent importance in material development.
6.Both public involvement and professional guidance are equally important factors in material development.

Technology in Teaching

In the present scenario of booming information and technology, the traditional language classroom is slowly moving towards digitalization. Internet-based and Internet-enhanced language learning has become the order of the day. Internet offers certain credible ways to access up-to-date and authentic language resources and materials for language teachers and learners of a foreign language. Present day creative teachers make use of current online newscasts, websites, videos, blogs, e-books, articles, student writing samples, or materials for short-term projects etc to strengthen their teaching A thorough understanding of technology-enhanced learning processes seems indispensable for teachers and learners in the current context. (Mercy Gnana Gandhi.S 2015)

Characteristics of the Internet Technology

Instant feedback, individualized self paced learning, multiple learning styles using text, audio, video and graphics, interactivity, Online authentic materials, tremendous search capabilities of the Web for up to date information, live chats using email, MUDs, MOOs, WOOs, SMS, video conferencing and other emerging technologies such as wiki, blogs and Web 2.0, interactivity are all the boons of Internet Technology. Syllabus design and materials development are mutually inclusive. While the syllabus defines the goals and objectives of a course, the instructional materials put flesh on the bones (Nunan, 1991). Technology plays an important role in content development and delivery in English Language Teaching and learning. Reinders, H. & White, C. (2010) suggest materials for various levels: In the first stage i.e. preproduction stage, photos, graphs, charts should be used, in the second stage digital stories, audio pod casts and on line videos should be used for grammar and vocabulary. Synchronous VoIPs (Skype.com, gizmo.com, writeboard.com) should be used in the third phase to promote speaking, reading and writing. In the fourth stage CALP, e communication tools, e listening tools, e creation tools be promoted to enhance subject specific language abilities. The infusion of technology into classroom makes it less teacher-centered and more student-centered. It enhances discovery learning and learner autonomy.
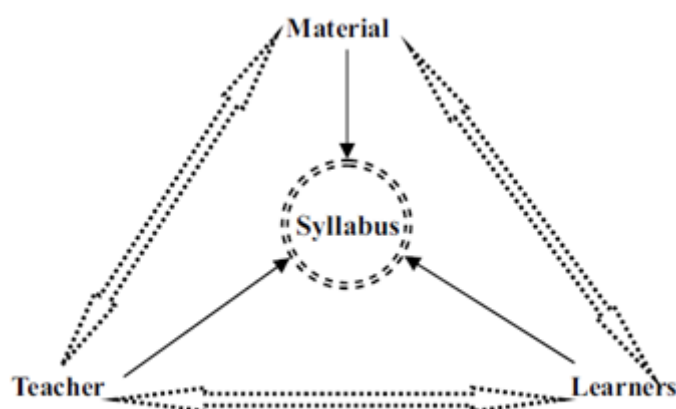
Figure 1. Critical factors affecting the syllabus design

Technological Tools

Technology is a tool to help teachers gather new information, locate lesson plans, participate in collaborative projects, engage in peer discussions and teaching forums and manage instructional materials and presentations. E-mail aids to exchange messages and computer files between students and teachers. Listservs is also a software programme with which a group can be created of people and it makes group discussion possible. Discussion Board is an on line bulletin board where the members of the Board can respond to the matters on agenda. Instant Messaging (IM) enables instant communication between two or more people for knowledge sharing. Whiteboard, a writing e-tool, is a web-based space that can be shared for writing and editing tasks. Wiki is a website that works as a reservoir of the collaborative writing or editing work of many people. These tools promote student-centered teaching because it is the students who write or edit on their own. Blogs are web logs or journals, posted on a website which can be seen by any one. Webquests are predesigned activities for learners to use to answer questions about a specific topic. A Podcast is a digital file that is created and posted on the internet and can be played back on a mobile device or on a personal computer at a time convenient to the listener. A Vodcast, like Podcast, is also a digital file with not only audio but also video component in it. Audioblog is the combination of text and audio files. Interviews, debates, discussions can be posted on an audioblog. Video sharing libraries, found on the internet, contain short video clips. Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) enable the teachers keep records in the classroom.

Material Development and Task Design For LSRW

While preparing listening texts, it is necessary to ensure good quality sound. When selecting listening materials, pre-recorded materials of radio or television programmes, announcements or other messages can be used. The material should be information-rich. The teacher can record interesting stories, speeches of famous personalities, news items, debates or other knowledge sharing programmes and make the students listen to them. Then the students can be posed queries to test their level of comprehension, understanding and listening skill. Pronunciation, stress and intonation can be effectively taught using advanced digital sound systems of modern gadgets. Students can learn listen to talks, debates, interviews and discussions in Radio, TV , computer internet or pre-recorded CDs and speak out their opinions about them. The teacher can correct their language wherever necessary. Plays and movies on famous literary works with sub titles can be utilized for making students learn the dialogues to speak the language . Mercy Gnana Gandhi.S (2015) suggests that students can be engaged in interactive language modules based on daily life situations, set up in computer and made to answer the simple queries with jumbled answers to learn the language. This will enable them apply them in their real life situations.

Teachers can store some famous literary pieces, scripts of speeches of great personalities, technical articles, and such other materials and make students read them aloud with proper pronunciation and intonation. Online power point presentations, pictures, images can help teachers teach proper sentence structures and other grammatical concepts. The teacher can make use of online quizzes and proficiency tests to test the students' understanding of grammar. The teacher can introduce some new words and phrases on display screen with images . Then the students can be asked to frame sentences making use of those words. Teachers can show pictures or hints to guide students to write stories or poems on their own.

II. Conclusion

A computer can do multiple functions such as a tutor, a partner in language games, a guide, a communication facilitator, a data source and a generator of examples. Technology helps to reinforce memory and reduce boredom through multiple activities. Nevertheless, it cannot replace a teacher; instead, the role of a teacher becomes a 'facilitator' in learning. He needs to programme the materials and supplement them whenever necessary. It is the teacher, not the technology who holds the power to make decisions. The role of a man and a machine in the growing educational enterprise should clearly be demarcated. With the introduction of the computers as a powerful teaching device, a new balance between the computer, the teaching materials and the teacher has to be maintained to have a healthy Teaching-Learning experience..Thus technology proves to be an effective tool providing pleasure and profit to the students as well as the teachers.

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