

Teacher Workshop on Using ICT Tools and Digital Narratives-A Report

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ABSTRACT

This article documents the teacher-researcher initiatives to share the experiences and reflections on the preparation, implementation and outcomes of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) oriented teaching modules. This is a report on the workshop held for school teachers as a part of the Action Research study emphasizing the role of digital narratives in enhancing productive skills. The formulation of need-based teaching modules using the technological tool Prezi and multimodal inputs were shared with a demonstration. A questionnaire was administered at the end of the session to know the teacher attitude and preparedness to use technology in their pedagogy.

Keywords: *Action research, Information and Communications Technology, Digital narratives, Multimodal inputs, Prezi.*

Introduction

English has attained the status of global language and with the rising demands from the society and especially students; a serious impact is felt on the English teacher. A teacher's role has metamorphosed from a content renderer to a facilitator to the modern reflective practitioner or undertakers of Action Research. Craig A. Mertler in his work on *Teachers as Researchers in the Classroom*, defines Action research as, "a systematic inquiry conducted by teachers, administrators, counsellors or others with a vested interest in the teaching and

learning process or environment for the purpose of gathering information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn"(4).

Action research is gaining grounds in the educational arena around the world. The 'one-size fits all' mode of teaching is regarded as an out-dated method by the post methods theorists. They claim that pragmatic and eclectic teaching methodology leads to effective teaching and learning as it is based on the cognitive need of the student.

The workshop is based on the concept of eclectic method –the teacher choosing good techniques from all the teaching methods

based on the need. Kumaravadivelu believes that Eclecticism is constrained by methods (33) and that the theoretical ideas can only be realized by actual practice in the classroom. He further clarifies that “Principled pragmatism thus focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped and reshaped by teachers as a result of self-observation, self-analysis, and self-evaluation”. He therefore strongly recommends ‘principled pragmatism’ which the teacher has to possess the ‘subjective understanding’ which is gained through experience as teachers (33).

Mertler in the book entitled *Improving Schools and Empowering Educators* points out that the last phase of any Action Research is the sharing of the process and results either by local presentations or academic journals as most of the studies are in the form of isolated theoretical reports, creating a gap between the research and application in the actual classroom. The researcher chose to conduct a workshop by collaborating with the local teachers as a means to disseminate the experience and reflections of the Action research study. This paper reports on the process of conduction and reflections on the workshop for teachers’, initiated by the teacher-researcher in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. The main aim of the workshop was

- Ø to introduce the technological tool, Prezi and digital storytelling to the teachers
- Ø assess the acceptability of technological teaching tools and teacher attitude toward integration of ICT.

Participants

Sixteen teachers collaborated by means of snowball sampling, where subjects recommended useful potential candidates from different schools in the town.

Procedure

Prior to the conduction of the workshop, it was necessary to understand their digital literacy level and their opinion on the concept of digital narratives. A questionnaire was planned and organized in two sections. The first section had questions regarding their personal profile and four general questions on their working hours. The second section had six close-ended questions using the Likert scale and two open-ended questions. The questions were related to digital narratives, Prezi and language skills.

After formal introductions, the intention and purpose of the meeting were explained. At this juncture, the questionnaires were distributed and the participants were instructed to fill the first section. The difference between a Prezi and a power point presentation was clearly explained. The focus was not only on the web tool called Prezi but also, on the backbone of the study, multimodality and use of multiple inputs in teaching.

A sample Prezi was designed and prepared based on two poems by A.D.Hope and Rabindranath Tagore. The session began with the demonstration of sample Prezi, a multimodal presentation tool, using a computer with an internet connection and

an LCD projector. The poems were presented as a digital narrative/story to the teachers using Prezi.

After the demonstration, the importance of productive skills in the present globalized world job market and the use of digital narratives to enhance productive skills were elaborately discussed. The queries by the teachers were answered after the presentation. The questions were related to Prezi login procedures and its usability. Care was taken not to bias the teacher's opinions. The questionnaire prepared for the post-workshop session was distributed and the data was collected after completion.

Reflections on the process

The workshop proved to be the best platform as the teachers openly shared opinions, experiences without any inhibitions. They expressed that syllabus completion and spending most of the school time in teaching as the reason for not preparing additional teaching material for students. They liked the concept of using Prezi and its compatibility of storing, sharing and using them multiple times by making necessary modifications.

Findings

Most of the teachers (94%) said that they have six hours of teaching. The data shows that all the schools have language laboratories but teachers do not get an opportunity to spend much time. 75% of the teachers said that they use the lab to play the CDROMS provided with the text. To the question about teacher training programs,

only one of all the teachers said that she has attended a session. The questions in the next section were on the use of ICT teaching tools.

All the teachers strongly agreed that there is a need for the teacher to carefully design the tasks other than the ones given in the text according to the need of the students. Due to lack of free time, 80% of the teachers said that preparing extra teaching material was time taking and difficult to design.

After the demonstration of Prezi, 88% of the teachers felt that the features like zooming, twisting and panning movements which are not available in PowerPoint presentation make Prezi more effective and also that nonlinear movement of slides are user-friendly. Almost all the teachers strongly agreed that digital narrative techniques can be tailored or designed to suit different learning styles of the students. 75% were enthusiastic about group projects and collaborative learning. 25% of the teachers expressed doubts regarding the availability and use of technological equipment at the individual level.

The open-ended question on the use of additional teaching materials other than the textbook, 25% accepted that they use hand-outs and pictures and follow conventional method of teaching.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the findings show that, teachers are hard-pressed for spending quality time in the language lab and end up playing the CDROMS provided

with the text. Implementation of ICT integrated teaching material has not been successful as teachers require appropriate training in conduction of such activities. Almost all the teachers agreed to the notion that language skills can be enhanced using digital narrative techniques by giving regular oral presentation tasks and summarizing stories watched on the internet or listening to e-books. They believed that dramatization helps in making the task of narration interesting and motivating. Though they liked the concept of encouraging collaborative learning using group projects they believed that designing and implementation requires proper training and feared negative outcomes.

The teachers' enthusiasm and positive outlook in the course of discussions held regarding practical exposure to the challenges faced by teachers and ways of

finding immediate solutions, gave an additional insight into the area of research.

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