

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCE MATERIALS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Supplementary resource materials are additional but more useful in English language teaching (ELT). The teacher needs to supplement materials to promote motivation, which is one of the key factors influencing learning. However, there is a lack of study what supporting materials the teachers are using in English language classrooms for teaching learning purposes. This paper attempts to explore the supplementary teaching materials selected and used in ELT classrooms of community schools in Nepal. The information was collected through observations, interviews and focus group discussion. It was found that non-technical visual supplementary teaching materials were used more than technical and audio/audio visual ones. Most of the materials were used for reading and writing purposes. Teachers' knowledge about technology, carefulness in using appropriate instructional materials/techniques, infrastructure and existing facilities of schools, are the major factors that affect to use the supplementary materials successfully in classrooms.

Key words: Audio visual materials, class observation, community school, English language teaching.

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

As language teachers, we often feel that the prescribed textbooks may not be sufficient to achieve a variety of objectives in language teaching. We often find them inadequate to deal with all the areas and needs of the learners. Teachers, therefore, should select and use certain supplementary materials based on their learners' learning styles and needs (Riasati & Zare, 2010). The needs, abilities, and learning environments of the students vary from place to place, and even class to class. Using supplementary materials in the class is necessary because there are "... different groups of learners with differing learning needs and learning styles, topics in a textbook may

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not be relevant for and interesting to all learners, and a textbook is confining, that is, it inhibits teachers' creativity," (Riasati & Zare 2010, p. 55) . It is not always possible for a textbook writer to produce an ideal textbook, which can fulfill the needs of all the students. To fulfill the needs of the students and objectives of the lesson, a teacher has to select and use the appropriate supplementary materials for the language classroom.

Supplementary materials, according to Spratt, Pulverness and Williams (2005), include “skills development materials; grammar, vocabulary and phonology practice materials; collection of communicative activities; and teacher’s resource materials” (p. 114). These teaching materials should support or enhance curricula and be relevant to the learning outcomes and contents of the course. Whenever possible, priority should be given to resources developed and produced in the local areas. They must be appropriate in content and to the emotional development, ability level, learning style, social development, and age of the students. They must have a physical format and appearance that is suitable for their intended use. They should avoid reflecting negative stereotypes, i.e. they should be fair, objective, and free from inappropriate language and images, bias, propaganda, discrimination and sex-role stereotyping, except where a teaching/learning situation requires illustrative material to develop critical thinking. They should provide a stimulus for creativity. While selecting and/or using the supplementary learning resources, one must be careful with the copyright laws. All supplementary materials must be read and/or reviewed prior to teaching use.

Supplementary materials help to motivate the learners (Dodd, 2015) by creating interests in the learning and encouraging them to use the language in the class. They enable the learners to understand and grasp the information from a given text. They are also useful to get information about the people and the culture of the target language society and help to contextualize the teaching learning environment. They save time and effort and lessen the burden of the teacher while presenting the learning items. They also contribute to ease in maintaining learner’s direct contact with the objects, places, thing and people and to reduce the use of the learner’s mother tongue in the classroom activities.

A teacher has to make some questions in his/her mind while he/she is selecting the teaching materials, e.g. (a) Is the material visually attractive? [Is it visually clear (e.g. using different colors, different fonts,

headings, etc.)? Does the visual material help learners understand context and meaning?] (b) Is it well organized? Can they and their learners follow the 'logic' of the material and find their way around the page or the unit quickly and easily? (c) Is it culturally appropriate? (d) Will the context(s) be familiar to learners? (e) Is it suitable for the learners' age and their needs and interests? (f) Will the topics be motivating to suit the age, gender, experience and personal interests of their learners? (g) Is it at the right level? Does it provide a clear enough context and /or explanations for learners to understand new language? (h) Does it give learners enough opportunities to use the language? (Spratt, Pulverness and Williams 2005).

Another task of language teachers after selecting/developing the appropriate supplementary materials is to use them in the classroom. The materials selected/developed according to Tomlinson, (2012) should be: ... informative (informing the learner about the target language), instructional (guiding the learner in practicing the language), experiential (providing the learner with experience of the language in use), eliciting (encouraging the learner to use the language) and exploratory (helping the learner to make discoveries about the language). (p. 143). Ideally materials should be developed for learning rather than for teaching and they should perform all the functions specified by Tomlinson (2012). A teacher sometimes has to modify the selected materials according to the levels of students and contexts providing clear instruction. Ur (2013) classifies the supplementary materials into two: paper and digital. According to her, reference books, textbooks, teacher handbooks, books for extensive reading, reading, worksheets, test papers, word cards, pictures (posters and flash cards) are paper supplementary materials. Similarly, the interactive whiteboards (IWBs) and data projects, internet, websites, interactive, digital tools, wikis and blogs, digital recording, production and e-books are digital supplementary.

Teaching aids can be classified variously on the basis of various criteria. Some of them are (a) on the basis of the way/load of preparation: The materials which require little time for preparation, e.g. flash cards, magazine cut-outs pictures, puppets, etc. and the materials which require more time and effort for preparation, e.g. the magnet board, wall posters the portable blackboard, white board, etc. are included under this criterion; (b) on the basis of their producer: Producers can be either business persons who prepare the materials for commercial purpose or teachers who prepare them for the classroom purpose; (c) on the basis of their complexity: Technical

materials which involve some kind of machinery or electricity, e.g. OHP, movies, video, tapes, TV, cassettes, radio, etc. are complex and other than technical ones, e.g. pictures, puppets, and so on are simple.

Similarly, some other criteria are (d) on the basis of their nature: There are different types of materials on the basis of their nature, e.g. flat or two dimensional (e.g. pictures), three dimensional (e.g. puppets), moving that shows something dynamic and still that shows something static; (e) on the basis of sense (s) involved: Teaching materials are either visual, e.g. realia, pictures, photographs, posters, maps, charts, diagrams, drawings, magazines, cut-outs, pin men, puppets, etc. or audio-visual, e.g. TV, video, language laboratory, multi-media computer, etc. or audio, e.g. radio broadcast taped materials, etc. in which we involve our senses to observe; (f) on the basis of their purpose: On the basis of their purpose, teaching materials are classified into different categories, e.g. reading materials, listening materials, speaking materials, writing materials and multi skill materials; (g) on the basis of whether they are used to display other materials or they are displayed themselves: Display devices are those by means of which other materials can be displayed, e.g. blackboard, pocket chart, etc. Display devices may be the same for different times, for different lessons and also for the students of different times, for lessons and also for students of different levels. Materials to be displayed are the materials shown to the students. Such materials are different for the students of different levels or age groups.

After a brief review of the related literature, a gap has been spelled out in the earlier research studies. Specifically, this paper tried to explore what supplementary teaching materials the English teachers of community schools in Nepal were using in addition to the prescribed materials in secondary level.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, qualitative research design, which “emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman 2008, p. 366) has been applied. Qualitative research is a cover term that aims at discovering/exploring how human beings “understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world” (Sandelowski, 2004, p. 893). The information for this study was collected through observations, interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) to explore the way what supplementary teaching materials English teachers were selecting and using

to teach English. Five community (government aided) schools representing five different Resource Centers of Kathmandu district were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Five teachers teaching English in these schools at secondary level were interviewed by using the interview guidelines, five classes of each English teacher were observed and recorded; and focus group discussions were conducted by selecting six students (three boys and three girls) randomly by using fish bowl technique from each school. The information was analyzed and interpreted after coding and categorizing into different themes applying 'thematic networks' (Attride-Stirling, 2001, pp 385-05).

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

The supplementary teaching materials which were found to have been used in the language classroom were interpreted by classifying them under the four themes: Audio visual materials, audio materials, visual materials and materials related to internet websites. As the name suggests, audio visual materials are some kinds of supplementary instructional devices in which the message can be heard as well as seen and by which the teacher, through the utilization of more than one sensory channel is able to clarify, establish and correlate concepts, interpretations and appreciations. In other words, audio visual aids are anything by means of which learning process may be encouraged through the sense of hearing or sense of sight; they can be used to make the learning experience more concrete, realistic and dynamic. These are also termed as multi-sensory materials. Audio visual materials are produced, distributed and used as planned components of educational programs. They help the process of learning that is motivation, classification and stimulation.

The main supplementary teaching materials for audio visual practice selected and used by the English teachers in language learning were computers/laptops, TV/VDO, cell phone, films and documentaries. Teachers and students agreed that these materials were very helpful in language teaching and learning. However, a teacher stated that "our school is weak in terms of infrastructure, i.e. there is no separate room for computer, we do not have projector, and there is problems of power." These problems seemed to be the common features of most of the schools in Nepal. It means that most of the schools were not facilitated in these types of materials for the purpose of language learning. It clearly shows that the schools are not updated in using the multimedia in language classroom.

Audio technology could play an important role in language teaching. Technology aided education could make students' learning better and interesting with pronunciation, fluency and accuracy. Most of all, they could have a very good support of developing listening skills. Because, this education system might help them with standard language materials and teaching aids. Students were more interested in technology as it helps them to get the message clearly through visualization and to know and listen to the exact pronunciation. So, technology helps students to develop their language skills properly in an interesting way. Harmer (2008) has provided some strategies to use the audio materials in the classroom in the following ways:

- a. Jigsaw listening is a strategy in which students are divided into three different groups. They listen to three different tapes, all of which are about something which explains a strange event, etc. Students are told to assemble all the facts by comparing their notes they have prepared after listening to the text. They may find out what actually happened, solve a mystery or get a rounded account of a situation or topic. Thus, jigsaw listening is useful for students.
- b. In Message-taking strategy, students listen to the message being given. They have to write down the message on a message pad. There are different kinds of message that students listen to. Some of them are a phone message, a recorded message about a film, announcements in airport, railway station, etc.
- c. Listening to music and sound effect is another strategy used in the classrooms. In this strategy, students listen to the songs and music and do some exercises on the basis of their listening. They can fill in the blanks in song lyrics, rearrange the lines or verses, or listen to songs and say what mood or message they convey. They can be asked what mood the music they have listened to.
- d. Another strategy is to listen to news and other radio genres. Students listen to a news broadcast and have to say which topics from a list occur in the news bulletin and in which order. They then have to listen for details about individual stories. Furthermore, students can be asked to convert the facts into the chart or graph form. Students can listen to radio commercial, radio phone-ins, and a number of games and quizzes.

- e. Similarly, listening to poetry is another activity to use the audio materials in the classrooms. Poems can be used in a number of ways to enhance the students' skill. They can be used to say what mood they convey or try to come up with appropriate titles, to put the punctuation marks in the form, to guess what kinds of words are likely to occur in these poems answer some simple questions from it.
- f. Students listen to people telling some stories and they can be asked to perform a number of activities. They can be asked to put the pictures in the order in which the story is told, write the main events in the order in which the story is told write the answers to some questions, complete the story after listen to it.
- g. Students can be asked to listen to the recorded monologue and dialogues, and to take notes, write options of different speakers explain the mood of the speakers, answer the questions, etc.

The main audio materials the teachers sometimes used as supplementary ones in language learning were cassette players, video tapes, computers and cell phones. The first three materials were especially used to listen to the conversation, poems, and other literary texts were spoken or read with appropriate stress, intonation, fluency and punctuation. One of the teachers shared that "I use cell phones mostly for listening to the English songs and correct pronunciation of the words given in the dictionary which I have downloaded". Like the audio visual materials, they were used rarely for language learning purpose.

Visual materials involve the sense of vision of the students and cover the whole range of non-verbal and non-auditory materials. They include a wide range of forms, e.g. photographs, paintings, drawings, prints, designs, books, three-dimensional art such as sculpture and architecture, etc. It is said that "One picture is worth a thousand words," as the saying goes, they are very important in language teaching and learning. While observing the classes, it was found that most of the teachers used the reading materials, e.g. practice book/workbook, grammar and essay books, question bank, i.e. collection of past question papers, dictionaries (both English and bilingual), model writing pieces and students' writing paragraphs. Similarly, some of them used pictures, flash cards, white board drawings, real objects which are locally available, and language games to motivate the students and to practice in the skill focus activities. It shows that the teachers focused to use visual materials more on the reading skill rather than other areas.

The teachers expressed that they used newspapers, thesaurus, projectors, atlas, magazines, and sample pieces of advertisement, cutout pictures, invitation cards, teachers' guides, reference books, language games, over head projectors and downloaded materials while presenting the language items in the class. Similarly, the students said that calendar, colors, photos, model letters, chart papers, posters, reports, periodic table, crossword puzzles and post cards were also used in addition to the supplementary teaching materials expressed by the teachers.

The internet provides teachers and students with an immense source of teaching materials and ideas as supplementary use, some of the examples stated in Ur (2013, pp. 212-3) are: (a) Reading texts from 'authentic' source websites. (b) Listening texts as You Tube videos, or audio podcasts. (c) Tests, work pages, exercise and so on, from the various English-teaching websites, such as the British Council's Teaching English. Regarding the use of internet websites, only a few teachers advised their students to visit some of the useful websites related to language learning and some of the students said that they listened and watched the videos which were provided in You Tube. An English teacher shared his experiences that "We do not have Internet facility in our school, so it is impossible to use the materials related to Internet and website. I sometimes suggest my students to use some sites in their home or cyber." These types of materials were hardly used in teaching and learning in english language classrooms.

CONCLUSION

As English teachers, we need to always have an aim to be successful teachers in our discipline. It is possible if we plan to use enough materials to support the teaching items. The rapid expansion of publishing platforms on the internet has led to an explosion of sources for instructional materials (Marple, Bugler, Chen-Gaddini, Burr, & Finkelstein, 2017) which can be used as supplementary materials. The range of these sources is enormous which can be comprehensive materials developed by education professionals, educational companies and any other concerned authorities. Most of the English teachers used the materials which required little preparation in terms of time and cost, i.e. free and inexpensive (Riley, 2009). Non-technical/flat/still supplementary teaching materials, e.g. pictures, flash cards, etc. were used most of the time rather than technical ones, e.g. OHP, movies, etc. they showed the economical as well as electrical problems as the reasons of not using the technological supplementary teaching materials in schools.

Similarly, they used more visual materials than audio and audio-visual ones. Most of the materials were used for reading and writing purposes.

The supplementary materials could help a language teacher when encountered with insufficient techniques, methods and materials while teaching English language in classrooms. Each supplementary material should be different from the other. These materials could be applicable to all levels of students. The language teachers should tactfully select and use the appropriate supplementary materials according to the age, level, interest and the topic of the lessons to be presented. A teacher should always be creative and innovative in selecting and using supplementary materials while teaching English but not just depend completely on textbooks for solutions. Similarly, the government should create the environment by providing and facilitating different types of training including ICT and other professional development training which help the teacher to develop and implement the appropriate supplementary teaching materials in language classrooms.

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