Impact of Technology on ELT: A Comparative View of Past and Present Bangladeshi ESL Teachers

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Abstract: Educational technology always plays a vital role in the field of language teaching and learning particularly for second language (L2) around the world. Using technology in ESL/ELT classrooms in the Bangladeshi context is not a new practice but in the recent past, it was used in some institutions and advocated by some ESL/ELT teachers with different views and skepticism. The opinions of educationalists about the digitalization of L2 classrooms have considerably changed in recent years. The usage of digital materials was not huge in number compared with technologically advanced counterparts but teachers, educationalists, and instructors always supported it in the past decades. Some other people tried to show the negative effects of using the technology in the L2 classes and their number was not ignorable. This article aims at showing a comparison between the views of past and present Bangladeshi ESL/ELT teachers about the usage of the educational technology used in the L2 classroom and digital materials for teaching and learning another language.

Key Words: Educational technology, Digital materials, Language, learners, teachers.

Abbreviation
ELT=English Language Teaching
ESL=English as a Second Language
EFL= English as a Foreign Language
L2=Second Language
IELTS=International English Language Testing System
TOEFL=Test of English as a Foreign Language
DET=Duolingo English Test

1. INTRODUCTION:

Educational technology is as comprehensive as education itself. Today highly sophisticated technology is used in language teaching broadly, particularly in the post-COVID-19 period. During the pandemic, schools were shut down in the first phase but in the second phase when the situation was taking a long time, schools started opening one after another. Though they opened schools, giving physical classes was almost impossible. This was a good chance for the online platforms, Zoom, Google Classroom, Moodle, ClassDojo, etc., to offer their services for conducting classes or other academic activities. Students and teachers all over the world witnessed the rise of educational tools and software extensively and very fast. Everyone had to adapt to the new form of teaching practice. After the COVID-19 situation is over, though everyone returned to the physical class, an online class is a good option. If anything like COVID-19 hits us again, it is sure that learners and teachers will not waste a moment thinking about what to do and how to conduct classes and other activities because of the availability of educational technology and tools (software, websites, internet, etc.) which was a matter of tension during COVID-19, and before the pendant, it was not an issue to think about. Now everyone is used to online classes and examinations. Today they are using several instruments, video, live streaming, and even recording online classes so that the students who miss them can watch them later. The attitude of ESL teachers was not the same two decades ago in Bangladesh. The idea about technology for language teaching or learning, or the usage of technology in language teaching classes has changed widely. Once educational technology was meant very narrowly and was confined to some so-called advanced technologies while today it is beyond the thought of the ancient ESL teachers where the L2 teaching technology reached. For example, an L2 learner from Bangladesh can join directly the class of a teacher who is offering it sitting in the USA. They may never meet in their lifetime but teaching and learning are happening very effectively. The technology and tools used for teaching and learning language must not be confused with electronic gadgets. Today technology is not only concerned with the design and curricula evaluation, it

is unavoidable. Everyday technology is getting updated and new versions with useful features are magnetizing both students and teachers to use this in real life. Nowadays, educational technology is not confined to tape recorders, headphones, or cassette players. Rahman (1992) defined educational technology in two ways, both negatively. One is *utopian* and another is *cataclysmic*. In his so-called utopian version of educational technology, learners will be put in the machine and they will speak it while they are out of it. The second one is eviler, he mentioned. He said that in the cataclysmic version, technology also means a machine, which kills students' initiative, imagination, and creative faculties. "Educational institutions have often made hasty, wasteful, and harmful investments in gadgets" Coombs (1968). Rahman (1992) wanted to say that developing teaching software was a failure because of its high cost and unreliability of equipment for teachers, though they did it for teaching a large number of students more efficiently.

2. DISCUSSION:

In the 1990s, L2 teachers in Bangladesh thought that the lack of sufficient incentive and rationale for audio-visual innovation have prevented its widespread dissemination but with the recent development of ESL, numerous types of visuals are used for language learning and teaching. Cartoons, movie clips, songs, and other types of digital materials are used in ESL classrooms. Two decades ago, ESL teachers in Bangladesh thought more sophisticated tools and teaching materials were antagonizing the teachers and students, and it did not add much to the amount of learning taking place. Today it is impossible not to use digital teaching materials in the class or out of class. The traditional belief was such that the teachers would soldier on with chalk and talk while, nowadays, language teachers are flexible with the computerized board, and digital writing instruments like mouse or stylus without dust.

It cannot be denied that, in Bangladesh, some educationalists in the 990s began to look beyond the individual components and strategies of teaching-learning technologies. They became concerned with designing the system as a whole, identifying aims and objectives, planning the learning environment, exploring and structuring the subject matter, selecting appropriate teaching strategies and teaching-learning media, evaluating the effectiveness of the learning system, and using the insights gained from educational technology for the future. This was a province of educational technologists. Rahman (1992) accepted that the earlier "tools technology" for teaching and learning was replaced by "system technology" which is again replaced by online classroom technology in the post-COVID-19 era. System technology was more unified than tools technology which means technology is offering more opportunities than ever and it is on the rise because online classroom technology is offering everything a student needs and a teacher can give. The early ESL instructors thought that technology made a learner isolated from one another which might block the way to learn effectively, and the people who learn from some prescribed materials cannot communicate with others who learned from conversations, dialogues, and any other ways in which he/she had to engage directly. In the era of tools technology, it was a bite-and-pieces approach in which courses might be tinkered with and marginally improved. On the other hand, system technology created an educational ecology (Rowntree 1974) with its skeptical insights. Now, online classroom technology created multidimensional approaches both for teachers and learners.

ESL teachers before the 90s in Bangladesh strongly believed in the Aristotelian view of knowledge, "There is nothing in knowledge which has not first passed through the senses". This view is still relevant for L2 learners. Today it is a technology that makes sense and helps learners develop their senses in them. It helps the learners to know about the language and the language first then shows the ways to learn it. The Aristotelian view of knowledge of language learning is still true but the system, pattern, and structure greatly changed over time. Teachers in the early 90s tried to avoid the strip projector for their presentation of visual aid. They thought that the teachers who could draw on a blackboard with rapid strokes would have been at an advantage. They also thought of printed pictures, magazine cuttings, or mimeographed sketches. All those teaching materials, ideas, and practices once helped the instructors when they did not have other ways or other materials to be in use. From today's point of view, regular drawing on the board is a time-consuming approach in the classroom. It is language class, not drawing class, it helps less in teaching because drawing and describing one picture would take more time than showing ten pictures in PowerPoint. Besides Rahman (1992) mentioned songs, games and other creative activities are equally important, "Pattern drills have their part to play: there are certain points of grammar or syntax in which theoretical knowledge of the construction is not enough, it needs to be developed as a means of habit". Those habits can be developed by online practice more effectively because pupils will not face any shortage of information. When there is enough information, people like to talk more. The internet is a place of a plethora of information. In the 90s, the L2 learners did not have much information about the culture, for example, and if they would be assigned to talk about it, they could not talk more because of less information, no matter how good the learner can speak They had only the textbooks and beside the prescribed information, they could not add extra. So, there were fewer chances to be good at L2 than today.

Once the ESL teacher thought educational technology means tap-recorder, headphones, cassette players, and some minor types of gadgets. Tap-recorder enables sound to be stored, edited, and produced easily. The idea of educational technology has greatly changed in the last three decades. Now when the idea of educational technology

comes to mind, first come digital materials like electronic paper, video walls, several software, video streaming, etc. Rahman (1992) again accepted the fact that any teacher who had integrated the use of these media into teaching strategy will soon find ways of extending their use. However, he emphasized the artificiality of electronic devices. Since electronic machines are artificial devices, and teaching and learning with them are just artificial activities, he wanted to say that it is not natural to talk to a thing that cannot converse with a mind of its own. Although he has reasons to think this way, the computer nowadays passages a huge memory. It can carry hundreds of millions of correctly pronounced conversations, and dialogues which can help a learner from several angles. Now learners can talk with others directly online. So, the logic of artificiality is invalid today. The conventional view of ESL teachers was such, "A language laboratory can either function or not - it can either be in working order or it can break down. But as a means of teaching language, it can be said neither to succeed nor fail. It is the teaching material in use that can do that" Hilton (1974).

ESL teachers in the past were somehow confused because they wanted to continue the legacy of teaching methods with chalk and blackboard and cannot avoid the usage of modern technology of their time. For example, they were laboring with the dust of chalk and talking about the negative effects of the usage of technology in ELT class but they sued recordings, Videos, or other means of teaching materials that were technologically advanced. They possessed both negative and positive ideas of technology for L2 teaching. They also thought that there are great advantages to using video in the classroom (Lonergan, 1984). The broad aim of language teaching is to enable learners to use the language not only correctly but also appropriately in a communicative situation. The speaker can be seen or heard, the setting is clear and the learner can see where the action is taking place. Rahman (1992) wished to mention that pupils can use several types of gadgets to improve their language skills. The new introduction of computers in the L2 classroom and L2 lab created a lot of interest among teachers and learners. Though many of the L2 teachers accepted it unwillingly because they knew it was just a tool with no capability of action and inborn wisdom. They tried to keep it aside as many times as possible. They accepted it because it would work as the instruction is given but ignored it because it could not initiate creativity.

The traditional thought of ESL teachers in Bangladesh was that the computer can offer interactive learning in the sense that can conduct a two-way learning session with a student, it can assess the student's response, can display messages, and take students through different sections of a package. Today the computer is doing everything. The renowned test IELTS, TOEFL, or DET are taken online before a computer monitor. A beginner can start learning a language without the help of a human teacher because a great number of well-designed teaching materials are uploaded every day by thousands of bloggers, you-tubers, and video bloggers. Everything can be found online. Once in the near past, the usage of computers in L2 classes faced a huge barrier because the material which can be usefully handled by a computer represents a tiny fraction of linguistic knowledge that a teacher brought to bear in a language class. Moreover, the computer cannot conduct an effective open-ended dialogue with the student (Ahmad et al, 1985). "It is a waste of resources - a crime against the code of cost-effectiveness - to use any specialized equipment for a purpose for which a less expensive device would be adequate" Hilton (1974). Language teaching technology was not so developed in the 90s in Bangladesh. Linguistic features in computers were neither handy nor related nor adequate. L2 teachers had reasons to take it negatively because of the less effective devices, software, and electricity supply, their skills, and knowledge to use it. Haque (2013) mentioned that in Bangladesh, using animated cartoons in EFL classrooms was not yet popular. The reality is that the price of devices, internet connection, and charges are very high. During and post-COVID-19 period, people were bound to arrange those tools of educational technology. Before 2019, people did not think much about the vast use of technology in L2 teaching and learning.

3. THE SYSTEM APPROACH

The System Approach has been borrowed from the domain of engineering. The first thing that an engineer does is to arrive at his/her aim precisely. Then the engineer examines the processes and the ways of operation, and then critically evaluates them. He/she then chooses the best route through the system to get to the end product and how to make the best possible use of man, materials, and money.

Why do we need a System Approach? It is essential to be clear about the goals of language teaching and plot the journey through a course, making judicious use of the materials available. It is not a teaching method; it is a means whereby the method can be implemented. Proper charting of a course and a good system combination may enable teachers to put over teaching methods in the most suitable way. The first essential point behind any systems approach is to ensure that the course has been properly planned. Then it is necessary to ensure the supply of appropriate teaching materials and media at the points they will be needed. It is not simply a matter of 'pick and choose but should form an integral part of an overall teaching plan. In the past decades it was only manual materials, for example, printed books, posters, chalks, and blackboard but recently digital materials, e.g. e-Books, audio, and videos (short films, cartoons, etc.) replaced the older ones. There should be inbuilt flexibility in the teaching program to enable the teacher to make changes in the teaching plan where necessary according to the demands of time, places, students, and availabilities. The language

teacher must be familiar with the teaching materials at his/her disposal and will have to exercise managerial control over the resources.

Today the leading teaching software is designed, and accumulated with teaching tools that a teacher may need for teaching L2 in the classroom setting. For example, zoom has a whiteboard to be written on, a screen sharing option, a class recording opportunity, etc. Using the appropriate instrument (mouse or stylus), the teacher or student can write and everyone can see it on a computer screen. Hundreds of thousands of well-designed teaching materials are available online for teaching or learning any language with some exceptions. Audios, videos, e-books, laptops, smartphones, podcasts, software, websites, and numerous other ways are available in the hands of learners and teachers to make the learning environment easier, handier, smarter, efficient, and environmentally friendly.

4. ODE TO THE VISUAL AIDS:

Visual aids like cartoons or films with a caption can be powerful educational tools because it improves the listening comprehension skills of L2 learners, facilitates language learning by helping students visualize what they hear, and leads to additional cognitive benefits, for example, greater depth of processing (Danan, 2000). Visual aids which are used to help learners see an immediate meaning in the language may be beneficial in language learning by helping to clarify the message, positively provided the visual works to enhance or supplement the language point. It engages the attention of the learners and creates an environment for passing the information which may improve the cognitive ability of learners along with their communication skills. These digital materials help learners achieve high confidence and motivate them for learning L2. Rule and Auge (2005) claim that students who use cartoons can improve different language skills and achieve higher test scores. Visual aids in L2 learning can help slow learners achieve a significant language proficiency improvement (Bahrani and Sim 2012). Movies, animation, cartoons, documentaries, or any other visual material stimulate L2 learners to speak the target language because it helps them to imitate which is the primary factor in the acquisition of a language. During and after the practice with the visual material, the teacher can reinforce the usage of vocabulary and language form in the class so that they can use it in real life. Finally, watching video materials may help learners fall in love with the language, culture, and people of the target language.

5. PROBLEM OF USING VISUAL AIDS IN BANGLADESHI L2 CLASS:

In the 90s Bangladesh, ESL teachers did not think of animated cartoons, movies, or documentaries to use in the classroom rather some thought it might be a waste of time and money (Hilton, 1974). In her research, Haque (2013) showed that 90% of students think there is no significance in using cartoons or any other visual aids in the ESL classroom in Bangladesh. Besides, visual aids are used in the class to teach them L2. Because of this scenario, learners are not used to this type of teaching and learning practice and they think it is odd to play movies, documentaries, or any video in the classroom environment. The authorities and parents are reluctant to use visual aids in class and sometimes they think it is a waste of time (Haque, 2013). Outside the classroom context, learners get few opportunities to watch movies in the target language. English learners get some chances but other L2 learners in Bangladesh do not have many scopes to watch films, cartoons, or documentaries about L2. Haque (2013) mentioned that ESL teachers are not skilled enough to use digital materials for specific tasks. In Bangladesh, teachers lack knowledge of using contextual visual materials for teaching L2. The teachers know the pedagogical value of digital materials but using them in the classroom for L2 teaching by focusing on specific tasks or grammatical forms requires a higher degree of competence which is lacking in our teachers of English Haque (2013). Moreover, most of the schools situated outside the capital of the nation do not have technical support and thus it is not possible to use digital materials.

6. CONCLUSION:

Technologically Bangladesh is a lower-ranked country. In ESL/EFL classes, using educational technology is still a costly and rear scenario. So, in the 90s, using highly sophisticated educational technology was but a daydream. Today digital educational equipment is used almost everywhere, more or less, which was not possible in 90s Bangladesh. Only a few schools in the capital city could afford this and use it but the average scenario in Bangladesh was different. Nowadays, using digital devices in the classroom, software and digital teaching-learning materials is a very common phenomenon in Bangladeshi L2 classes that could not be possible thirty years ago. Naturally, the technology of these two eras will not be the same but comparatively ESL teachers were not in favor of the educational technology three decades ago. It is now time to consider all the problems and find out reasonable solutions for designing the L2 classroom with the demand of time. It is time for us to be aware of the educational technology and values, and to incorporate it for teaching L2.

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