Chapter 28
Teacher Professional Development Using Mobile Technologies in a Large–Scale Project:
Lessons Learned from Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Mobile technologies have been influencing the field of education including language learning for almost a decade. The literature on mobile technologies for education reports a number of case studies that examine various aspects of mobile learning. However, the use of mobile technologies for teacher professional development, particularly in developing economies, is rarely reported. This paper presents a case study of the English in Action (EIA) project, a UK government funded English language development project in Bangladesh, and its use of mobile technologies which not only provides teachers with the 'trainer in the pocket' that helps them achieve pedagogical changes in the classroom but also serves as a tool for improving their own English language competence. The article, in particular, reports on the design and implementation of audio and video teacher professional development materials for MP3 players and mobile phones. It also highlights implications for similar projects intending to deploy mobile technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been employed in language education since the 1950s (Beatty, 2010) and are increasingly

found not only in developed but also in developing countries. More recently, mobile technologies such as MP3 players and mobile phones are also reported to have been used for language education. In recent years, mobile technologies have served as tools in the context of English language teaching (ELT) as well. However, the literature

regarding mobile technologies and ELT seems to have focused on the developed economies, and studies on the use of such technologies for teacher professional development is extremely limited. Even though there are a number of studies reported in this area in the context of developing countries, they tend to be small-scale studies. In order to redress this, this article reports on a UK government-funded large-scale English language teacher professional development project in Bangladesh.

The main aim of this paper is to report on how a large-scale English language teacher professional development project successfully carried out its activities deploying mobile technologies in a developing economy. In this regard, first of all, I will review the literature on ELT and mobile technologies. I will, then, briefly describe the landscape of mobile technologies in Bangladesh. The rest of the paper will explain how the large-scale project called English in Action (EIA) has conducted mobile technology-enhanced teacher professional development. This explanation is informed by EIA's three years' robust research and development work. Finally, I will present implications of this project for similar projects intending to deploy mobile technologies.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES

English language learning and teaching methodology has undergone many changes over the last four decades: moving from a traditional grammar-translation method to more student-centred methods such as Total Physical Response, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning, which are more popular among language teachers (see Richards & Rogers, 2001, for an overview). CLT, in particular, appears to be appealing to many teachers. Although teachers from different parts of the world have viewed and practised CLT differently, it is widespread in the ELT world. In addition to the student-centredness of this method, communication (and hence meaning) is at its heart. In fact, CLT is all about developing learners' *communicative competence* in a target language (see Folse, 2010, for a review). Communicative competence refers to a user's ability to use the language observing appropriate linguistic (e.g., tone, pronunciation) and non-linguistic (e.g., politeness) features while communicating a message to other users of the same language (Hymes, 1972). Following this notion, CLT classroom activities are developed by drawing on real life communication (e.g., giving directions meaningfully to a tourist), which focuses on meaning making in a social context rather than learning about grammar (for a recent review, see Littlewood, 2007).

A recent surge in the use of ICTs is having an impact on how English and other languages are taught and learned (see, for example, Beatty, 2010; Levy & Stockwell, 2006). The value of ICTs for language learning is widely accepted, albeit in some cases with caution (Warschauer & Ware, 2008). In the context of developing countries, ICTs are often seen as an empowering tool that provides people with access to opportunities and choices that were hitherto not available. Mobile technologies, particularly mobile phones, for English language teaching and learning are still an emerging field in developing countries (e.g., Shrestha, 2011). However, studies in developing and developed countries do offer evidence of mobile phones' impact across various global contexts in regards to the aforementioned fields as well as other areas of development. There are many remarkable case studies outside education that highlight the efficacy of mobile phones for young peoples' participation in a radio discussion in Nepal (Ulbricht, 2010); entrepreneurial activity among women in Bangladesh (Sullivan, 2007); economic development in relation to microenterprises in Rwanda (Donner, 2007); and activism (see www.mobileactive.org) in developing countries. Of key importance to the Bangladeshi ELT

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