

Developing Training Course for Language Teachers

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The teachers worldwide face the problem connected with the growing trend of teaching online and with technology. The shift from the traditional in-person instruction to the digital context has been so fast and drastic that quite a number of teachers feel uncertain about their ability to handle the technology appropriately. The teachers tend to have anxiety regarding their skills and professional preparation. In this paper we will highlight the issue of how to prepare language teachers for the changes in the teaching context and style of instruction with the focus on students' needs. The paper will focus on piloting the training course for teachers "Making Technology Work for Every Teacher and Learner".

Under the pandemics many found it difficult to manage the familiar style of language teaching. The current changes in education have even worsened the state of things with professional development. At the Institute of Professional Education Development, we held a Needs Analysis among 258 secondary school teachers attending the courses in the period of February –October, 2021. There were teachers of secondary and high school ranging in experience and education level from 3 to 21 years. They work with learners aged from 6 to 18 years old. The respondents were asked 3 questions (Appendix 2): 1) Are you well aware of the modern technologies you are expected to work with as a language instructor? (Yes/No/Not sure). 2) Do you apply the learner-oriented approach in your teaching? (Always/Sometimes/Not sure) 3) Do you think you meet your learners needs when it comes to teaching with online tools? (Yes/ No/Not sure). The respondents were also asked to make comments regarding their context. According to the results 68% of the teachers are very concerned and even frustrated with the issue of having to work with technology on a regular basis. Worryingly, 59% of the teachers admitted they are not sure whether they apply the learner-oriented approach in teaching, And finally, 48 % confessed they do not meet their learners needs, while only 22% believe they meet the learners needs. The majority (83%) mentioned in their comments that there is an urgent need for the teachers of English to use technology more efficiently to be able to meet their learners' expectations. Out of 258 respondents we had only 2 who were confused about answering the questions openly. In that regard the data we collected clearly indicated there is a need for a training course to raise teachers' awareness of learner-oriented environment and to improve skills of using technology in the classroom.

Based on the results we worked out an action plan which consisted of 3 steps to the course piloting: Engagement, Community Building and Training outline.

Firstly, we aimed at supporting teachers through a community of practice and set the goals as trainers to get teachers actively engaged in sharing their best practices and describing their limitations in profession.

To pitch a new training we presented our plan to the stakeholders – Vice Rector for Academic Programs, teachers of Department of Modern Languages. We explained the idea of launching a new course "Making Technology Work for Every Teacher and Learner". There is a shared understanding that teaching community face numerous problems with focusing on student-oriented approach when it comes to implementing technology into the classroom activities. We face a major problem within local teaching community and there is a need to raise awareness and improve teachers' skills regarding using ICT in the classroom with a focus on student-oriented approach.

We see *the solution* in carrying out a training course for teachers of secondary and high school designed to eventually get teachers and learners engaged in activities through student-centered approach.

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The course goal was that by the end of the course participants will be able to improve the skills of using ICT in their teaching context and be aware of modern trends in education.

The training plan of the course is designed to familiarize teachers with online tools to be used in their teaching context focusing on student-centered approach. The trainees are expected to improve their Information Communication Technologies awareness and acquire practical skills using them. By the end of the course the participants will be able to: get familiar with modern ICT tools they can apply in their teaching; choose the most suitable tool for their own teaching context; apply the selected tool in the classroom practice; create student-centered activities; demonstrate learners' improvement in skills (speaking/listening/reading/writing or grammar and vocabulary).

Logistics and evaluation required research. Before piloting the training we have done some research on the issue. According to Bates (2019) both teachers and learners should develop the skills, attitudes that will bring them success in life. Based on the research carried out by another educator Philip Preville (2018) teaching generation Z students today should mostly focus on designing a targeted approach of assessing their progress and adjusting on the fly as well as involving technology in the classroom. Also, educators should select topics that elicit learners' enthusiasm. The mentioned above only proves that the course we are going to launch is very timely and significant in teachers' professional development if they want to stay connected to their learners.

We set the timeline for the course: 4 weeks (20 total course hours, 5 hours per session, once a week) to be taken at the Institute of Professional Education Development. The plan is to involve the specialists from two departments (Department of Modern Languages and Department of Communication and Information Technologies). We also worked out 3 surveys for the trainees (Appendix 1,2,3)

Regarding *assessment and evaluation*. The trainees will be assessed at every session (once a week). Firstly, they present their learners' needs based on the survey they make. Secondly, the trainees will present the tools they have chosen and describe how they will apply those (1 minimum) in the classroom. Next, they will also be asked to clarify the definitions applicable to their educational setting and needs and explanations (in our case, such as student-centered approach, learner autonomy, individual trajectory, etc.). And finally, at the end of the course the trainees are to do the following task - to demonstrate a lesson plan with activities based on a technology selected and used in their classroom. The task will be graded based on the following criteria: A) whether or not the selected tool is learner-oriented and friendly; B) demonstration of how it can improve speaking/listening/reading/writing or grammar and vocabulary skills of the learners; C) peer-assessment review.

Below is the *Training Outline* for the proposed course “**Making Technology Work for Every Teacher and Learner**”. The following chart illustrates the objectives, activities and ways of assessing the teachers within the first two units of the training course “Making Technology Work for Every Teacher and Learner”:

Unit 1	Topic: Learner-oriented Environment and Modern Technologies in Education		
<p><u>Objectives:</u> By the end of the weekly session the participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -name the topics of the course and anticipate future assignments -raise awareness of learner-oriented approach in teaching -get familiar with current ICT trends -have clear comprehension of Action Research regarding ICT-related activities 	<p><u>Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -read and discuss articles on learner-oriented teaching and life skills -group work and collaboration to define “Learner-oriented approach” and give own definition depending on educational context -get to know and discuss modern ICT -read about Action Research concept –post ideas about Action Research within their context -discuss best ICT practices 	<p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -trainees are assessed on the understanding of principles of learner-oriented teaching and life skills -trainees do the quiz in the end of the unit on modern ICT -trainees describe their best practices on ICT tools they have used –trainees do comprehension quiz on Action Research -trainees are asked to provide feedback on peers' ideas regarding Action Research 	

Unit 2	Topic: Student-friendly ICT Tools in the Classroom	
<u>Objectives:</u> By the end of the weekly session the participants will be able to: - create learners' needs analysis - identify learners' skills to be improved based on carried needs analysis	<u>Activities:</u> create a questionnaire for learners to identify their weak points in English -participants provide a shortlist of ICT they are inclined to apply in their teaching -work out a list of skills to be improved using ICT tools	<u>Assessment:</u> - participants do peer-evaluation of created questionnaires/ surveys within their teaching context - participants get evaluated on the provided plan for improving their learners' skills using ICT tools
Unit 3	Topic: Making ICT Tools Work in the Classroom	
<u>Objectives:</u> By the end of the weekly session the participants will be able to: - get familiar with tools other participants use -create a bank of modern tools	<u>Activities:</u> - present Action Research -share the data of questionnaire - single out weak points in English - work out the list of technology commonly used to meet learners' needs	<u>Assessment:</u> - present one tool to be used in the classroom best suiting their teaching context
Unit 4	Topic: Reflection and Further Planning ICT Tools Implementation	
<u>Objectives:</u> By the end of the weekly session the participants will be able to: -get familiar with at least 5 tools to be used in the classroom - to demonstrate clear understanding of the concept of learner-oriented approach in teaching - have a clear vision of future steps with technology implementation in the classroom	<u>Activities:</u> -discuss technology they use - share samples of lessons with technology do peer-evaluation on whether or not the activities are learner-oriented and friendly - discuss future work (activities)regarding modern tools implementation	<u>Assessment:</u> -present a lesson plan with specific activities based on a technology selected and used in their classroom -present ideas about further ICT tools implementation

Conclusion. Summing it all up I would like to highlight that we consider our training outline for the course as a good solution for the teachers' burning needs. The timing is proper and the piloting the course is the most appropriate step in teacher training. Being able to use modern technology in the classroom with a focus on student-centered approach would both encourage teachers and motivate their learners to learn English more efficiently thus improving the educational context in general. The activities we propose will ensure trainees' involvement and participation aiming at further technology implementation and the ability to be aware of current trends in education.

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Appendix 1

Needs Analysis Survey

- 1) Are you well aware of the modern technologies you are expected to work with as a language instructor? (Yes/No/Not sure).
- 2) Do you apply the learner-oriented approach in your teaching? (Always/Sometimes/Not sure).
- 3) Do you think you meet your learners needs when it comes to teaching with online tools? (Yes/ No/Not sure).

Appendix 2

Survey

Part I (carried out before the course starts)

Dear participants, please answer the following questions in order to make our course is goal-oriented and efficient.

1. How long have you been working as a teacher?
2. What University have you graduated from?
3. What age groups are you currently teaching?
4. What are your learners' burning needs?
5. How well are you able to meet your learners' needs (Well enough/Fairly enough/ Not able).

Appendix 3

Part II (carried out in the beginning of the course)

Dear trainees, you are kindly asked to do the reflection of your teaching practice in terms of it being learner-friendly and the context regarding technology.

1. Please describe "Learner-friendly environment" the way you understand it.
2. Describe your strong points in 5-10 sentences.
3. Say what aspects in your teaching you might lack. Write 3-5 sentences.
4. Do you see yourself professionally as:
 - A) very well-prepared regarding ICT usage in the classroom.
 - B) prepared enough for the level you teach regarding ICT usage in the classroom.
 - C) not very-well prepared regarding ICT usage in the classroom.

Appendix 4

Part III (carried out in the end of the course)

Please provide an overall evaluation of the course and your own participation in it..

1. How much are you satisfied with the course (Very much/ Satisfied/ Not satisfied)?
2. What ideas in general were useful for you during the course? (Write 3-5 sentences). If not, explain why the ideas were not useful.
3. How well your knowledge and skills regarding ICT usage in the classroom improved? (Very much/ Improved to a certain extent/ Difficult to say).
4. Do you believe you will be able to meet your learners' needs upon course completion? (Yes/No/Difficult to say)
4. How would you apply ideas from the course into your teaching context? (Write 3-5 sentences).