Report

Audio Resource Creation: Online Course for English Language Teachers

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Background

IT for Change (ITfC) and the English Language Teachers Association, Telangana (ELTA) collaborated to design and conduct an online course on 'Audio Open Educational Resource (OER) Creation for Language Teaching'. The course was based on the NCERT National ICT curriculum, 2013 themes—Creating and Learning (teachers learnt to create audio OER) and Connecting and Learning (teachers accessed articles related to language teaching on the web and interacted with their peers).

The Objective

The course objectives were as follows:

1. To explore digital methods for language learning; to learn to use Audacity FOSS (Free and Open Source Software) to create audio OER; to publish the created resources on a public repository.
2. To understand the philosophy of OER (community ownership with the ability to re-use, revise and redistribute resources).
3. To access articles about English Language Teaching (ELT) on the web and present them in the webinars for peer feedback and learning.

Course Design and Processes

The course consisted of a mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. The synchronous activities included online webinar sessions using the Free and Open Source Big Blue Button (BBB) platform. We conducted two 90-minute webinars per week, for four weeks. The webinars explained concepts of language learning and included demonstrations and practice of Audacity. Since the participants were teachers, and were themselves conducting online classes, the webinars were held in the evenings. Asynchronous learning included installing relevant applications, reading assigned articles, accessing OER audio repositories and creating audio resources. The participants were encouraged to share their audio OER on a WhatsApp group created for the course.

Each participant was also assigned an article about ELT, which they had to read and present to other participants during the webinars. This activity helped participants fully engage with the piece of writing and be conversant with the ideas in the other papers presented in the webinars.

The course objectives, schedule, content, reading materials, OER audio repositories and sample audio resources, methodology, course requirements and resources were shared on the workshop page (https://teacher-network.in/OER/index.php/ELTA_Audio_OER_course), so that the participants would be prepared for the webinars, thereby enhancing the interactions.

Course Content

The course oriented the teachers to the importance of audio resources in developing listening and speaking skills. Teachers learnt to use Audacity to record themselves and add music and sound elements to create audio resources which they could use in their classrooms. The participants were also taught advanced features of Audacity, including volume adjustments (fade in/fade out, noise cancellation and reduction), incorporating multiple tracks for various purposes, changing pitch, etc.

Each participant was expected to select a topic (prose/poetry) and create an audio resource based on it. Most participants created and shared audio resources by the end of the course.

Lastly, the participants were assigned readings related to language teaching that covered Krashen's hypotheses, digital storytelling, NCF position papers on English and Indian language teaching, articles from journals, etc.

Participants

The course participants comprised language teachers including experienced and novice teachers from both high school and middle school. Some were new to digital technology and required an additional support to become comfortable with it. While over fifty language teachers registered for the course, thirty of them completed the course by attending five webinar sessions.
Participants who created and shared their audio OER and presented the article that they had accessed and read, received a certificate of completion from IT for Change and the English Language Teachers Association, Telangana.

Outcomes

Participants became familiar with the usage of digital resources for language teaching-learning. They learnt how to use Audacity to create and enrich audio resources. They also prepared at least one audio on their selected topic and shared it for publishing on a public repository.
The webinar sessions were highly interactive, and the participants were enthusiastic about learning new skills.
The audio OER created by the teachers were published on SoundCloud, an online OER audio repository (see https://soundcloud.com/ELTA-audio-workshop-july-2020). Many of these were extremely powerful, melodic and soulful resources that would help teachers in creating a significant impact in the classroom.
Participants also strengthened their capacities for aesthetic appreciation of audio resources through discussions in the webinars and peer feedback on the audio resources made by them.
Participants were exposed to resources available on the web related to language teaching and became aware of the need to access freely available online resources to improve their understanding of language teaching-learning.

Our Reflections

The course aimed to encourage teachers to think of themselves as creators and visualized every teacher as a creator. The act of material-making can be an emancipatory process of teacher development.

The course also aimed to support teachers in becoming active users of digital technology by creating resources, rather than just being passive users. When technology is seen as something that is done to teachers, it compromises their agency. When technology-based resources are created by teachers, owned by them and used for the benefit of teachers the resources become relevant and aid teacher agency.