THE CHANGING ROLES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THE BLENDED ELT ENVIRONMENT IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study has investigated the changing roles of English teachers in the blended ELT mode in Pakistan. There are new learning modes, such as web-based, mixed and completely online learning in the majority of tertiary level institutions in Pakistan. The focus of this study was the preliminary analysis of how the roles of English teachers in different classroom settings are altered as a result of blended learning.The ten roles of the ELT teachers were identified in this study. Mainly, the study used a mixed method approach as both kinds of quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The data was collected from the English language teachers of Virtual University of Pakistan which is Pakistan's first university based on modern information and communication technologies and is pioneer in IT based education in Pakistan. Total 50 ELT teachers from Virtual University of Pakistan participated in the study. The close ended questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data. The data was analyzed descriptively using SPSS and the frequency of each item was calculated separately. The results of this study are in accordance to the objective of the investigation, that is, to recognize the new and changing roles of the instructors in mixed ELT mode. The findings show that the mixed ELT mode supports the new and different roles of the instructors. The results depicts that the traditional roles of the instructors are changing and becoming more versatile. This clearly indicates that the mixed ELT mode has shifted the conventional responsibilities of the instructors, and now they are expected to take up new and multiple types of responsibilities. The study is significant for the researchers and other stakeholders of language teacher education as it highlights the challenges Pakistani English teachers are facing in the scenario of emerging role of technology in language teaching, particularly the blended ELT mode.

Key Words: ELT,web-based online learning, SPSS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Modern technology has provided teachers with new tools that can transform instructional roles, curricula, and practices. The English teachers worldwide take up new roles as new technologies are being introduced into education. This study has documented a strong association between these new technology-based practices and changes in English teaching pedagogy and teachers' role in Pakistan.

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Teaching is a demanding and a complex task. Technology plays an important role in this approach of providing teachers with tools and information that support their problem solving, communication, collaboration, and knowledge creation. It also provides teachers with new tools that can transform instructional roles, curricula, and practices. The blended ELT environment has increased rapidly, driven by evidence of its advantages over either online or classroom teaching alone. The English teachers worldwide take up new roles as new technologies are being introduced into education (Means & Olson, 1997). This study has documented a strong association between these new technology-based practices and changes in curriculum, English teaching pedagogy and teacher's role.

The study has examined how the blended mode has affected the ELT pedagogical practices and the English teacher's role in Pakistan. Powerful new capabilities of computers make it possible to access, represent, process, and communicate information in new ways (Kozma, 1991). These capabilities make it possible to search and organize information, analyze data, represent and transform ideas, simulate complex systems, and communicate with others in ways that were previously not practical or even possible. They also enable new ways of teaching and learning English language – new activities, new products, and new types of learning and teaching (Kozma & Schank, 1998). But, do all English teachers and educators feel and agree with the general, positive, societal perception of technology in education? This study has synthesized findings about changing roles and the practices of ELT teachers from ten identified roles of ELT teachers and nine recognized roles of English learners' in Pakistan.

1.2. Blended Learning as an Emerging Trend from E-learning

Blended learning has become a buzzword in many educational environments in recent years; it usually refers to courses that employ a mix of traditional and web learning (Sharma, 2010). Blended learning mode basically includes a classroom face to face part and also an online segment. This study is based on the fact that the technology is emerging as a new and a dominant trend in learning. The truth of the matter is that the youth of today is inundated with technology in almost all capacities of their lives. A study conducted by Roberts, Foehr and Rideout (2005) have suggested that the average youth spends almost 6 ½ hours a day

using media, which includes most defined technologies. This fact alone remains alarming enough without even accounting for the amount of media and technology that the learners are experiencing in the educational environment. This being said, one question that emerges is: to what degree can we justify promoting more media and technology use within the classroom if our youth are already so overly exposed? However, it is found that 87% of learners, aged from 19 to 22, used the internet, which demonstrates how significant new technologies have become with our youth generation and how this generation is defined by the technological environment within which they live (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005).

The introduction of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has been a fairly recent phenomenon and the effect of computers on modern society as they have transformed society and education since the middle of the 20th century cannot be underestimated. Computerized advancements are pervasive in modern society. The learners getting admission into colleges and institutions have grown up with them and they have great hopes that their organizations will give trustworthy and simple access to blended education (Beer, 2009).

1.3. Theoretical Framework in Global Perspective

Globalization and technology are continually altering our views of education and offering new opportunities for learning and teaching (Warschauer, 2000). We live in a connected world with unparalleled access to a vast array of online information and experiences. The teachers are growing up in a world where knowledge and opportunities are just a screen touch away. Powerful new capabilities of computers make it possible to access, represent, process, and communicate information in new ways (Kozma, 1994).Technology such as web conferencing, internet, blogs/wikis, virtual worlds and mobile devices such as iPads, mobile phones, digital cameras and voice recorders are changing the way teachers teach and the way the students learn. Technology enables learning to extend beyond the classroom walls and facilitates better access to learning resources. It also supports the creation of partnerships with the wider school community and equips learners with contemporary skills necessary for successful participation in life. Globalization, the current economic climate, industrialization and

technological advancements have identified blended learning as one of the top trends to emerge in knowledge delivery.

Industrialization and globalization of education has resulted in the need for teachers to improve their teaching pedagogy and demand teachers to make adjustments in their teaching process accordingly. The pedagogical innovation should consist of putting into practice a differential model of teaching and learning process which is currently widespread throughout the world (Colpaert, 2007). According to Xu (2012), the blended mode has re-configured the constructs on language learning, teaching, classroom dynamics, and the roles and responsibilities of the English teachers. So, this study has brought to light the new roles that the ELT teachers in Pakistan who are expected to be aware of the changing scenario in order to make adjustments in their teaching and learning process accordingly.

The study aims to identify the different roles of the instructors in Pakistan, to highlight the consequences of mixed ELT environment on the subject awareness and the teaching practices of instructors who are in-service in Pakistan, to highlight the role of mixed ELT mode in facilitating the pattern shift from instructor-centered to learner-centered practices and to recognize how the blended ELT environment is a significant challenge for English language teachers.

1.4. Research Questions

This study has investigated the research question: How has blended ELT environment changed the role of English teachers in Pakistan?

To explain the changing roles of English teachers, the study has delimited its scope to various roles of ELT teachers in blended ELT environment: *planner, team-coordinator, facilitator, motivator, manager, resource developer, examiner, behavior counselor, information provider, role model.* The question was important in the context that the teachers can better understand their process of change and how these challenges can be better handled.

This blended mode has re-configured the constructs on language learning, teaching, classroom dynamics, and the roles and responsibilities of the English teachers. Worldwide, much work has been done on the changing roles of English teachers and students with the advent of blended mode; however, all these studies have been performed in different academic settings with different cultural perspectives. A scanty

work is available in Pakistani perspective and, thus, this study addresses the need to look this issue in the local cultural milieu. There has been major change in Pakistan regarding pedagogical practices from instructor-centered to student-centered learning. So, it is the appropriate time to bring to light the new roles that the ELT students and the teachers in the newly introduced system of blended learning.

2. METHODLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify the multiple and changing roles of English teachers in blended ELT mode in Pakistan. This study has determined the effects of blended ELT environment on the subject awareness and the teaching practices of instructors who are in-service in Pakistan. Mainly, the research approach describes and highlights the research objectives and defines the method to find out the answer of the identified research questions.

2.1. Research Design and Sampling

Mainly, this study was based on quantitative approach; however, qualitative interpretations provided deeper insights in understanding the results and reaching the adequate findings. This study used primary data for analysis. The research design for this study was cross sectional research. The survey method was found the most suitable method so that opinion of population could be collected about this specific issue.

The population for this study was the teachers who were engaged in blended ELT environment. The data was collected from the English language teachers of Virtual University of Pakistan. Total 50 ELT teachers teaching in Virtual University of Pakistan participated in the study. These participants were divided into two categories: 25 teachers were those who had shifted from online teaching mode to blended mode and rest 25 teachers were those who had transferred their teaching methodology from face to face (traditional) teaching to the blended mode. The selection of participants was random. The total population from which a sample was taken did not represent a homogeneous group; therefore, stratified sampling method was practiced to get a representative sample. Sample consisted of both male and female participants aged between 20-60 years old.

2.2. Research Instrument: Questionnaire

Taking into consideration the nature of investigation, objectives and scope of the inquiry, the close ended questionnaire was used as a tool to

collect data. For this study, the research questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The backdrop information had socio-demographic features of the participants like gender, age, education, designation and previous teaching experience. The survey properly discovered the multiple roles of the instructors in mixed ELT mode. These questionnaires consisted of questions; based upon the present and the new roles of the instructors in the mixed ELT mode. The teachers were asked to rank the degree to what they find themselves as performing the said roles. Level of agreement was judged through a Likert scale as the data collection tool was developed by utilizing the Likert set-up. In this survey every statement was given five options. Given below is the range that was utilized to understand the overall reactions of all the participants for each survey statement by calculating the weighted mean:

Range	Interpretation
4.01 _ 5.00	Very Likely
3.01 – 4.00	Likely
2.01 – 3.00	No Opinion
1.01 – 2.00	Unlikely
0.00 – 1.00	Very Unlikely

To establish the validity in the questionnaire, the conventional measures were taken: a) the questions were taken and then adapted from authentic resources; b) opinions of five experts was sought on the questions and then suggestions were incorporated; c) a pilot study with 10 potential respondents was conducted and the questionnaire problems were addressed. With these points in the mind, the investigators tried their best to develop a validate research tool for this investigation. The Cronbach's alpha test was used on the scale. It was also taken into consideration that the measures or elements were connected with each other methodically in a straight way as they were considered to be the measure of the same construct. The alpha for the 10 items/roles was .85, which showed that they formed a scale that had reasonable internal consistency

2.3. Data Collection Procedure

The survey was given to the selected participants by the given methods: 1. individual visits to the respondents; 2. direct e-mails to the respondents. On the whole, the response rate of 90% was supporting for the investigator that improved inspiration level. Total 60 questionnaires were given, out of which, 55 were returned from which the investigator

rejected 05 because of mistakes present in them and finally 50 questionnaires were utilized for further investigation and study results. The approximate length of time for information gathering was almost six weeks. Much of time was utilized in finding the required participants, circulating the questionnaire and keenly waiting and seeking participants for questionnaire return.

3. RESULTS

The data was analyzed descriptively using the popular statistical software, SPSS and the percentage of each item was calculated separately. The data was entered precisely and carefully and a detailed exploratory data analysis was conducted. The data was found normal and suitable for further analysis. The frequency, cumulative percentage, means, mode, median, standard deviation and other necessary descriptive statistics were used. The data analysis brought the following results.

3.1. Teacher's Roles within Classroom

For profound analysis the teacher's role was divided into two categories i.e. teacher's role within classroom and teacher's roles additional to classroom management. The Table No. 1 depicts the teacher's role within the classroom. The response frequency Table No. 1 shows that for teacher's role as a *Planner* only 92% teachers took up this role and 8% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as a planner in the blended ELT environment. While the results for teacher's role as a *Team Coordinator* indicates the concept that 4% teachers took up this role and 96% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as a team coordinator in the blended ELT environment. Teacher's role as a *Facilitator* indicates the concept that 12% teachers took up this said role and 88% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as a facilitator in blended ELT environment. Teacher's role as a *Motivator* indicates the concept that 18% teachers took up this said role and 82% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as a motivator in the blended ELT environment. For teacher's role as a *Manager* indicates the concept that 44% teachers took up this said role and 56% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as a manager in the blended ELT environment. Teacher's role as a *Resource Developer* indicates the concept that 80% teachers took up this role and 20% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as a resource developer in the blended ELT environment. Teacher's role as an *Examiner* indicates the concept that

14% teachers took up this said role and 86% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as an examiner in the blended ELT environment.

Table 1.*Response frequency of respondents for teacher's roles within classroom*

Role	Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Planner	Very Unlikely	0	0.0	0.0
	Unlikely	3	6.0	6.0
	No Opinion	1	2.0	8.0
	Likely	28	56.0	64.0
	Very Likely	18	36.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	
Team-Coordinator	Very Unlikely	25	50.0	50.0
	Unlikely	23	46.0	96.0
	No Opinion	0	0.0	96.0
	Likely	2	4.0	100.0
	Very Likely	0	0.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	
Facilitator	Very Unlikely	22	44.0	44.0
	Unlikely	22	44.0	88.0
	No Opinion	0	0.0	88.0
	Likely	6	12.0	100.0
	Very Likely	0	0.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	
Motivator	Very Unlikely	15	30.0	30.0
	Unlikely	25	50.0	80.0
	No Opinion	1	2.0	82.0
	Likely	9	18.0	100.0
	Very Likely	0	0.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	
Manager	Very Unlikely	8	16.0	16.0
	Unlikely	19	38.0	54.0
	No Opinion	1	2.0	56.0
	Likely	22	44.0	100.0
	Very Likely	0	0.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	

Role	Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Resource Developer	Very Unlikely	0	0.0	0.0
	Unlikely	10	20.0	20.0
	No Opinion	0	0.0	20.0
	Likely	23	46.0	66.0
	Very Likely	17	34.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	
Examiner	Very Unlikely	23	46.0	46.0
	Unlikely	20	40.0	86.0
	No Opinion	0	0.0	86.0
	Likely	5	10.0	96.0
	Very Likely	2	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	

3.2. Teacher's Roles Additional to Classroom Management

Table No. 2 depicts the teacher's roles which are additional to classroom management and how they are changed within the blended mode. The response frequency Table No. 2 shows that for teacher's role as a *Behavior Counselor* only 22% teachers took up this role and 78% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as a behavior counselor in the blended ELT environment. Teacher's role as an *Information Provider* indicates the concept that 70% teachers took up this role and 30% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as an information provider in the blended ELT environment. Teacher's role as a *Role Model* indicates the concept that 16% teachers took up this role and 84% teachers did not find many opportunities to act as a role model in the blended ELT environment.

Table 2: *Response frequency of respondents for teacher's roles additional to classroom*

Role	Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Behavior Counselor	Very Unlikely	16	32.0	32.0
	Unlikely	21	42.0	74.0
	No Opinion	2	4.0	78.0
	Likely	11	22.0	100.0
	Very Likely	0	0.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	

Information Provider	Very Unlikely	3	6.0	6.0
	Unlikely	10	20.0	26.0
	No Opinion	2	4.0	30.0
	Likely	23	46.0	76.0
	Very Likely	12	24.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	
Role Model	Very Unlikely	18	36.0	36.0
	Unlikely	23	46.0	82.0
	No Opinion	1	2.0	84.0
	Likely	7	14.0	98.0
	Very Likely	1	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	

4. DISCUSSION

These results were in accordance with the objective of the investigation that was to recognize the new and changing roles of the instructors in the mixed ELT mode. The data addresses the main question how blended ELT environment has changed the role of English teachers in Pakistan.

4.1. Findings

This study has focused on teaching in the mixed ELT mode and the evolving roles of the instructors in Pakistani perspective. Overall, the results have endorsed the previous studies, e.g. Smith & Kurthen (2007), comment that, "interaction, between instructor-student and between students, is at the heart of education, whether face to face, fully online, or blended-hybrid" (p. 458); and similarly, according to Chan (2003), "the blended ELT environment has challenged the teacher-centeredness and authority-oriented tradition of education in worldwide" (p. 34). By blending the different types of mediums such as traditional and web communication the instructors are engaging and embracing multiple and changing roles in the mixed ELT mode. The information gathered through questionnaire depicts that the mixed ELT mode makes possible the transfer of teaching practices from instructor-centered to learner-centered methods. Therefore, it builds up an effective relation between the learners and the students and thus, supports the new and different roles of the instructors. Now, findings related to the study objectives, obtained through teachers' questionnaire, are discussed as follows:

The data collected indicates that there is a change or shift in the traditional role of teachers as a *behavior counselor*, as majority of teachers do not think that they act as effective behavior counselor in the

blended ELT environment. Whereas, it is found that there is no change in traditional role of teachers as an *information provider*, as majority of teachers think that they act as information providers in the blended ELT environment. Similarly, most of the teachers find no change in their role as a *planner* as majority of teachers think that they act as a planner in the blended ELT environment. The data also highlights that there is a change in this traditional role of teachers as a *team coordinator*, as a great number of teachers think that they do not act effectively as a teach coordinator in the blended ELT environment. Likewise, a visible change is found in the teacher's role as a *facilitator* and most of them feel they are not able to perform this role effectively in the blended ELT mode. Similarly, a change was also observed in the traditional role of teachers as a *motivator* and the majority of the teachers do not act think that they act as effective motivator in the blended ELT environment. The teacher's role as *manager* is also changed in the blended ELT mode as most of the teacher think that they find it difficult to perform an effective manager. On the other hand, the traditional role of teachers as a *resource developer* remain the same and most of the teachers feel that they can perform as effectively in the blended ELT learning mode as they used to have previously. Lastly, mostly teachers find it different to work in the blended ELT learning mode from their previous teaching practice.

The information gathered shows that the mixed ELT mode supports the new and different roles of the instructors. The results of questionnaire survey depict that the traditional roles of the instructors have been changed and thus the teachers have become more versatile in some areas and restricted in others. This study results support the idea of Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López and Alvarez (1999), that "teaching and learning in the blended context requires participants to constantly negotiate their roles and understandings as they co-participate in various problem-solving activities" (p. 88). In this way, according to Smith & Kurthen (2007), "the blended ELT environment has a democratization effect" (p. 472). Though the conventional roles of the instructors such as information providers, planner and resource developer are still prevailing, yet they also negotiate some new and evolving roles. The findings show that the mixed ELT mode has shifted the conventional responsibilities of the instructors, and now they are expected to take up new and multiple types of responsibilities. The collected data shows that

a blend of the different teaching practices in the mixed ELT mode aid the instructor to be conscious of their conventional and new roles, and this understanding, as a result, assists to maintain a relation between the instructors and the learners.

As far as the role of the teachers is concerned the collected data indicate that in the mixed ELT mode the conventional responsibilities of instructors have definitely been changed. Although teachers retain some of their traditional roles (information providers, planner and resource developer), yet they also negotiate different and new roles in blended environment, which utilized new technology-based practices. This new leaning environment meets a variety of learning styles which is quite different from teachers' role in traditional classroom.

4.2. Conclusions

Incorporating educational technology into institutional and learning frameworks is a complicated and versatile procedure. The one consistent element in this procedure is change: specially the change in the teachers' traditional roles. The English teachers in Pakistan are taking up new responsibilities as new advancements are being brought into educational network. This study has documented a strong relationship between these new educational innovations and changes in syllabus, English teaching practices and learners' role. Therefore, now the teachers in Pakistan need to develop new roles, better approaches for learning English language – innovative activities, new products, and modern methods of learning and instructing practices.

This study has highlighted the different and the emerging roles that instructors are adopting in the mixed ELT mode in Pakistan. The increased rate of mixed learning opens opportunity to redefine and reframe conventional concept regarding teachers, therefore, producing a new range of roles that demands a unique and dynamic mixture of abilities and potentials. This shift in roles requires the re-image teaching and learning process as a cutting-edge profession, one that is quite different from traditional set patterns. The institutions that are following the mixed ELT learning patterns should also revisit and expand their conventional talent channels to fit into this wider and deeper talent pool, so that teams can be built which should be reflective of the variety of talents essential for achievement.

This study suggests to ask more questions than to give answers. The study at the larger scale is expected to raise many more exciting and demanding realities for the educational bodies as well as policy implementers, as we move into the 21st century. As new roles of the instructors are developing in mixed ELT mode, then what these new roles are, problems regarding transformative learning, reflectivity, innovations and emerging roles in other areas of teaching and learning also recommend very challenging areas to study in the bigger context.

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