ICT TRENDS IN ELT

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Abstract

Students' enthusiasm to learn and their capacity for originality and critical analysis have been shown to rise dramatically when teachers make extensive use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the classroom. Because of the expanded variety of learning environments and possibilities and the improved accessibility of course content to practically all students, the use of technology in language learning may result in higher participation and enthusiasm from students (Pennington, 1996). By the incorporation of ICT into the curriculum, students have access to a plethora of online resources, including interactive video, the Internet, email, and the World Wide Web. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) may aid students in learning English, connecting with native speakers, and gaining exposure to other cultures and contemporary ways of life in countries where English is spoken as a first or second language. It is often believed that using technology in the classroom would pique the interest of and motivate ELT students to study more.

Keywords: *ICT, English language teaching, Blended learning, Utility and efficiency.*

INTRODUCTION

There are several ways in which students may benefit from the use of technology into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, including increased desire to learn, expanded perspectives, and a renewed interest in the material. Yet, many EFL teachers and professors experience problems and impediments when attempting to use ICT into their teaching, sparking discussions and mounting concerns over the real value of ICT usage in the language classroom.

Is it the case that these advantages really contribute to better English language instruction, or are they more ornamental than functional? If you're teaching English as a foreign language, do you think it would be beneficial to include technology into your lessons? Evidence from studies shows that incorporating technology into language instruction improves students' performance.

English as a Foreign Language classes by encouraging more independent study, increasing the likelihood of achieving desired results, and inspiring students to work more. Yet, the use of ICT

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without prior planning and defined goals is likely to be ineffective. Students' chances of learning and mastering a second language are improved in a variety of ways thanks to the integration of ICT into language instruction. Increased student engagement and motivation, higher test scores, more student independence and critical thinking, and many other positive outcomes have been linked to the use of technology in the classroom. The literature on this topic is extensive (Dodge, 1995; Warschauer, 1996; Dornyei, 1998; Joyce, 1998; Reksten, 2000; Greenfield, 2003; Hui-Fang, 2007; McMinn, 2008; Abu Naba'h, 2009; Ilter, 2009; Hussain, 2010; Seiltad, 2012; Azmi, 2014).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

There have been extensive arguments and rising concerns regarding the actual value of ICT usage in language classrooms as a result of the difficulties and hurdles that many ELT face when seeking to incorporate ICT instruction (Blake, 2008; Erben et al, 2009; Padureau et al, 2009). The question therefore becomes whether or not the purported advantages of ICT usage in language classrooms really contribute to the enhancement and optimization of instruction and learning of English. What kind of results can we expect from integrating Technology into ELT lessons? improvements to the classroom that allow for more flexible and fruitful instruction?

RESEARCH METHOD

In order to assess and dig further into the research problem at hand, document review has been employed as a secondary research strategy. This literature study is not intended to be, and cannot be, comprehensive. While there is evidence of computer usage in language education dating back to the 1960s, it wasn't until 1994, and especially with the advent of the Internet, that educators and academics began to give significant thought to using computers into language instruction. The literature from the previous two decades (1990-2014) is taken into account and analyzed, with a focus on the period since the introduction of innovative language-learning software and engaging online apps. Due to the rapid evolution of IT and the Internet in particular, it is challenging to maintain an up-to-date examination of the full scope of its impacts. Research published before 1990 and after 2014 will be purposefully excluded from the review.

The study takes into consideration North America, Europe, and South East Asia since these areas have more advanced instructional information technology and more accessible research. Many of the cultural values and pedagogical trends and practices that drive educational and

schooling policies in our country are also prevalent throughout the Arab world, and as such, the region is also represented in this research.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Improving Students' Interest and Motivation in Language Learning

Maintaining interest among language learners is a challenging endeavor that requires analysis of a wide range of linguistic, socio-psychological, and cultural factors (Dornyei, 1998). Most professionals in the area of second language learning believe that having a strong sense of intrinsic drive is essential for the greatest potential outcomes in language study. To what degree, then, can students be more motivated and engaged in their learning via the use of information technology? Many studies have shown that using technology in the classroom may have a positive effect on students' attitudes toward learning, as well as on their level of engagement and participation (Warschauer, 1996; Reksten, 2000; Jay, 2006; Kassim et al, 2007; Ilter, 2009).

Positive attitudes are more common among kids when computers are used in the classroom. They are more eager to meet and talk to people of various native language backgrounds (Warschauer, 1996). The use of ICT has the potential to create a classroom where students' interest and drive are nurtured and sustained. The research on the effects of technology usage in ELT classrooms has shown that it is possible to improve the efficacy of EFL activities by using technology. There was a widespread demand from the student body for educators to implement technology. As a result, they are more invested in their education and exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement (Ilter, 2009).

Blogs, podcasts, and digital videos are great ways to get students interested in and involved in the language classroom. Research by Jay (2006) into how to get students writing indicated that giving them a genuine audience was vital, as did demonstrating the advantages of writing for a global audience. Hong Kong University of Science and Technology researcher McMinn (2008) is investigating the effect of podcasts on students' motivation and interest in learning a new language. He has concluded that podcasting, the internet publishing of audio or video files, helps teachers make the most of class time by mixing authentic material and simulated contexts into instruction. Podcasts are a great way to get engaging, real-world content into the classroom. He goes on to say that podcasts are a great way for students to hear authentic voices from the communities they are studying

Kassim et. al research's is another that looks at how well ICT may be used to boost student enthusiasm in a language classroom (2007). She discovered that when technology is included into language sessions, pupils are able to form optimistic perspectives on the subject. The vast majority of students who take part in the study feel that the use of ICT inspires them to care more about their education. Teaching students the skills they'll need to actively engage with real materials (blogs, podcasts, and digital videos) in the classroom has been shown to boost meaningful classroom interaction, student interest and motivation, and student involvement and engagement.

Considering these claims, it seems that there is consensus on the positive effects of ICT on student enthusiasm and participation in language classes. Yet, using ICT tools in the classroom demands students to engage in complex cognitive processes, which may have the unintended consequence of discouraging students who struggle academically or those whose learning styles are better suited to a teacher-centered environment.

FOSTERING STUDENTS' INDEPENDENCE AND FOCUS

Teachers' traditional function as lecturer has shifted to that of facilitator of learning as a result of widespread computer usage in the classroom. Hence, fostering pupils' growth toward more autonomy and self-sufficiency (Murray et al, 2005). More students are actively engaged in their learning thanks to recent changes in the techniques and methods used to teach foreign languages. Computers and other forms of information technology have enabled a wide range of novel approaches to language instruction. The web has been a huge boon to pedagogical approaches that foster student autonomy and give tools for more tailored lessons, such as the standards-based approach, the competency-based approach, project-based learning, and task-based learning. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) proponents and supporters say that CALL is superior to more conventional methods of teaching foreign languages because it encourages student initiative and encourages the development of unique approaches to learning (Murray et al. 2005). This benefit assumes a position switch inside the language classroom. The degree to which students, instructors, and parents are able to shift their mindsets is crucial to the effectiveness of the experience. Students are now expected to take on a more active role in the classroom and teachers are no longer seen as the exclusive source of information. Students must actively participate in the building and structuring of their own education (Lee, C., 2005).

This switch in responsibilities is made easier with the use of instructional technology, which many students are adopting to develop their learning independence. According to research by

Lee, C. "The more a teacher employs instructional technology, the less teacher-centered and the more students-centered a classroom will become" (p.81). Classrooms with more advanced technological tools have been shown to be more conducive to student-driven, discovery-based learning.

Teachers of English in various countries give their pupils project work to do to supplement and enrich what they learn in class. The majority of today's students rely heavily on the Internet for their academic needs. Students are encouraged to take charge of their own learning by taking part in projects that interest them (Reksten, 2000). Multimedia applications and programs allow students to complete a reading assignment in the target language, look up words in a dictionary, study grammar and pronunciation related to the reading content, take a comprehension test on the reading content, and receive immediate feedback all within the same programme. This will be sufficient to maximize desired results and provide additional options and infrastructure for independent study.

Teachers are able to be more flexible and adaptable in a dynamic classroom setting, which in turn leads to classes featuring activities and tasks like project work, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring that give students more agency over their own learning and create a less teacher-dominated learning environment (Kassim et al, 2007). It is believed that web-based education, and online quests in particular, equip students with good study strategies and promote self-directed study. It was Bernie Dodge who first used the phrase "web quest" (1995). He describes it as a method of instruction in which students do independent research and rely mostly or exclusively on data collected from the World Wide Web. Web quests are instructional tools created to help students make the most of their time online, encourage critical thinking beyond simple recall, and promote analysis, synthesis, and assessment (Smith and Baber, 2005). Students are expected to put in significant independent effort and draw upon previously learned skills and information to complete such assignments, with the result often being a presentation or report. The capacity for success and self-directed learning are both strengthened by this.

Using ICT in the English language classroom has been shown to boost students' ability to study independently in a number of empirical studies undertaken at a variety of educational institutions (Kassim et al, 2007). Using hypermedia has been a huge boon to student learning. As individuals may now study at their own speed and complete assignments independently, they have more agency over their educational experience (Padurean and Margan, 2009). Language learners shouldn't expect to develop super-autonomous learning abilities and

competences just by interacting with ICT-enhanced settings. Some students may thrive in classes where the instructor takes the lead because that environment better suits their preferred method of learning.

HELPING PEOPLE SPEAK MORE AND TYPE LESS

The widespread availability of information and communication technology has enabled and increased interaction and real discussion amongst native English speakers. Without the advancements in ICT, it would be impossible to communicate with the ease and speed that we currently enjoy. Although it's true that nothing beats talking to someone face-to-face, most students just don't have the resources to go internationally to study with their peers. Authentic talks, debates, and discussions may take place amongst language users using only a video or audio connection via the Internet (Rank, 2011). In addition to improving education, technological progress and the Internet in particular may open up new avenues for study and promote communication among students (Lee,C. 2005). According to Chapelle (2003), "for those who want to engage in it, computer-mediated communication creates a form of virtual immersion environment" (p.35). Following the conventional belief that one should relocate to an English-speaking area if they want to become fluent in the language, many English-learning services on the Internet provide users with the chance to chat with and get to know native English speakers. Additionally, new technologies have the potential to transform task-based language teaching into active learning by bringing students together to communicate, interact, and develop knowledge (Thomas, M., 2010).

There is a wide range of benefits to be gained by using either synchronous or asynchronous computer-mediated communication systems. The social pressures of in-person collaboration, such as waiting one's time, being the center of attention, or being afraid to speak out for fear of retribution or mental stagnation, may be alleviated by these tools (Cohen, E.2002). Students of a foreign language are not pressured to respond immediately and may instead take their time coming up with thoughtful replies. Author De Ramirez states in 2010 that "web-based platforms can also provide a safer, more anonymous space in which to practice English. Beginners can be reticent and uncomfortable speaking in class sharing their writing with peers in a face-to-face situation" (p. 3).

Because to advances in web technology and especially Internet video connections, non-verbal communication may also be seen. Culture-loaded nonverbal cues like facial expressions, gestures, and posture assist students correctly comprehend a variety of speech actions and foster

a shared language foundation (Lee, L., 2009). They may now stay away from any potential communication-stifling blenders. In addition, the classroom conditions made feasible by computer-enhanced communication are more conducive to learning and provide more support for meaning-oriented communication. Students strike a balance between spontaneity and precision as they acquire the linguistic and intercultural competence necessary to carry on meaningful interactions with native speakers. This makes online conversation a potent and useful medium for mediation and education (Lee, L., 2009).

Yet, there are also drawbacks to synchronous communication and engagement. The fast-paced nature of online chat, which is meant to simulate in-person interaction, may be stressful for language learners (less waiting time and quick responses and reactions). Because of the genuine and casual nature of the scenario, students often use slang, misspellings, and abbreviations in their writing (Lee, L., 2009). Body language and prosodic elements are social cues that cannot be taken advantage of in computer-mediated communication. Students sometimes resort to utilizing emoticons and happy faces to convey their innermost thoughts and sensations. Although these digital images may aid in communication, they do nothing to advance language acquisition or enhance students' performance on writing class assessments. These might lead to sloppy or improper word choice.

INCREASING AUTHENTICITY AND SENSORY IMPACT

Using technology in the English language classroom may also provide teachers with access to authentic educational materials. According to Evans (2009), "The Internet provides a wealth of information which can support and extend pupils' knowledge and skills within English lessons" (p.43). CALL software supports the development of all four linguistic faculties via the use of authentic and relevant content that stimulates the learner's interest in the language. They provide students access to authentic media, including the words and voices of native speakers (Reksten, 2000).

Publishing students' work on blogs, wikis, and podcasts in front of a real audience has been shown to boost their motivation and interest in studying. When students think their work is appreciated and will be read by others, they are more likely to participate and produce. De Ramirez (2010) implies that "publishing student work to the World Wide Web is a means of providing an authentic global audience for classroom productions. When students write or speak for a broader and more international audience, they pay more attention to polishing their work" (p.1). Instructors of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) throughout the globe often

encourage their students to use online publishing platforms like blogs, videos, wikis, podcasts, and social networks to share the work they've done in the classroom. This provides pupils with an incentive to study English and aids in their progress toward that goal. In addition, students report increased levels of engagement and motivation when instructors employ signals like music, visuals, and videos to promote learning. The advent of blogs has resulted in several benefits. Blogs are an excellent resource for classrooms since they can be used as a means of communication and a treasure trove of reading materials, exposing students to real-world examples of language and culture (Richardson, 2008).

Technology in the English language classroom allows for multi-sensory learning. Apps that provide information in several visual, auditory, and kinesthetic forms offer students more options in how they learn (Reksten, 2000). Teachers who want to accommodate a wide range of student learning styles might find helpful support in the form of multimedia. Multimedia is any presentation that includes moving images, sound, and text. This guarantees that all EFL learners will get something out of the resources provided in class (Reksten, 2000).

Using multimodal delivery, such as the visual multimedia forms prevalent on most websites, offers the ability to meet the needs of students with a wide range of learning styles (Reksten, 2000). Having to bring physical items into the classroom and waste time explaining and illustrating abstract linguistic input could be avoided with the help of a simple interactive video link.

The delivery of classes using multimedia allows for a great deal of individualization in education. Multimedia environments offer advantages over more conventional teaching methods by appealing to students' visual and auditory senses (Rajeshwar, 2001). Rajeshwar's claim is supported by Shailaja (2001), who also argues that "Hypertext provides a number of advantages for language learning. A more authentic learning environment is created since listening is combined with seeing in the real world and skills are easily integrated" (p.3). In addition, multimedia computer tools allow for the monitoring of student progress and the instantaneous provision of feedback (Rajeshwa, Shailaja &Damodar, 2001).

Yet, the use of ICT without prior planning and defined goals is likely to be ineffective. The employment of technology in the classroom, and especially in the context of multimodal delivery of the English language, is not without its drawbacks. It might be difficult to find instructional materials that account for cultural differences. M. Evans argues in 2009 that "The vast availability of original, authentic exits can provide instant contact and stimulus for the

language learners. Nonetheless, such material, produced for native speakers of the language, can, for many language learners and their teachers , be viewed as 'difficult'….. and the subject matter may relate to a culture of which the learner has little or no experience" (p. 3).

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITTEN CLASS PERFORMANCE

Arguments have been made on both sides as to whether or not utilizing technology to teach English really helps students learn the language and do better on standardized tests. Several studies have looked into how well ICT-based instruction works for teaching a second language, and the results have been mixed. The findings imply that the adoption of ICT-enabled English teaching settings has enhanced students' language skills, enthusiasm in learning, and success in learning English.

Hussain, in 2010, studied the effects of using a technologically advanced classroom on students' English language skills. The purpose of the research was to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference in academic performance between students who received and those who did not receive education facilitated by information and communication technology (ICT). The findings demonstrated that the experimental group's high achievers and poor achievers had significantly different mean scores. Research proves that incorporating technology into language classes benefited pupils of all levels. The study's authors advocated for integrating IT into lessons and for using tech-enhanced classrooms to boost students' education.

In the same vein, Abu Naba'h (2009) looked into the problem by focusing on grammar as a distinct component of the target language. The study's primary objective was to compare students' average performance in conventional classroom settings with that of online learning environments. The experimental group that learned passive voice grammar via computers outperformed the control group that learned passive voice grammar via traditional instruction by a statistically significant margin. The experiment was blamed for the disparity in ratings. Researchers hypothesized that computers' impact on students' performance was due to the fact that students could set their own paces in the classroom and that CALL programs were designed with their unique needs in mind. It was suggested that EFL educators use a variety of strategies with their students, and that similar studies be conducted in other parts of Jordan to verify and generalize the findings.

Joyce performed studies on how children learned English in a computer-based classroom (1998). The study analyzed how students learned different English grammatical structures

depending on the delivery method (computer-based instruction versus teacher-directed instruction). The study's goal was to compare the learning of a specific grammatical structure by students in a teacher-led classroom to that of students in a computer-assisted learning setting. The findings demonstrate that grammar instruction delivered via computer is as effective as, if not more so than, instruction delivered via a human teacher. The results of the immediate open-ended and fill-in-the-blank post-tests showed a statistically significant difference between the groups, whereas the results of the multiple-choice post-tests did not. The results showed that the use of computers in the classroom bolstered the development of certain language features and frameworks. Hui-Fang (2007) discovered that when students used email, their writing improved in terms of syntactic complexity, grammatical correctness, and lexical density. The purpose of this research was twofold: (1) to examine whether or if students' writing improved as a result of their frequency of email interactions, and (2) to investigate how students felt about using email in their EFL writing. The results show that both the complexity and accuracy of the students' grammar have increased. Using email's rehabilitative and communicative potentials accounted for the noticeable difference. Yet, lexical density decreased as students made more frequent use of remedial comments. Results also reveal that students have a generally favorable attitude about using email to enhance their writing abilities, and that there is a positive correlation between the amount of email exchanged and the quality of written work produced.

Greenfield (2003) conducted a qualitative case study with ESL students in secondary school to learn more about their reactions to a class email exchange with their counterparts in Hong Kong and Iowa. The instructional model developed by the researcher that served as the foundation for the email conversation included elements of cooperative learning, communicative language acquisition, process writing, and project-based learning. Participants reported feeling like they made significant progress in their English and computer skills as a result of the exchange. But, in the pre-experiment survey, they weren't sure whether it improved abilities that mattered on written class assessments, such as grammar use and discrete language functions. Students were doubtful that the project had helped them enhance their exam-related skills, and they had low expectations for the role that utilizing computers and email may play in helping them perform better on standardized exams, according to a survey conducted after the study was completed. In contrast, Seiltad (2012) investigated the viability of introducing a hybrid language learning course for English language learners in Morocco, with a focus on utilizing individualized YouTube videos as a pre-teaching strategy. Concern that pupils would not acquire as much knowledge in a hybrid context as they would in a conventional one was one of the primary foci

of the research. The study's findings support the use of YouTube videos as part of compelling lesson plans.

To see whether there were statistically significant changes between the groups, we evaluated students' final grades before and after they were exposed to the YouTube films as a kind of pre-teaching. According to a t-test, the effect size of (p.no20) is too little to be considered statistically significant. Pre-class web-based training has been demonstrated to increase students' final grades, although marginally. Azmi's (2014) research aimed to determine how the use of technology in the classroom affected the academic achievement of ESL students (performance on written class assessment). Two classes, G1 (the experimental group) and G2 (the control group), participated in a field experiment over the course of three semesters. The study's objectives were to determine the extent to which patterns alter over time and to determine whether or not there is evidence that utilizing ICT in language classes optimizes learning and helps students enhance performance on written class evaluation. Although there is a small difference between groups on the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2, the t-test for equality of means shows that there is a statistically significant difference between high achievers in the experimental group and high achievers in the control group on post-test 2 ($p = 0.009\ 0.05$). The primary takeaway from the research is that the use of ICT may successfully maximize learning outcomes and boost the performance of high-achieving students on written class assessment. So, it is essential to modify ICT usage in order to better assist underachieving demographics. While the use of ICT has the potential to help most students enhance their oral and receptive skills, only the highest-achieving students stand to profit from the digitalization of course materials in terms of their productive writing skills. Maybe they already possess the motivation, self-direction, and independent learning abilities necessary to make the most of ICT.

CONCLUSION

Most of the research concluded that when Technology was properly implemented in language classrooms, it improved instruction, student engagement, communication, autonomy, learning outcomes, motivation, and performance in EFL courses. The implementation of appropriate pedagogies and techniques may, therefore, make a difference, bring about beneficial changes in the EFL classroom, and turn classrooms into open digital spaces of learning. Yet, the use of ICT without prior planning and defined goals is likely to be ineffective. The employment of technology in the classroom, and especially in the context of multimodal delivery of the English

language, is not without its drawbacks. The cultural context of instructional materials is not always clear or easy to navigate. Moreover, the successful use of ICT in ELT, and multimodal delivery in particular, requires adequate training and pedagogical preparation. If you believe Blake (2008), "Teachers inexperienced in using technology often harbour the belief that merely transforming an activity into a web or CALL format will guarantee its success for students. Again, any activity without adequate pedagogical planning- technologically enhanced or not- will produce unsatisfactory results with students, even if it's attractive from a multimedia point of view" (p.11). Without adequate pedagogical preparation, the use of Technology in the ELT classroom might backfire.

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