INTEGRATING ICT IN CURRICULUM: MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Since the onset of this century, education has encountered critical challenges. In the information age, how to give elevated quality education and training has turned out to be a fundamental query to be addressed for those who require education and can gain from it in the most cost-effective approach. Educational systems have endeavoured to surmount the challenges by adopting new approaches. Information and communication technologies (ICT) embody a new approach for developing the distribution of information and aiding to face these challenges. The major objective of this study is to get empirical data on the current use of ICT by teachers and students to come up with strategies and action plans for integrating ICTs in the Algerian higher educational system. With a prior concern to the implementation of ICT at school and classroom levels, the study addresses the following questions: *How effective for EFL learning process is the integration of ICT in classroom instruction? How academically appropriate is the integration of ICT for `reconceptualising' students' learning process? How can the perceived obstacles be challenged for appropriate integration of ICT?* The findings revealed that participating university teachers supported the use of ICTs as a tool for providing students with more learning resources, enhancing instructional activities for submitting assignments, and facilitating classroom communication between teachers and students. The findings disclosed also that participant teachers believed that lack of training, long standing pedagogical approaches and no perception of benefits are the major obstacles that challenge successful use of ICTs. Because teachers play a major role in any type of education reform and innovation, their perspectives and beliefs should not be left uncharted. Once these are made clear, teachers will get prepared to integrate ICT into their instructions.

Keywords: ICT, teachers' perceptions, learning outcomes, barriers, achievement and challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The use of ICT is generating main distinctions in the learning of students and teaching approaches. Educational institutions in the Western World empowered a lot for ICT infrastructures above the last 20 years, and students draw on computers more frequently and for a much huge variety of applications (Volman, 2005). A number of studies disclosed that students using ICT abilities mostly reveal higher learning improvements than those who do not use it. Moreover, the use of ICTs in education is also a turning point in the learning approaches. In fact, there is a prevalent conception that the integration of ICTs in education contributes to a more constructivist learning and an improvement in activity and greater engagement of students (Albirini, 2006). It enhances the role of the teacher to endorsing, encouraging, and training students more willingly than merely passing on knowledge. The ongoing advance in using computers shifts from learning about computers, to learning computers, and finally to learning with computers (Volman, 2005). Conversely, teachers' unwillingness to adopt innovations must be perceived within the backdrop of existing technology and promises. Evidently, a diversity of factors still consider the ICT in the syllabus problematic (Watson, 2001). Because of this, the effect of ICT did not bring ground-breaking changes in education. For example, the National ICT survey in the Netherlands reveals that the majority of primary-school students use computers less than once a week and there are still a lot of secondary

school teachers who do not use ICT in any way (Alhawiti, 2013). Most frequently, they draw on computers for drill-and-practice and word processing.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In latest years , there has been a rising interest to recognize how computers and internet can best be used to perk up success and effectiveness of education at all levels and in both formal and non-formal learning environments. Since there is a change of theories enlightening learning processes, ICTs become a prop for learning activities. Voogt's (2003) depiction on the foremost roles, defined ICTs as a subject for study, a feature of a discipline or a vocation, and a means of instruction. As a means of instruction, ICTs suit to fulfill and carry out the emerging pedagogy of constructivism (Voogt ,2003). Furthermore, Voogt (2003) distinguished between traditional learning environment and constructivist approaches. The former deems learning as conduction of knowledge to students, which is the one and only undertaking of the teacher. In contrast, the constructivist approach deems learning as genuine and learner centered. ICT is a terrific aid in the constructivist approach, where one can design virtual and personal learning environments to students. ICTs are having impacts on instructive approaches in the classrooms. Their encouragement to shifts in teaching practices, school innovation, and community services is significant.

With the assumption that what teachers think has a great impact on classroom instruction and students' learning processes, this study aimed to discover what teachers perceive, believe, and think about technology in EFL teaching in the Algerian university. Technology in this setting refers to the use of a range of computer and Internet programs and applications that are available in English language department at Tlemcen university. Using multiple approaches to elicit teachers' beliefs and personal perspectives about their practices revealed that technology use in EFL teaching in highly personalized and context-situated. In other words, it is not only teachers' personal knowledge, skills, or confidence in technology that facilitate the integration.

The integration of ICT is making major distinctions in the learning of students and teaching approaches. In the western world, educational institutions invested in ICT infrastructures over the last 20 years, and students use computers more frequently and for an infinite variety of applications (Volman, 2005). In academic framework, the use of computers attempts to support student language learning; the notion is known as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Computer Assisted Language Learning can be considered as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning" (Lim, 2003.p, 1).CALL is mostly deemed as the critical acronym to denote studies related to second language and computer technology.

In line with studies which view motivation as an essential factor in language learning, CALL practitioner have been to claim that computer environments themselves can enthuse many learners. Learners are inspired while learning with computer as they are less threatened and thus take more risks and are more spontaneous (Becker, 2001).

The process of implementing ICTs in the teaching learning process seeks both to comprise the various competencies of language learning and explore the technology more completely into language teaching (Aydın, 2007). For this enterprise, ICT materials (for example computers, Interactive White Boards (IWBs), multimedia software, network processes ect) proffer a diversity of informal, communicative and publishing materials (Brooks-Young,2007).

Studies have been made to underline the role of the teacher to sustain, stimulate, and train students more willingly than just sending out knowledge. The ongoing experience of utilizing computers has shifted from learning about computers, to learning computers, and lastly to learning with computers (Volman, 2005).

In recent times, there has been a rising attention to recognize how computers and internet can best be employed to obtain a effective and efficient teaching learning process. Attributable to the revised theories of learning, ICTs are supposed to support the process of learning. ICTs are recognized as a topic for investigation, a trait of a discipline or a career, and tools for teaching (Voogt, 2003). ICTs are best used to go with the rising pedagogy of constructivism. Besides, Voogt (2003) differentiated between traditional learning environment and constructivist approaches. The former views learning as transmission of knowledge to students, which is the major role of the teacher. On the contrary, the constructivist approach views learning as authentic and learner centered. The integration of ICT seeks to hold up the constructivist approach, where the teacher can design virtual and personal learning environments to students.

Presently, the traditional teaching methods and environments are not well-liked while multimedia technology fitting into audio and visual animation effects makes us more exposed to data. Furthermore, multimedia technology supplies a sense of authenticity and practicability, which critically fosters students' interest and impetus in study and their engagement in class activities. ICT constructs a context for language teaching and makes the class dynamic and attractive. Throughout the process of multimedia instruction, sounds and pictures can be put together, the fact which boosts the initiative of both teachers and students and enriches the content of classes.

RESEARCH METHOD AND ANALYSIS

This research was conducted with a group of teachers giving instruction in English language department at Tlemcen University of Algeria. The main research launched in February, 2017 when a survey questionnaire about teachers' perspectives of ICT integration in teaching learning process was administered to participants who revealed willingness to contribute in the study. The first research query addressed in this paper was about the perceptions of university teachers regarding ICT integration into their classroom instruction. Quantitative data of teachers' views and perceptions is provided in the table below.

Table1: Rank of factors effective in using ICT as perceived by EFL teachers

Rank	Factors	Mean	SD
1	Providing opportunities that traditional instruction cannot provide.	4.50	0.56
2	Providing 'authentic' experiences.	4.31	0.97
3	Creating an effective learning environment.	4.18	0.96
4	Enriching teaching/learning environment.	4.10	0.97
5	Extending beyond the lesson.	4.09	1.20
6	Providing feedback.	4.07	1.20
7	Replacing the traditional teaching aids by new ICT tools.	4.06	1.04
8	Providing edutainment in classroom environment.	4.03	1.08
9	Supporting teachers to plan in-class activities.	4.01	1.96
10	Supporting teachers to evaluate in-class activities.	3.88	1.12
11	Using a range of assessment methods.	3.86	1.30
12	Managing learning.	3.85	1.13
13	Increasing student achievement.	3.83	1.20
14	Managing time and pace well.	3.80	1.08
15	Revising the instructional strategies to be used.	3.15	1.17
16	Extending a vision for integrating ICT across the curriculum.	3.12	1.14
17	Helping teachers implementing in class activities.	3.07	1.13
18	Providing staff with personal access to ICT.	3.01	1.24

The present research showed that participant teachers supported the use of computer and Information Technology as a tool for: providing opportunities that traditional instruction cannot provide, providing 'authentic' experiences, creating an effective learning environment and enriching teaching/learning environment. In fact, theses teachers' beliefs about technology- enhanced teaching may not appear as distinct from how English language instruction is perceived and currently enacted without the use of technology. They thought technology should be used in a way that corresponds with the existing curriculum and their beliefs about EFL instruction in particular settings. Therefore, they are inclined to accept a form of technology-mediated instruction that helps them achieve their

high prioritised teaching goals, which are influenced by their own instructional beliefs and students' needs and backgrounds.

Although it is perceived among these teachers that technology has great potential in promoting communicative language learning, technology use in this context may not focus on these areas since teachers know that there is something more important in the classroom that needs to be addressed. This mismatch between actual instructional technology activities and the apparent potential of technology use to enhance instruction was further influenced by the lack of facilities and students' low language ability. These are major barriers to technology integration which may also hinder them from maximizing the capability of ICT in EFL instruction. The table bellow highlights the informants' perceptions about the factors that could affect a successful use of ICT.

Table2: Rank of factors contributing for reluctance of using ICT as perceived by teachers

Rank	Factors	Mean	SD
1	Lack of pedagogical training.	4.06	1.00
2	Lack of teacher ICT competencies.	4.02	1.03
3	Teachers' computer anxiety.	4.01	1.09
4	Lack of teacher confidence.	3.92	1.16
5	Fear of things going wrong.	3.30	1.05
6	Negative experience with ICT in the past.	3.30	1.14
7	No perception of benefits.	3.29	1.03
8	Teacher workload.	3.27	1.19
9	Lack of technical Support.	3.27	1.30
10	lack of time.	3.26	1.17
11	Resistance to change & negative attitudes.	3.20	1.19
12	Impact of public examinations.	3.19	1 .18
13	Age differences.	3.18	1.17
14	Gender differences.	3.17	1.16
15	Lack of personal access for teachers.	3.15	1.09

The present study revealed that "Lack of training" is deemed to be the first problematic issue that influenced the process of ICT integration as it affects teachers' competence to use of ICT. "Lack of teachers' competence" is a barrier that would generate other issues such as "Lack of teachers' confidence" . As they do not believe that they can manage the use ICT, teachers prefer not to use ICT because of "Fear of things going wrong" and also if they lived a "Negative experience with ICT in the past". "Teacher workload" and "No perception of benefits" tend as well to be an obstacle that prevents a successful use of ICT in teaching. Findings drawn from this study reveal that change should come from within teachers who need alter their negative attitudes towards the use of ICT if they realise the effectiveness of this tool for both teaching and learning process.

Since technology use in Algerian university EFL instruction is mediated by teachers' beliefs about what constitutes effective language teaching and how technology and information access can enhance the role f the teacher in classrooms, at this point, providing teachers with the latest educational technology is no longer what is required to encourage technology-mediated instruction. Rather, teachers should be encouraged to think about the unique capacities of each tool and how using that tool in the classroom could facilitate students' learning and achievement of current learning goals. It is now crucial to urge EFL teachers to critically evaluate the potential of instructional technology, and the value it would bring, and then design instructional methods and tasks that enhance language learning for students of the digital age. In these backgrounds, educators' shifting role in the 21st century entails a basic mission, which is to be willing for introducing technological novelties to teaching learning process. Currently, essential skills and the level of willingness are key factors in the integration process of innovative ICTs (Özo_ul, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this research was to address the importance of understanding the perceptions of EFL teachers who know best what is good for them and their students. Although, including technology in language teaching is not mandatory in most Algerian university departments, EFL teachers cannot escape the need to teach with technology in the near future given the increasing presence and demands of online communication and electronic literacy. To ensure successful technology integration, it is highly important to tap teachers' cognition and perceptions about technology and their personal beliefs about language learning and teaching in particular contexts. As teachers play a major role in any kind of education reform and innovation, their perspectives, understanding, and beliefs should not be left unexplored. Teachers should be encouraged to explore and understand the interconnectedness of their own teaching principles. Once these are made clear, teachers will have a more informed basis for the integration of technology into their daily classrooms. It is important that teachers should seek both knowledge and models of good teaching to improve their teaching expertise, whether from their own experience, colleagues, and professional development opportunities, or the web. And finally teachers themselves should represent models of "good learning" for students and colleagues and never stop learning.

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