

"The Use of Information and Communication Technology in Teaching English Language at Al-Yarmouk University College"

Key words : The Use of Information

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Abstract

The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in English language teaching classrooms depends on the available aids the lecturers' knowledge, and the students. One of the important factors is lecturers' knowledge and skills in using ICT in class. This study reports a case study of 12 EFL instructors who are working in the department of English at Al-Yarmouk University College who use ICT in teaching different topics of English as foreign language (FL) learners. The data of the study were collected from observation of instructors' lectures. Each lesson was a video recorded and played back during a stimulated recollection interview and followed by instructors after each lecture. Mishra and Koehler(2006) suggest the use of technology is associated by the dynamic relationship between instructors' technological, pedagogical and content knowledge (TPCK). The analysis of the interview data will hopefully provide a better understanding of how the different types of knowledge interact and influence instructors' use of ICT in teaching English to FL learners. Furthermore, through an analysis of instructors' use of ICT in teaching specific subject content, this study also hopes to advance the development of the TPCK model. The findings will also contribute to an understanding of the role of literature in language.

1. Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) can be defined as scientific, technological and engineering based management techniques used in information storage and communication mechanism with optimal time and space utilization from comparison to other traditional methods adopted for the same. The word 'ICT' includes any communication device or application such as computer, mobile phones, radio, television, satellite system etc. (Saxena, Jyotsana & Rai, Geeta 1989, p68).

Meskill & Ranglova, 2000; Jackstadt & Müller-Hartmann, 2001 state that the Recent studies have demonstrated how the use of technology affects EFL teaching process at university level such as the use of e-mail. Other studies emphasizes multimedia (Yeh, 2005 on his side states), and the internet contributions to learning of English language. Most of these studies demonstrate exemplary uses of technology in teaching and learning English. In contrast, there is limited researches focus on instructors' pedagogical approaches in teaching English.

Today it may be said that instructor can make use of these different tools of technology and can make his/her teaching innovative and interesting. Paran 2006 p.12) calls for more research investigating the approaches taken in EFL teaching with specific types of language learners and in specific countries.

The aims of the study:

This paper aims to address the current gap in the EFL teaching through a case study of three university instructors' integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in EFL class.

Hypotheses

1. There is no reason behind using ICT.
2. The ICT has no contribution in developing the student's comprehension.
3. The use of ICT has no effect on communication skill.

Literature Review

English language is a necessary for most people in today's world, while technology development has a very strong effect on teaching and also contributes in developing education, especially English Language. Since English is one of the difficult subject, it is better for the instructors to create interactive teaching and learning to make students interest. Information technology is part of the medium used to convey the message of science to many people, ranging from printing technology a few centuries ago, such as printed books, telecommunications to media, voice recorded on tape, video, television, and CD. According to Kent "ICT in education refers to computers, communications facilities and features that variously support teaching, learning and a range of activities in education.(QCA Schemes of Work for ICT in Kent Country Council. 2004p.33).

Moreover, the term information and Communications Technologies includes

technologies in which the computer plays a central role, i.e. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the internet, and variety of generic computer application also asserts that English language teaching has been shaped by the search for the 'one best method' of teaching the language. Regardless of whether the focus of instruction has been reading, the grammatical rules and vocabulary of the target language (e.g. Grammar Translation Method), speaking (how to communicate the target language such as Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, The Silent Way, Community Language, Communicative Approach), or other issues (e.g. The Total Physical Response Method), the attempts of the teaching profession have been shaped by a desire to find 'a' better way of teaching than the existing method. (Fitzparick and Davies, 2002) Hartoyo (2008).

The latest method that is developing is Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Some experts and practitioners of education learning language in CALL, strongly supports the utilization of ICT in language learning to improve efficiency and effectiveness of learning that can improve the quality of understanding and mastery of the language studied. In other words, the integration of ICT in the field of language learning is inevitable known that the ICT and language learning are two aspects which support each other like two sides of the coin inseparable (Hartoyo, 2010, p122). Fortunately, the use of Computer Assisted-Learning language (CALL) has increased noticeably by English instructors. Consideration of Computer Assisted Language Learning is using computer. This tool is flexible, rich and interactive. It is flexible in the term of time and place. It has also assumed that

more than other media can encourage students in learning language. This is due to the computer's ability to present material in more diverse ways than either book or video does. In addition, CALL is able to generate interaction and improve communicative competence, including providing authentic material to the class or self – learning. The method focuses in computer utilization to enhance language learning.

2. Methodology

For the sake of this study, the lectures of 12 EFL instructors who are working in department of English at Al-Yarmouk University College were observed by the researcher and each instructor participated in a stimulated recall interview after each lectures. The data was analyzed to answer the research question: "How do EFL instructors integrate ICT in EFL teaching?." The English text books taught by the instructors included a range of novels, drama, poetry, translation, and phonetics prescribed by the Ministry Of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq. The duration of interview with each participant was no longer than 30 minutes. The interview was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed and coded using Microsoft word.

The researcher observes 30 lectures and each lecture lasted from 45 minutes. This study reports preliminary findings and results of the case analyses. The technological pedagogical content knowledge framework (TPCKF) proposed by Mishra and Koehler (2006) was adopted and utilized in the data analysis.

According to Mishra and Koehler (2006),instructors' use of technology is guided by the dynamic relationship between teachers' technological/pedagogical and content

knowledge. They argue that effective integration of technology requires instructors to be "continually creating, maintaining, and re-establishing a dynamic equilibrium between each component". This study adopted this conceptual framework, because it is broad and flexible enough to be applied on most subjects.

3. Findings

3.1. ICT in EFL Class

Based on the data, all of the instructors used ICT as a presentation tool to facilitate the students' comprehension and provide them with more interesting teaching. For instance, instructors use data show and computers in teaching novels, drama, poetry, translation, and phonetics. The traditional mode of reading from a book was transformed as learners viewed a multimedia presentation which contained animation, narration and lines from the original texts. The instructors believed that the helped not only in describing the events especially in the novels, drama, and poetry but also with the setting of them. The instructor's use of the CD-ROM is related to her belief about how the use of multimedia could aid the learners' comprehension of the subjects mentioned earlier. The learners with low proficiency levels would have been an obstacle for them to appreciate the plays, novels, and some poems through reading alone and the use of multimedia enabled them to access the text through a different medium.

3.2. ICT to promote learner response to EFL textbooks

Analysis of the data also revealed that instructor' TPCKF included knowledge

of how to use ICT in a student-centered approach. For instance, in one of the instructor's lecture on the phonetics, there was evidence of ICT being used to encourage learners' response to the variation between English consonants and vowels. The aim of the lesson was not to learn about the consonants and vowels in isolate, but rather to see how the learners responded to the different issues in each category. Although they did not compose their own ideas or opinions, the learners were able to demonstrate an understanding of them by relating them to the songs and some video clips. Three of the students with high Language proficiency were chosen to present their own responses the consonants and vowels. The instructor believed that this activity was a way to promote peer teaching.

Although the activity was not related to the exam, the instructor believed that it would help the students to “internalize the phonetics and will help students understand the content of the English phonetics better”. Although there was no collaborative work and not all learners had the opportunity to use ICT, the learners were engaged in oral interaction with the whole class. The instructor ended the lesson by giving a short speaking task which required the learners to choose a piece of advice from the text book and the reason why it is important to them. In my view, the use of ICT as a presentation tool in this lesson was effective in creating a better learning environment where learners were free to share their personal views orally and cooperatively.

3.3. ICT to alert students' language awareness

An analysis of the lessons further reveals that the teaching of some text books was also integrated with language practice. For example, a communicative approach was observed in two of the instructors' lectures who involved in this study. They were used the data show in teaching poetry and novel. In their lessons observed, one those instructors selected students to relate some conversations to the right characters. The task required them to understand the meaning of words and know the role of each character in the task.

3.4. ICT as motivation tool

The instructors' integration of ICT in EFL teaching was also affects learners' motivation to learn novels, drama, poetry, and phonetics. One of the instructors, who involved in the current study, stated that the use of ICT was more interesting than reading books and enabled learners to be more focused and also make students interact more with these EFL subjects. For example, in the eighth lecture he used a PowerPoint slide and asked the students to make phonemic transcription of some English words through collaborative work. The learners were required to work in small groups to make their transcriptions about the given words.

4. Conclusions

The effectiveness of the lectures largely depended on instructors' linguistics knowledge and how to use ICT in ways that could enable them and their students to get better EFL teaching atmosphere. They try to make their learners benefit from the integration of ICT in these classes. This study reveals that the evidence arises from these case analyses would suggest that instructors' TPCKF is related to their

beliefs about the value and possibility of integrating technology in EFL teaching and its importance in helping the learners to meet their needs to avoid their language difficulty and at the same time give them more motivation to learn English.

The use of generic tools such as PowerPoint and data show appeared to be more amenable to a broader range of pedagogical strategies compared to the use of prepared English Foreign Language (EFL) computer programs. Although there were episodes where its use could be considered effective, there were also instances where it would have been more effective if the instructors had used the activities to promote interaction among students. The evidence from the case analyses would suggest that instructors technological pedagogical content knowledge framework (TPCKF) could be further developed with more guidance on how to creatively integrate any prepared computer programs in ways that promote to more learners' interaction inside EFL class. This could begin by requiring instructors to examine their own beliefs about the possibility of integrating any prepared programs using ICT and to evaluate their potential use in meeting learner needs.

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