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Prof. K. N. Shelke

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Effectiveness of ICT in EFL Classroom**Syed Imranul Haque***Assistant Professor, English Language Center, Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia***Abstract**

The role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in EFL classroom is becoming increasingly prominent these days. EFL classrooms today are constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of students. This paper aims to investigate the effectiveness of ICT in teaching English as a foreign language. This article has been based both on quantitative and qualitative research supported by the previous researches in ICT spectrum and it further explores, in totality, its effectiveness in EFL classrooms at Jazan University. This article also examines various avenues for EFL teachers to know how to implement ICT in EFL learning effectively in developing communication skill among its learners. The study further analyses and evaluates the pros and cons of use of ICT in daily practice and remedial measures to encounter these problems suggesting various techniques for its meaningfulness and usefulness, in its application.

Key Words: Information and Communication Technology, motivation, communication skills, techniques, attitude, perception.

1. Introduction:

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has become a global facilitator of learning all around the world. It has created a space for learners to learn efficiently and effectively to take on the responsibilities as future leaders in different spheres of businesses. The use of ICT in EFL classroom is also one amongst them

and it has become part and parcel of learning process both for the teachers and learners respectively. It is a well-established fact that the use of ICT in teaching facilitates the students' interest to participate in the teaching-learning process. Latest innovations in the field of technology have created a global world without boundaries and brought tremendous changes in our routine life. It entered into our social life,

culture, business and other areas to ease our life by solving our problems at one click. But the hidden fact of the use of ICT is the lack of its knowledge to operate it in different situations which has posed a threat and a challenge to all of us. Similar to this is for EFL teachers who need the required amalgamation of technical skills and pedagogical knowledge to facilitate them to make an effective use of ICT in the today's EFL classroom and develop and improve upon to exploit new technologies for future purposes.

This research describes the development process of ICT from novice to the present status through reviewing literature, existing status in Saudi Arabian EFL classroom, various ICT tools and its uses, students and teachers' perception on the uses of ICT, and finally evaluates and discusses followed by the recommendations for EFL classroom settings by teachers and future scope of research at a Jazan university, Saudi Arabia.

2. Literature review:

Information and communication technology has passed through many stages since its inception and created a niche in every walk of life around the world. Every individual, society and organization is evaluated for its status on one of the criteria i.e. use of ICT. While using the term in academic development process, the researchers had shown that using ICT in education enable students to take a more active role in their learning rather than be a passive observer or listener

(Balanskat, Blamire, & Kefala, 2006; Cradler & Bridgforth, 2002; Gao & Hargis, 2010; Saleh, 20

08). *ICT has got its own pros and cons but as on its merits in academic setting like: pursuing problem-solving skills, fostering collaborative learning, providing flexible learning opportunities and in creasing productivity* (Bitter & Legacy, 2008; Chambers, 2011; Hatt, 2007). Besides, ICT is considered important for improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in schools (Lin, Wang, & Lin, 2012). The development was little slow in the beginning but it picked up its pace slowly and spread like fire today in every organization implementing introduction of ICT and training to its employees to use them effectively.

Since the late 1990s, many governments have developed strategic plans to increase the investments in ICT in the education systems (Pelgrum, 2001). *Its utilization was initially acknowledged* by the European countries and later on in the last decade, many school subjects have seen the implementation of ICT into the educational process (Balcon, 2003). Many developed countries like the United States Department of Education spending more than USD\$9.5 billion for educational technology in public schools (Brunk, 2008) and Australia invested about AUD\$8 billion on ICT in education in 2008 (Lane, 2012). Similarly, Saudi Arabia has also made substantial investments in educational technology. King Abdullah's Public Education Development Project (Tatweer) which was seeking to equip classrooms with ICT equipment including laptops, computers, projectors, and interactive white boards, was launched with a budget of SAR9 billion over a six-year period (Ministry of Education, 2007).

It is judicious to know about the fact that the investment on ICT has produced the desired results in the academic institutions. The previous studies showed that not all studies indicate the positive impact of using ICT. Several found either “no effect” or a negative impact of ICT on education (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001; Ungerleider & Burns, 2003; Waxman, Lin, & Michko, 2003; Wozney, Venkatesh, & Abrami, 2006). Likewise, Cuban, Kirkpatrick and Peck (2001) investigated the relationship between access to and use of computers in teaching and learning. Findings were that increased access to computers did not lead to a higher frequency of use in teaching. When computers and related resources were used, they were used to maintain, instead of transform, existing educational practices. Collins (2001) suggested that teachers cannot make good use of ICT until they know which ICT is relevant. Furthermore, ICT is less effective when the educational objectives are unclear (Honey, Culp, & Spielvogel, 2005). Honey, Culp, and Spielvogel (2005) agreed that instead of concentrating on ICT use itself, those who successfully implement ICT “show a clear and meaningful connection between technology and larger educational goals” (p. 13).

This argument leads us to the third aspect of effective use of ICT that is promoting constructivist learning environments. There is a growing tendency in the literature to encourage teachers to change from traditional teacher-centred classroom to more student-centred learning or what known as constructivism (Pedersen & Liu, 2003). Similarly,

Wozney, Venkatesh and Abrami (2006) investigated computer technology practices among 764 teachers from both private and public school sectors in Quebec. The authors reported that the frequency of computer use among teachers in the study was limited. Only a small percentage of teachers reporting extensive use of computers, despite increased availability.

3. Concept of ICT:

The term ICT elaborates and stands for Information and Communication Technology which has a wider scope with a number of definitions and components. It is an information-based technology that can be coordinated with other technologies including communications has acquired the status of a structural unit of society (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education 2002; UNESCO, 2002). While making its role to language learning in education, we all relate it with computer-based technology that includes both hardware and software. But the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (2002) elaborated it further and described it as “computer hardware and software; voice, data, network, satellite and other telecommunications technologies; and multimedia and application development tools; these technologies are used for the input, storage, processing, and communication of information”. With the passage of time, the researchers have defined as per their utilization and comprehensibility as “diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information” (Blurton,

2002), whereas Elston (2007) recognizes it as technology to manage information and communication. Therefore, ICT (Sharma:2015) includes all the inter-intra computer network, technological software, hardware, concepts, applications, printers, scanners and technical-research publications, users, infrastructure and other useful facilities that are required to make teaching-learning process more effective and construction to benefit all the users (teachers and students).

4. ICT's Utilization Outcomes:

Since beginning we have always been prone to adopt any new concept of innovative teaching methodology, learning material and any other course material. The new concepts usually get lots of resistance from the teachers and policy makers who are still live in a primitive age. They always feel unsecured and reluctant to accept the bitter truth of dynamism and updating themselves through latest technology and the system in the era witnessing abrupt changes at every second of life. This concept has widened its scope beyond EFL learning to English literature: "teaching language through literature by using the modern technology (ICT) is an indispensable activity which promotes the basic virtues of literature which blossom with 'beauty' and 'pleasure' (Sharma (2014). They all believe that traditional ways of teaching are the best and students' involvement within ICT-rich classroom "does not necessarily correlate with productive learning" (Geisert & Futrell 2000, p. 10). They believe that use of ICT can't bring changes or miracles overnight "without appropriate directions and making

ICT available in classrooms does not "in itself" lead to better education (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2005). The concept of ICT adoption physically will not improve education; rather, the significant issue here is how ICT improves the educational process (Bingimlas, 2010). This fact is evident in the previous studies that found no direct link between the use of ICT and a positive impact on student outcomes (Cuban, et al., 2001; Newhouse, 2002; Ungerleider & Burns, 2003; Waxman, et al., 2003; Wozney, et al., 2006).

Despite these unfavorable ideas and conclusions mentioned above, it has been observed that incorporation of ICT in language instruction does not only increase the students' enthusiasm but also achieve better through their active involvement on the task. It helps in developing cultural awareness and social identity in the target culture. ICT generates students' interest and attitude in learning and promote their communication skills and self-confidence. The teachers also get motivated on seeing students' involvement to learn prerequisite skills for using ICT-based tasks in the classroom setting.

Using ICT for classroom learning would be progressive step rather using computers only for word processing or presentations, does not indicate the 'effective' implementation of computers (Leach and Moon, 2000). Indubitably, we have to ensure that ICT has to be used in an effective way; otherwise, it may be a waste of time (Romeo, 2006). The researcher found that the merit of computer-based exams over traditional exams is

instant and targeted feedback and can be altered as per learners' levels, to support formative assessment.

5. Research Objectives:

This study is intended:

- To investigate the effect of ICT on knowledge, skills and use in EFL classroom
- To explore the attitude and perceptions of EFL teachers and students
- To explore probable outcomes of use of ICT and motivation of students using ICT for learning

5.1. Present status in Saudi Arabian EFL classroom:

Ministry Higher Education of Saudi Arabia is striving hard to fulfill its aim "Education for all" but and allocates enormous funds (nearly 25%) of its annual budget to education which seems reasonable and adequate to equip its education system with state-of-the-art modern technology and facilities in the world. The government provides free education, free learning tools, and scholarships to its students. In order to upgrade its education standards and meet its international expectations to compete in the global market, it introduced the use of ICT in schools, college and universities many in the last decade. Despite the fact, the majority of Saudi families do not have computers and children have little access to ICT (World Bank, 2007).

It introduced new curriculum and pedagogical theory prescribing a new model which enables students to use ICT to

increase their scope of language learning. The situation in educational institutions is not satisfactory but the Ministry takes all steps regularly to improve the educational system to bring quality outcomes not only for its students but for the teachers as well. In pursuing its objectives, the use of ICT at all the educational institutions would enable teaching and learning processes effectively.

5.2 Research Context:

The English Language Center was the context in which the research was conducted. In the department, all courses are instructed in English in technologically-furnished classrooms. The researcher upon investigation found that the center offered elective ICT courses which are needs technology, and Internet Skills in Language Teaching so as to develop positive attitude toward ICT and encourage students to employ ICT in their subject teaching.

5.3 Methodology:

The researcher handled all the questions using quantitative strategies collecting quantitative data. Quantitative data offers useful information if the researcher needs to describe a large population (Creswell, 2005). A questionnaire was administered to EFL teachers as conferring to Johnson and Christensen (2004), a questionnaire is a self-reporting data collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a research study. Then, the sample was further analyzed by calculating the percentage of the subjects' responses. This is done to identify the significant issues of ICT use, its

effectiveness, training and outcomes that they had during the last few years.

5.4 Sample:

The study was conducted with the participation of 50 EFL teachers teaching engineering, computer sciences, business administration and arts to students at different campuses respectively. The participants (n=50) were randomly selected among (n=250) teachers. The responses were sought from each teacher through administering the questionnaire.

5.5 Instruments:

A questionnaire was developed by the researchers to gather data needed for the study after an extensive literature review of the literature utilized in educational institutions. While finalizing the questionnaire, the researcher sought advice from the senior teachers who had good experience in research with different backgrounds to evaluate the instrument for content and face validity. The questionnaire contained fourteen items based on 2-point scale (Yes and No) and the last question to confirm full abbreviation of ICT.

The questionnaires were self-administered with an explanatory note in the beginning of the questionnaire including the instructions to assist respondents (EFL teachers) at ELC (n=50) in different programs and campuses.

5.6 Data Collection and Analysis:

The data were analyzed and reported in percentages for simple calculation,

verification and comprehending the results. Johnson and Christensen (2004) states that descriptive statistics give a clear view of the situation, allowing the researcher to draw conclusions and give decision makers the means to base their decisions on rational study. While analyzing the data, the researcher can explore some vital aspects by organizing the data into a more comprehensive form and by calculating numerical averages and percentile ranks respectively.

6. Discussion:

Participants were requested to respond to fifteen questions dealing with EFL teachers' perception, attitudes and views toward the use of ICT into EFL learning (Appendix A) and were presented by a percentile on a two point scale i.e. Yes or No respectively. Besides, one question on elaborating ICT to check their awareness, interest and knowledge. The findings were structured along with the following list of research questions comprising the central basis of the concurrent study.

- To investigate the effect of ICT on knowledge, *skills and use in EFL classroom*
- To explore the attitude and perceptions of EFL teachers and students
- Probable outcomes of use of ICT and motivation of students using ICT for learning.

The researcher has analyzed elaborately the responses of the respondents in the succeeding paragraphs.

Questionnaire: Total subjects (N=50)

S. No	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Do you use ICT in the EFL classroom?	27	23
2.	Does use of ICT help in the classroom management?	42	08
3.	Do you have adequate infrastructure for the use of ICT?	17	33
4.	Is ICT helpful and effective tool in teaching learning?	49	01
5.	Does ICT bring an exciting element into the curricula?	45	05
6.	Does ICT facilitate the learning process, by raising students' motivation to learn?	49	01
7.	Does ICT open new and wider perspectives into modern educational methods i.e. cooperative and constructive learning?	44	06
8.	Do students obtain a profound understanding of the curriculum through the use of ICT?	39	11
9.	Do you feel ICT becoming universal throughout international pedagogy?	41	09
10.	Do you feel the use of ICT fulfill the needs of Saudi EFL learners?	39	11
11.	Does ICT improve the quality of education and nurtures students' linguistic skills?	50	00
12.	Do most of a given curriculum (ESP, grammar & writing) be better explained and presented by using ICT than by using other means?	46	04
13.	Does ICT reduce time required for planning; executing lessons and make corrections during the lesson?	43	07
14.	Do you feel ICT promotes EFL teachers' role, educational experiences and enhancing the flow of ideas?	47	03
15.	ICT stands for	37	13
	Total	615	135
		(82.1%)	(21.9%)

As shown in the table, the ratio of the ICT users (54%) is little more than the non-users (46%) in EFL classroom setting as responded to item one. But majority of the respondents (84%) feel that using ICT certainly creates students' interest and participation leading to a better classroom

management as responded to item two. At the same time, most of the teachers (66%) agreed upon lack of infrastructure for the use of ICT as responded to item three whereas only few subjects (34%) responded in favor of the item. They feel that the infrastructure should be adequate for each

student with uninterrupted Internet facility and to make students prepare for internet-based online lessons.

4. Is ICT helpful and effective tool in teaching learning?
5. Does ICT bring an exciting element into the curricula?
6. Does ICT facilitate the learning process, by raising students' motivation to learn?

In response to item four, almost all have agreed upon the fact that ICT is very helpful and effective tool not only in teaching but learning also. ICT also creates an environment to bring excitement into the curricula and the teachers teach them well using ICT facilities as shown in item five. This further increases students' interest in learning and eagerly participate in problem solving and discussion there by proving to be a powerful motivating tool as responded to item six. Sharma (2014) supports this result that the teacher has to update and make use of ICT to create students' interest in learning English language because speaking any language as a foreign language is a colossus task for the native speakers.

7. Does ICT open new and wider perspectives into modern educational methods i.e. cooperative and constructive learning?
8. Do students obtain a profound understanding of the curriculum through the use of ICT?
9. Do you feel ICT becoming universal throughout international pedagogy?

Further to item seven, most of the subjects agree that ICT opens many avenues to incorporate modern method of teaching accompanied with state of-the-art facilities

to impart desired, constructive and eternal learning where students have free hand to express, display and participate as agreed by 88% against meagre 12% who still have negative opinion. As resultant of this students' inclined attitude towards learning make them easy to learn curriculum as per their own pace, will and interest altogether bringing effective results as many subjects (78%) agreed but still 22% subjects feel against it as shown in item eight. Despite, majority (82%) realized and expressed that this concept has become a buzzword in the global education milieu.

10. Do you feel the use of ICT fulfill the needs of Saudi EFL learners?
11. Does ICT improve the quality of education and nurtures students' linguistic skills?
12. Do most of a given curriculum (ESP, grammar & writing) be better explained and presented by using ICT than by using other means?

In response to item ten, 78% subjects have experience that incorporating ICT in EFL classroom indubitably proves constructive for Saudi students whereas 22% still resist. The response to item eleven and twelve prove harder the positive impact of using ICT as it helps students to develop their communication skills holistically because the teachers make effective use of ICT to teach the lessons effectively. It aligns with the argument (Johnson, et al., 1998) who specified that effective ICT implementation reflects using ICT as knowledge construction tools rather than instructional tools and advocated the use of ICT as mind tools to assist students in organising and interpreting what they learn, instead of as

instructional tools to present facts and information to them, which allowing students “function as designers”, and ICT as cognitive amplification tools “for interpreting and organizing their personal knowledge”.

13. Does ICT reduce time required for planning; executing lessons and make corrections during the lesson?

14. Do you feel ICT promotes EFL teachers’ role, educational experiences and enhancing the flow of ideas?

15. ICT stands for

There is proven fact that the desired learning outcomes are achieved with a sound lesson plan, good teaching methodology, timely updation and modification of the contents to suit the needs of students and the use of ICT makes teacher’s role vital and indispensable as they improve their competency and pedagogical skills, gain expertise and enhance their knowledge in ICT realm consistently: as seen in responses to item thirteen (86%) and fourteen ((94%) respectively. The researcher concludes that these respondents feel comfortable and enjoy using ICT without any anxieties, and try to learn about technology. The teachers use “blended learning that helps enhance the classroom experience and extend learning through the innovative use of information and communications technology” (Sharma: 2014). Besides, they agreed upon the fact that ICT saved time and effort, providing learning opportunities and interested to integrate largely into the curriculum in future.

It is true that that there was little evidence of the effectiveness of e-learning in promoting

academic achievement and motivation, or on facilitating instruction. The authors asserted that having access to computers in the classroom does not necessarily improve academic achievement (Ungerleider & Burns, 2003). But the abovementioned enormous positive response from EFL teachers on the use of ICT in EFL classroom settings proved its effectiveness. Unfortunately, it is heartening to mention that still one fourth of the total teachers don’t know the abbreviation of ICT and the researcher also feels that they are the stumbling blocks in using ICT. There is a dire need to counsel and sensitize them, provide technology based pedagogical training to bring them into the stream of updated EFL teachers by getting rid them of obsolete teaching styles and so called technology phobia.

The EFL teachers should start using ICT initially with the identification of educational problems and must start from “dissatisfaction with the educational opportunities offered to [students] and a striving to do better” (Newhouse, 2002). The teachers should move from focusing merely on technology itself (or starting from the existence of ICT), and instead be able to do a systematic analysis of educational problems that need to be solved (Van Melle, et al., 2003).

7. Conclusion and Recommendations:

It is clear from the above discussion of responses that the EFL teachers sampled for this study believe that the use of ICT is successful in generating positive attitudes and ICT has the potential to considerably improve education, but which in fact, is not

being realized, in EFL class room settings. The wide use of ICT in classrooms and labs enable the students to have an easy, instant and required contents access on the projects and course material that not only develops interest, motivation, group dynamics, leadership qualities but also facilitate easy learning to the absentees (Sharma:2014). The results proved that incorporation of ICT in EFL classroom settings had brought tremendous positive effects on students' motivation and knowledge on one side and the change in perceptions and attitudes of the teachers on the other side in the teaching-learning process.

The curriculum has certain flaws and needs to prepare according to the Saudi students' needs. Mhyre (1998) concludes: "we must address the use of computers together with the teachers, understanding of pedagogy and subject matter in order for technology to play a significant role in improving

schools". The innovative ways are required to review and update the existing curricula to increase the ICT use efficacy. The mismatching of curricula may have the factors which may bring about disparity and discovered that the advantages of periodically evaluating and revising existing curricula are widely acknowledged (Jackson 2005) to cater to the needs of Saudi EFL learners effectively. The syllabi makers should take a strict note of these findings to evaluate and renew the current syllabi enabling ICT use activities to meet future aspirants' needs failing may compel teachers to incline to restricting their thinking about ICT to "boxes and wires" or isolated computer skills (Fishman and Pinkard 2001). Finally, the theoretical issues in incorporating ICT into EFL classroom settings and altering EFL teachers' attitude and perceptions through professional development offer remarkable corridors for further research.

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