

Investigating the Role of Technology in English Language Teaching: A Case of Afghan Universities

Fahim Rahimi

Ph.D. Scholar, Andhra University, India

Lecturer, Nangarhar University, Afghanistan

Email : fahimjan.rahimi@yahoo.com, f.rahimi@nu.edu.af

Professor P. Rajendra Karmarkar

Department of English, Andhra University, India

Email: karmarkar999@gmail.com

Abstract

Technology is playing vital role in today's education. As we know the emerging of technology effect all aspects of our life from business, health, traveling, food and more. Education is also largely impacted by technology. It changed the way of learning, teaching and assessments. The role of technology has not been investigated in language learning in Afghanistan. The main objective of the study is to find the role of technology in English language teaching in Afghan Universities in order to achieve effective role of technology in English language classrooms. The study is descriptive in nature and the data has been collected through prepared questionnaire. The questionnaire shared through google docs with the instructors of English language Departments of Afghan universities. The data were analyzed using frequencies. The result of the study shows that technology plays important role in English language teaching and learners can achieve better outcomes.

Keywords: 1.Technology 2.English Language 3.Teaching 4. Role 5.Learning 6.Universities

Introduction

It is quite obvious that learning a language goes through the phases of lingual development. It is just like a baby learning to walk for the first time with physical complexities hindering her/him, but here in language learning the context differs being psychological complexities. Here Erben, Ban and Castaneda (2009), elaborate this condition as "What this means is that an ELL will utter "homework do" before being able to utter "tonight I homework do" before ultimately being able to produce a target-like structure such as "I will do my homework tonight." Of course, with regard to being communicatively effective, the first example is as successful as the last example".

The use of technology in education has positive impact on the learning environment (Mikre, 2011). It is well known fact that technology is being the most powerful weapon used to modernize our world, and English is the language of world. So the appropriate use of technology in the teaching English language is an important aspect of learning and teaching process. With broadening demand of language learning especially English

language learning, CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) was emerged around 1980s to assist learners who are learning languages. But before that, tape recorders being the stand-alone tool to assist and facilitate language learning. Today, CALL is focusing on learners to learn autonomously, and monitor themselves with the help of technology while the role of teacher is just to facilitate the learning process. In 1990s, Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) started to appear as The Internet and Communication Technology offered a great deal of opportunities (Dudeny and Hockly, 2007).

Technology is the same for most of the fields. For instance, in English language teaching, it is used the same way as it is used mostly in mathematics and science. But the consequences are positive both for teachers and learners, such as the word processing which has been developed to help them in terms of editing, revision, and publishing.

Today, every kind of language learning activity to the most extent, are connected with technology. On particular ground, it can be oral communication, writing or reading, other special skills like translating. But ICT (Information and Communication Technology) seems effective when integrated with project-based learning (Beckett et al, 2006).

There are some definitions of ICT in educational environments for learning and teaching. UNESCO (2002) defines ICT as “forms of technology that are used to transmit, process, store, create, display, share or exchange information by electronic means.” (p. 123). Kareem (2017) defines ICT as technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. It is similar to information technology (IT) which includes the Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and other communication mediums” (Kareem, 2017).

There are many kinds of ICT devices under different names. They might be used for different purposes of teaching and learning. Njoku (2015) classifies different kinds of ICT that are usable for teaching and learning such as radio, television, videotape, audiotape, tape recorder, compact disc (CD), digital versatile disc (DVD), flash drive, telephone (both fixed line and mobile), satellite systems and computer hardware, software and networks. Teachers and students got used to them because they might have used in their daily lives. These devices can play video, audio, and image files to improve the learner’s English language reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the schools and universities.

Internet is named the latest in the list of technological advances brought into classrooms. In 1990s, it was considered a bold step if one would bring internet into the classroom (Only 17 percent of primary schools even had access to the internet by 1998). Internet has facilitated children to visit events and parts of the world which otherwise would be expensive, far in distance, and maybe dangerous. For instance, www.24hourmuseum.org.uk gives its visitors an online virtual tour (Pritchard, 2007).

Methods of teaching have gone through big changes. In the 1980s – 1990s before technology became so common, there were traditional ways of teaching or learning. The traditional way was totally different from the modern ways of teaching (Communicative approaches) in the present time. Some places, like underdeveloped countries, teachers still follow the traditional ways of teaching (authoritarian ways of teaching), but in other developed countries such as the United States of America or most of the countries in Europe, they practice modern methods of teaching which is more interactive and communicative. Additionally, some people prefer to blend both the traditional and the modern methods of teaching. For instance, Gyamfi and Gyaase (2017) and Chapelle (2010) mentioned that mixing both traditional and modern ways of teaching as they call it (blended learning) is good, especially in teaching second language. ICTs offer various resources and strategies for improving learning languages.

The abilities essential to help use internet in English is of the contemporary understanding. Language teachers when draw out their lessons, they have a target in

mind which is to help students enhance their communicative language ability. Crystal (2001) shows us a very concise understanding of language and modern technology, Rasool (1999) gives more intention to the area communication is used. The recommendation seems to be very helpful: the applied linguist need to rethink what communication competence means implied by forms of communication in the contemporary world such as developing technology, multimodal texts, the large volumes of texts, and physical capability to interact with texts and information(Chapelle, 2003).

The current push for technology applications is not new (Cuban, 1986). However, the speed and haste at which new technologies are rushed into schools and universities has often overshadowed the necessary pedagogical discussions that guide the use of those technologies. The fact that most teachers use computers at home more than at school points to the complexities of using technology effectively in schools (Cuban, 1999). If teachers' challenging working conditions were better understood and their opinions taken more seriously, policy makers might provide the necessary time, training, and support that could inspire teachers to use technology in the classroom more often, perhaps at a frequency approaching their at-home use and, more importantly, in a much more informed and meaningful way (Young & Bush, 2004).

Research Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and questionnaire was used for data collection. The study was conducted in public universities of Afghanistan. English instructors were the population for this research. Snowball sampling approach was used for data collection. First of all, questionnaire form was created and shared through Google docs to the English instructors who had been contacted. Moreover, these instructors were requested to share the questionnaire with colleagues in their respective departments. Overall, 61 respondents were selected for this research.

The prepared questionnaire had two parts; the first part was regarding the demographic information while the second part of the questionnaire had (17) multiple choice questions so the respondents could scale up their understanding of the ICT through a given likert scale (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) or percentage (100%, 75%, 50%, 25%). These questions were about the importance, usage, understanding, access, impact, and changes of information and communication technology. Furthermore, three of the 17 MCQs were about the respondents' experience using ICT and its impact on students learning and engagement.

The data was analyzed by SPSS IBM 24th version. The frequency and percentage had been shown in the results.

Results

The result shows that the respondents are 63.9% M.A., 34.4% B.A., and 1.7% Ph.D. degree holders. Similarly, 85.7% of the respondents had 1-5 years of teaching experience while 14.3% had more six year of experience. Only 3.3% respondent have received training on ICT while 96.7% did not receive any formal training of ICT. They were recruited as instructors in public universities of Afghanistan.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Attributes	Category	Number of respondent	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	57	93.5
	Female	4	6.5
Level of Education	B.A.	21	34.5
	M.A.	39	63.9
	Ph.D.	1	1.6
Teaching Experience (year)	1-5	52	85.3
	6-10	9	14.7
	10+	0	0
Any formal training received on ICT?	Yes	2	3.3
	No	59	96.7

According to the result of survey, 57.4% of the instructors have good understanding of technology, 37.7% of the instructors have very good understanding of technology, and while 4.9% of the instructors just have fair understanding of technology. Result shows that the 24.6% of the respondent always use technology, 50.8% respondent usually use technology, 23% respondent sometimes use technology, and 1.6% respondent never use technology. The finding indicates that 8.2% of the instructors use 100%, while 55.7% the instructors use 75% of technology, 29.5 % of the instructors use 50% of technology and 6.6% of the instructors use 25% or less than that technology in their respective area of teaching.

It indicates that the view of the instructors regarding the importance of technology are various as 75.4% of the respondents answered as very important in English language teaching, while 24.6% of the respondents stated that technology is important in English language teaching.

It also revealed that 68.9%, 29.5%, and 1.5% technology brought great changes, some changes and no change in quality of teaching of instructors respectively.

Based on the result, the impact of online and offline sources in English language teaching shows that 86.9% are agreed for both online and offline, 8.2% only believed on online and only just 4.9% referred that offline sources have more impact in teaching. The 93.4% of the respondents use offline sources while 6.6% use online sources in English language teaching.

In addition, 70.5% of the instructors communicate with their students through technology while 29.5% instructors do not communicate through technology.

Technology can arise students' interest in English language learning 67.2% of the respondents strongly agree while 32.8% are just agreed. It indicates that technology can be effective on students' interest in learning English language.

Table 2: Understanding and Usage of Technology

Item	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1) How is your understanding of new technology?	37.7%	57.4%	4.9%	0
Item	Always	Usually	Sometime	Never
2) How often do you use technology?	24.6%	50.8%	23%	1.6%

Item	100%	75%	50%	25%
3) What is the percentage of technology use at your teaching area?	8.2%	55.7%	29.5 %	6.6%
Item	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important
4) How important is technology in teaching English?	75.4%	24.6%	0	0
Item	Greater extent	Some extent	Less extent	No extent
5) To what extent the use of technology has brought change in your teaching quality?	68.9%	29.5%.	0	1.5%
Item	Online	Offline	Both	None
6) Which source has more impact on English language teaching?	8.2	4.9	86.9%	0
Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8) The use of technology helps learners find interest in learning English language.	98.4	1.6	0	0

The 98.4% respondents said that they use technology to facilitate English language learning, while 1.6% of the respondents are not using technology in teaching and learning process. The result indicates that there are not adequate number of computer system in the classroom. Only 4.5% of the teachers use online website for teaching while 95.5% teachers do not use online websites. In addition, results revealed that 98.4 % teachers use offline application for their teaching while 1.6% do not use it.

. According to the respondents 78.7% of the students have access to technology whereas 21.3% students do not have access to technology. Moreover, the result shows that 67.2% of the instructors are not uploading their lectures for absent students whereas 32.8% instructors are uploading their lectures for absent students. In a question regarding the usage of both print and electronic media to develop English language skills among students shows 98.4% responded that both form of media can develop English language skills among the students whereas 1.6% do not agreed.

Similarly, 98.4% of the instructors responded that multimedia integrated teaching enables teachers to shift from teacher-centered method to student-centered method of teaching whereas 1.6% do not agreed. All of the respondent 100% said that technology can help learners learn better in classroom.

Table 3: Importance and Role of Technology in Teaching

Items	Yes %	No %
1) Do you use technology to facilitate English language learning?	98.4	1.6
2) Are there adequate computer systems in your classroom?	1.6	98.4
3) Do you use website (Edx, study.com, etc...) as online source in your teaching?	4.5	95.5
4) Do you use offline sources (Ms. Office or offline English language	98.4	1.6

learning apps) in your teaching?		
5) Do your students have access to technology?	78.7	21.3
6) Have you tried uploading your lecture on the internet so that students who are absent or students of other batches can access your lecture?	32.8	67.2
7) Do you think that both print and electronic media can be used successfully for developing English language skills among students?	98.4	1.6
8) Do you think that multimedia integrated teaching enables teachers to shift from Teacher-Centered method to student-centered method of teaching?	98.4	1.6
9) Do you think the use of technology in classroom help learners to learn in better way?	100%	0

Discussion

The research has explored the contextual factors of technology in the context of English language learning and teaching. The findings support the existing literature on the use of technology in learning and teaching of English language. Findings revealed that a great number of the research participants tend to use several online and offline sources, and integrated different modes of ICT to assist English learning and teaching.

In the overall online survey conducted, less than 30% of the participants had less or no access to online ICT, but they do use offline sources such as projector, LCD, Laptop, and offline learning and teaching applications. Gyamfi, et al (2017) mentioned that blended learning is good in second language learning process, so using both online and offline resources in classes help learning process. In the same way, the study showed that either the use of online or offline teaching can help students learn better.

As far as ICT usage in the learning process is concerned, the respondents expressed their positive perceptions about this aspect. According to their responses students' reaction to using ICT seems to be engaging and motivating. However, as ICT usage has become standard practice on our everyday basis. Electronic devices do not attract students' attention as significantly anymore as it was before. Furthermore, technology is getting updated every day, but as the respondents mentioned some universities do not provide their students with adequate facilitation of ICT mostly, in third world countries, such as Afghanistan. However, as Njoku (2015) stated various kinds of ICT tools like radio, television, audiotape and even mobile phone can be use as alternative for learning. Mike Dawson has worked for more than 6 years to provide Afghan with basic educational technology. Mike had worked with Paiwastoon where they have developed a learning app without internet connectivity called Ustad Mobile (Teacher Mobile) in both official languages of the country. Through this app student can access and share educational content offline. So, educational technology according to Mike (2013), is currently taking its path in Afghanistan.

As the survey participants were from Afghanistan, and they strongly agreed that educational technology do have a greater positive impact on students' learning, but according to them a great number of their students' lacked access to educational technology at their learning centers. Researcher recommend that students can use their smart phone for all four skills of language learning in very easy way as they are accustomed to it. The respondents do see technology as interesting aid to be used in English language teaching. Not only interesting, technology indeed is seen as potential utility which is beneficial for both teachers and students. In addition, giving a very good response deal with the benefit of media shows that teachers have a very good view of ELT

media. Here, the teachers' themselves give their opinion about media based on the fact that they experience while teaching through media in the classroom.

Different alterations in the field of education and development of ICT have made a significant influence on the role of the teacher. Nowadays, teachers play a role as facilitators. This means that they should be proficient experts in their pedagogical field and should know how effectively they can use their material to educate their learners.

Conclusion

In sum, this present study gained insights into investigating the role of technology in English language teaching. The research questions were directed to investigate the experience of ICT implementation by English language teachers: in what way and for which purposes technology is used, what kind of support and enhancement of teachers' qualification is provided.

Based on previous literature review and instruments applied in prior research, online questionnaire with the help of Google docs. ICT was widely used in varied ways by the respondents in their instruction. In addition, school administration supports the innovative culture and tries to keep pace with different changes in the field of ICT and education in general, but as the respondents said around less than 30% of the both teachers and students do not have access to online ICT. Therefore, it still needs further research and work to analysis and contribute positively toward the support of educational technology in learning and teaching process. The findings of the study let us realize that in order to provide efficient and smooth development of the process of ICT integration in education several aspects should be considered. These aspects are: support, adequate training which meets the needs of teachers and the curriculum, teachers' collaboration and provision with up-to-date technology. What is significant is that feelings, emotions and voices of teachers are worth hearing.

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