

Pyrex Journal of Educational Research and Reviews
Vol 1 (5) pp. 049-051 July, 2015
<http://www.pyrexjournals.org/pjerr>
Copyright © 2015 Pyrex Journals

Original Research Article

Promoting the Quality of Education as well as EFL teaching and learning through ICT Integration

Bensafa Abdelkader

English department, University of Tlemcen, Algeria

Accepted 9th July, 2015

Making education and training available for all is becoming more crucial than ever. This is due to the Social, technological and economic changes witnessed in the past decades. Yet, educational systems all over the world are struggling to devote funds to reach educational opportunities for all, provide their graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills for evolving workplaces and sophisticated living environments, and have citizens ready for an ongoing learning process. The aim of this paper is to highlight the importance of ICT integration in education in general and EFL teaching and learning in particular.

Key words: Education, EFL teaching and learning, ICT integration.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become commonplace entities in all aspects of life. Education is one of these aspects. Within education, ICT has begun to have a presence, but the impact has not been as extensive as in other fields. Additionally, the quality of education has traditionally been associated with strong teachers having higher degrees of personal contact with learners; whereas, in today's information age, learning is no longer confined within the four walls of a classroom. The instructor, armed with a textbook, is no longer the sole source of educational experience. Information resources are everywhere, often separated from the learner by time and space.

The use of ICT in education lends itself to more student-centered learning settings often this creates some tensions for some teachers and students. But with the rapid movement of the world into the information society, the role of ICT in education is becoming more and more important and its development will be continued through distance learning. It is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education which is becoming accepted and indispensable in the educational system in both developed and developing countries.

Expanding Access to Education through ICT

The economic developments and social justice turned attention to expanding access to education. It is true that worldwide illiteracy rates have declined in the last decades ^[1]. But it is also true that the emphasis on knowledge is now much higher than forty years ago. In the past, societies could flourish economically even when more than half of the population was illiterate, but this is no longer possible in the Information

Societies. To remain economically competitive and prosper in this widespread knowledge-driven economy, countries cannot fund large sectors of their population to be excluded from education, or at the lowest level of the educational process.

Expanding access to education means integrating those populations who have been excluded from education for cultural or social reasons. In cultures- such as Algeria- with strict rules and traditions regarding interaction between genders, girls may be forced to leave school before puberty for a simple reason i.e. avoiding contact with male colleagues and teachers. For girls who remain in school, the rules regarding with whom they may or may not talk make it difficult to succeed and reach further degrees. One of the techniques regarding the fulfillment of this task, i.e. expanding access to education is the use of ICTs.

For more than a century, education has used technology to expand beyond the physical limits of schools and university campuses and reach more students. For instance, in the beginning of the last century, Australia and New Zealand used a system of itinerant teachers to educate children and youth living in sparsely inhabited territories. In 1992, 41% of higher education students in Thailand and 38% in Turkey studied at a distance. The China TV University System and Anadolu University in Turkey serve more than 500,000 students each year. The United Kingdom Open University has provided education for more than 2 million individuals since it was established about 30 years ago (Daniel, 1996; Harry, 1999). Generally, distance learning institutions use a mix of technologies starting with less expensive technologies such as printed material, videos, CD-ROMs, email, and the Internet,

then moving to faster and more powerful resources such as videoconferencing as the need for expansion increases.

Additionally, technology can promote alternatives for educating women that are more cost effective than all-female schools without disrupting cultural traditions. Television and radio broadcasts or Internet-based technologies enable girls to continue their studies from home or small learning centres. To conclude this part, one can say that technology functions as a neutral agent without gender or cultural allegiances, thereby facilitating communication.

The possibility of ICTs to overcome barriers in communication was clearly illustrated in an essay exercised in a co-educational class at the African Nazarene University that required the use of computers. Faced with the challenge of learning a new technology, the students forgot tribal rivalries and gender differences to exchange information and work side by side (John, M.T., & John, F. I. 1998).

Promoting the Efficiency of language Teaching

There is no one best way to teach foreign language, nor a single optimal set of teaching materials. This is because teachers will vary both in how they teach and what they need and want to teach. It follows, therefore, that there is no single 'magic bullet' that can be offered by ICT to support language teaching across all ages. However, looking at the current provision of language teaching, and at the future languages strategy, there are a number of key roles that ICT has the potential to promote Language teaching: first, it can increase motivation to learn languages. This can be done through enabling language learning across institutions and outside formal educational contexts. Second, it offers opportunities for meaningful practice of language in authentic contexts. This may result in offering opportunities for maximal progress in language acquisition through responsive diagnostic and feedback systems. The third role is that ICT helps provide innovative language engineering devices which provide just-in-time support in language use. Finally, it enables information and resource sharing between language teachers.

The above mentioned aspects of ICT respond to three key issues in language teaching: first, the need to ensure that teaching language is seen as relevant and enjoyable for learners; second, the need to offer more opportunities for learners to practice the language; and third, the need to support language teachers, particularly at primary level, in rural areas or teachers working on less popular languages.

ICT as a Foreign Language Teaching Support

Since its introduction to modern science, ICT opportunities were considered as being critical. Very heated debates and clear differences took place amongst educationalists on using computers and the Internet in Foreign Language Teaching. The techniques offered, the activities and the degree of application in the language teaching syllabus have undergone a number of serious changes alongside the evolution of technology. As a tool stage, the computer usage can be considered as a vehicle for delivering instructional materials to learners (through drill and practice). The development of computer – based activities designed to develop learner's knowledge and interaction is seen as a way of engaging learners in a wide range of communicative tasks. This was the moment computers assumed the role of stimuli in language learning. They were used as instruments for understanding and using language through spelling and grammar checkers,

desktop editing programmes. All these steps belong to CALL (Computer assisted language learning) ^[2].

Another support ICT brings to language learning and teaching is the Hypermedia. Hypermedia has a number of advantages not included in the CALL. First, it provides both language teachers and learners with a variety of multimedia resources, such as texts, graphics, sound, animation, video linked together. It also offers an authentic learning environment by combining listening with watching.

In addition, language Skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) can easily be integrated in the teaching/learning process and combined with task- based learning. It is also better for learners to use ICT in their classes. They will have a greater control over their learning as they can go at their own pace; do some activities on their own, skips some parts of the text or revise the ones they find difficult.

Another major advantage of hypermedia or ICT usage as a foreign language teaching and learning support is that learners can focus on the content and have access to different links and websites offering grammar explanations, exercises, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. This makes ICT brings variety to the class since it encourages students to learn the foreign language in a new and pleasant way, not just by interacting with the teacher and reading from the book.

Another factor related to ICT application is communication. It gives more opportunities for communication between peer learners (the GVC program (3) is one of the best examples). They can exchange information in real time, participate in blog discussions, work in teams on different projects, exchange emails, search for information, etc. All This makes them have a better insight into the culture of the country and the people they study their language as they will profit from using the authentic material provided by the Internet.

To summarize all the above mentioned benefits, Padurean & Amargan (2009:99) list the following roles computers may have in a language classroom:

Computer as a teacher

it teaches students a new language (foreign one) using multimedia CD ROMS. In such programmes, students can listen to recordings, watch videos, speak into the microphone, record their progress or learn words by clicking on the pictures and hearing their pronunciation. An alternative to CD ROMS is the World Wide Web (WWW) where students can practice all their skills and it is more useful for the teacher than the CD ROM because teachers can intervene with their own ideas or materials.

Computer as a tester

It tests students on the already learned structures by giving them the opportunity to practice their knowledge using different Internet websites. However, a problem these sites represent is the fact that the practice programmes are very limited in

- ❖ **Terms of practice materials:** Since the only answer the computer can give is Right or Wrong. Despite these limitations, computer grammar or vocabulary practice is enjoyed by students because they feel like playing and get the feedback without fearing the teacher's or friends' criticism. They can also work in groups, sitting at the same computer and discuss the answers. Basically, the practice material refers to multiple – choice exercises, dual – choice exercises, true or false.

- ❖ **Computer as a tool:** It assists students to do certain tasks as it is seen as tools because they provide tools for acquiring a foreign language. The large numbers of websites, pictures, projects, exercises, audio and video materials are all tools in the teaching and learning process.
- ❖ **Computer as a data source:** It provides students with the information they need to solve different tasks. However, little can be said about computers as information providers since, due to computers and the Internet, almost any information needed can be accessed. A particular aspect that educationalist – especially those working on the CALL want to highlight is random Internet navigation. This is why teachers should offer them a number of useful websites and guide them in such a way as to find out information as soon as possible and solve their tasks.
- ❖ **Computer as communication facilitator:** It allows students to communicate with others. This can be done by e-mail, chatting, or participating in discussion forums. Teachers can set up discussion forums and use them to communicate with their students. Or students can exchange didactic e-mails, discussing a topic presented in the classroom or any other topic of interest. ESP Platform.

In sum, this part has pointed out the advantages of using ICT in the classroom. But it is also worth mentioning to state that the traditional teaching methods cannot be replaced. Textbooks and any other printed materials are necessary in the teaching/learning process. But ICT lessons can alternate traditional classes, or traditional activities can be improved by using the computer or the Internet.

As a conclusion, the above section aimed to outline from previous research and experience the potential of using ICT to enhance and update the educational policies, objectives, and practices. The effectiveness of ICT depends heavily on context

References

- Daniel, C. D (1996) "Seeing is Believing--or Is It?" Oxford University Press pp. 158-172. In Akins, K. (1996) Ed., Perception, Vancouver Studies in Cognitive Science, vol. 5: pp. 158-172.
- Harry, K (1999). Higher Education through Open and Distance Learning: World review of distance education and open learning. London: Rutledge/Commonwealth of Learning.

Notes

1. Across the world, from 1970 to 2000, the illiteracy rate for populations aged 15 years and older declined from 37% to 21%. In the less developed regions, illiteracy rates were cut in half in this period, from 53% to 27% (although 23 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa still show illiteracy rates above 50%) (UNESCO (2000) World Education Report. The Right to Education for All throughout Life, pages 37-38, Figures 2.3 and 2.4. Paris: UNESCO Publication).
2. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is an intercontinental and interdisciplinary journal which

and quality of application. Besides, since ICT is only tools for education, they represent a hard task when trying to isolate the factors that may contribute to a positive result such as promoting the quality of both teaching and learning. In the same line with the best performance in traditional measures of academic achievement, a secondary benefit of ICT in education is to familiarize new generations with the technologies that have become fundamental mechanisms of the modern world.

Schacter (1999) states that: With these caveats in mind, evidence from large studies and meta-analyses suggests that the use of ICTs, particularly computer technologies, correlates to positive academic outcomes, including higher test scores, better attitudes toward schools, and better understanding of abstract concepts. However, research on the outcomes of ICT on educational attainment continues to be criticized, along with all other areas of education, since they are well recognized as how they are used. The trail from the potential for effectiveness is neither simple nor automated because it was, still is, and will continue to be context dependent. This is what will be highlighted in the section taking the Algerian context as an illustration of the availability of ICT in developing countries.

Conclusion

In today's world, it is a fact that technology is driving progress on many fronts. Education is no exception. How this is going to affect students and teachers will have to be investigated on a much wider scale. Greater consideration should be given to gaining a better understanding of the interaction between technological and human factors. It is clear that research has to consider both the pedagogical point of view as well as the technological one. Future research should also consider whether attitudes towards videoconferencing are uniformly developed across organizational boundaries and within other institutional contexts.

- John, M.T., & John, F. I. (1997). "Technology Builds Global Acceptance among African Students". Paper presented at the International Conference on Thinking, Singapore, June 1998.
- Padurean, A and Amargan, M (2009) "Foreign Language Teaching Via ICT" in Journal of Social Informatics vol. VII pp 97-101
- Schacter, J. (1999). The Impact of Education Technology on Student Achievement

- leads the field in its dedication to all matters associated with the use of computers in language learning (L1 and L2), teaching and testing.
3. The Global Virtual Classroom (GVC) is a collection of free, online educational activities and resources. It aims to complement the efforts of governments and educators around the world to integrate technology into their classrooms and curricula and to link their schools to the Internet in educationally productive ways.