

Investigating EFL Learners' Attitude on the Use of Technology at Language Institutes

Shahram Afraz ¹, Azar Bagheri ^{2*}

1. Department of English Language, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran.

2. PhD. Student in TEFL, Department of English Language, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran.

* Corresponding Author's Email: Azar.Bagheri000@gmail.com

Abstract – The application of technology in language classrooms has become more commonplace in the last fifty years. Computers and the internet have made foreign language materials easy to access and use. They are playing salient roles in educational environment and the use of Technology in education lends itself to more student-centered learning setting with the world moving speedily in to digital media and information, the role of technology in education is becoming more and more important. The aim of the study was to investigate the attitudes of EFL learners in a private language institute on the use of technology. A group of 88 learners, males and females made up the subjects. A translated questionnaire was used to seek the responses of the study participants. The questionnaires were distributed among the participants during their class time and soon after it, they were collected and submitted for analysis using SPSS. The results of the study proved that the learners of the study have been agreed for the use of technology in their language class.

Keywords: Technology, ICT, CALL, EFL learners, attitude

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of foreign language teaching and learning has long been recognized and acknowledged in today's world. Rapid advances in the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have simultaneously been seen to offer new opportunities for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of language teaching and learning (Carlson & Silvman, 1986). Although technology is increasingly prevalent in everyday life, education, work, and other sectors, a number of educational institutions have been unable to use them effectively or they struggle with the challenges of implementing ICT. The permeating of technology in various forms in our everyday life activities becomes more and more obvious. We are already into the 21st century; schools have to acculturate students to be lifelong learners. Students need to learn how to search new information, think critically and show initiative to see the challenges of the fast-changing world. Research studies of technology in schools have established that technology facilitates the enculturation processes of lifelong learning (Sivin-Kachala, 1998; Wenglinisky, 1998; Mann, Shakeshaft, Becker & Kottkamp, 1999).

It will not become a surprise when education, as one of most important factors in human development, applied many of their new invention to improve the quality, the process

and the result of education. Even further, the use of technology in education is no doubt become more important and in some cases it unavoidable. In some special circumstances, such as in distance learning, it could be the only way to make the learning process occurs. In language teaching field, technology has its own role to create new dimension of the process (Carlson & Silvman, 1986).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Teachers have been using technology of one type or another with their students for a long time, but the development of new technologies and their presence in classrooms is increasing rapidly. Interactive single-touch and now multi-touch screens in a variety of sizes, from interactive whiteboards to tablets, have changed the way language learners engage with technology. Alongside this is the explosion in learning content, particularly for language learning. Whether traditional or newer, educational technology plays an important role in children's learning when it is based on research, child development theory, and developmentally appropriate practices, and when it aligns with curriculum goals. Besides, there is a great many of different types of facilities available for teaching the interested language learners that have to be used in a practical useful manner. They include the software, and the technology that are provided purposefully for these goals. All these suggest the idea that the use of technology of any form is an indispensable need for the educational systems in our schools, universities and institutes.

Now the basic question to ask in this area is the extent teachers and learners really benefit from these facilities in a practical manner and to what extent they are satisfied with these facilities. Actually, technology (computers) cannot replace the teacher, however, the teachers who do not know how to use and to get benefit of technology (computers) will be replaced by those who do. In fact, it is not known if teachers and learners really think positively about the effectiveness and practicality of these devices. In the new era of technology, little attention is now given to the use of technology and its implications in the language classes of institutes, they still insist on traditional systems and this makes the participants demotivated. Educational Technology is analyzed and interpreted in schools, universities, and libraries, but neither has not investigated in language institutes nor studied on different genders' attitude. The present study can reveal the fact that now in our time the language learners look for some up-to-date devices that may assist them to become better language learners using technology as a facilitative device.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The current study follows three certain objectives. First it decides to reveal what the views and attitudes of the EFL learners of the study about the use of technology are, and tries to prove if the learners presently are satisfied with the use and implementation of technology in their language classes. Second, it tries to reveal if the learners really prefer to learn their language using technology and that if it is an advantage for them to use technology or they preferred to use the usual and old teaching systems? Third, this project tries to indicate if

there is any difference between the attitudes of the EFL learners towards the use of technology in terms of their genders.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What is the attitude of the language learners of the study towards the use of technology in their language classes?
2. What is the difference between the attitudes of the EFL learners of the study in terms of their genders towards the use of technology?

1.4. Research Hypotheses

1. Language learners of the study have positive views towards the use of technology in their language classes.
2. Language learners of different genders have different views towards the use of technology.

2. LITRATURE REVIEW

2.1. Information of ICT in Education

Balcon (2003) contended, ‘many countries in Europe have integrated ICT into their schools and have determined the importance of it and during the last decade, and today they have to use ICT in teaching and to integrate it into subject teaching. No doubt, ICT tools such as interactive whiteboards, video projection units, digital microscopes, CD-ROMs, presentations with video, resources selected from the Internet, prepared handouts for students and model data will continue to impact on education and these will have benefits for the teachers and students (Department for Education & Skills, 2004).

2.2. CALL in the Language Class

Ayres (2003) also suggested the framework process of integrating CALL into ESL classroom with its sequences:

1. Identifying the course pedagogic philosophies and learning outcomes clearly because it will influence the choice of method, material, and drill
2. Identifying available CALL or ICT resources including the websites, both for students and staff. I think the consideration about the maintenance, setting, and ratio between the computers and the users should also be included;
3. Match the learning outcome with appropriate resources, create a clear content profile so there is no overlapping or repetition;
4. Create an explicit objective and it should be written down both for teachers and students;

The potentials of information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate students' learning, improve teaching and enhance institutional administration had been established in literature (Kazu & Yavulzalp, 2008; Kirschner & Woperies, 2003). The use of information and communication technology as a tool for enhancing students' learning, teachers' instruction, and as catalyst for improving access to quality education in formal and non-formal settings has become a necessity. Recognizing the impact of new technologies on the workplace and everyday life, teacher education institutions try to restructure their education programs and classroom facilities, in order to husband the potentials of ICT in improving the content of teacher education. Information and communication technology as tools within the school environment include use for school administration and management, teaching and learning of ICT related skills for enhancing the presentation of classroom work, teaching/learning repetitive tasks, teaching/learning intellectual, thinking and problem solving skills, stimulating creativity and imagination; for research by teachers and students, and as communication tool by teachers and students (Collis & Moonen, 2001; Derbyshire, 2003; Moursund & Bielefeldt, 1999).

2.3. The Role of Teacher in CALL

The importance of teacher's role in choosing the most appropriate software and the students' understanding about the use of CALL in their learning process shows that in teaching learning English, multimedia or technology is a learning aid, not the main control (Carlson & Silvman, 1986).

It is important to consider the goal, the need, the availability, and the maintenance. Of course financial budget will also play a key role in choosing the program. Therefore, it is important to consider all those things which are related to language learning process including the setting (Bradin, 1999) and the maintenance before deciding using the software. Technology is only useful if the users not only know how to use it but are also aware when they really need it. Designing criteria is important to be basic information that the software is created for educational purposes and to show whether the author of the software is aware of what is needed in learning process rather than creating it on commercial basis. Meanwhile, the hardware availability is still an issue in some countries, as it was mentioned in Bradin (1999), the setting should also be considered before choosing the hardware. The setting here means whether we need to provide one computer for each student or we put a number of computers in one laboratory, whether we provide the several computers in the library or learning center or one computer for each classroom. The type of computer should also be considered. The teacher and the decision makers should well understand what kind of hardware which is needed for their teaching learning goals as well as the budget.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

A group of 88 learners, 44 males and 44 females made up the subjects. There were aged between 10 minimum to 18, the maximum age of these learners. These learners had already studied in the same institute using some technological devices such as the internet,

computer and smart board and thus were familiar with the use of these devices in the language class. In fact the time they had spent with these facilities was enough to become familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of each device.

3.2. Instrumentation

To explore the attitudes of the participants of the study, a questionnaire was designed and implemented by the researchers for this purpose, and it was translated to Persian. It consisted two major parts. The first part of the questionnaire was devoted to the demographic information about the participants' gender and age, and the next part sought the attitudes of the participants on their attitudes on the use of different aspects of technology in their language classes.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

To collect the data of the study, the researchers used a pre-designed questionnaire. It was included 24 items using Likert Scale. 88 subjects of both genders responded to the given items and then their responses to the items were collected and analyzed.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for Microsoft Windows version 21 was used to analyze the collected data. Two types of data analysis were used: descriptive and inferential. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, standard deviations and percentages, were implemented in order to investigate the demographic data, and the use of technological devices. Besides, inferential data was used to know if there were any significant relationship between the gender of the subjects and their response to any of the given question items.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section presents the collected data in the form of tables. The tables below demonstrate the responses of the subjects in detail in terms of the frequencies and the percentage.

Table 1: Do you enjoy using technology to learn English?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	77	87.5	87.5	87.5
NO	10	11.4	11.4	11.4
Valid	41.00	1	1.1	100.0
Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Will you continue to use technology in your English learning?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid YES	76	86.4	86.4	86.4
NO	12	13.6	13.6	13.6
Total	88	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3: Does technology help to make learning easier?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid YES	73	83.0	83.0	83.0
NO	15	17.0	17.0	17.0
Total	88	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4: Do you think using technology might be better than other methods?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid YES	75	85.2	85.2	85.2
NO	13	14.8	14.8	14.8
Total	88	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.1. Discussion

As Table 1 indicated in the previous section, a great majority of students, 87.5% responded positively that enjoy using technology to learn English. Only a very limited number of 11.4% expressed their disagreement with the idea. On the whole, a great majority supported the use of technology in teaching and learning English. Besides, as Table 2 displayed, a majority of learners nearly 87% wanted to continue to use technology in their English learning, and a limited numbers almost 13% were disagree to use technology.

Then the study investigated the learners' ideas about using technology to make learning easier. A great percentage of students (83%) responded positively to the given question item and a limited number of them (17%) responded negatively to the question being asked. Finally the questionnaire examined if using technology might be better than other methods. Based on the information in the related table (Table 4), most if the participants (85%)

responded positively to the given question and a minority of 14% disagreed with the given idea. On the whole, a high majority indicated their agreement with this idea.

4.2. Crosstab Table

To view the difference between the attitudes expressed by males and females, the questions were correlated with the two male and female genders. Nowhere could we observe any difference or meaningful relationship between the responses of the two groups. In fact the researchers can claim with certainty that no great and considerable difference could be observed between the attitudes stated by the two genders. In other word, the ideas on the use of technology among two different genders made no difference and they were similar in this regard.

5. CONCLUSION

The goal of the study was to examine the following two hypotheses. The first one was “Language learners of the study have positive views towards the use of technology in their language classes”.

The first hypothesis is completely confirmed. By referring to the data in previous part, it can be observed that a great majority of the learners of the study had a positive view towards the use of technology in their language class. The next question was about the learners’ enjoyment in using technology to learn English. Most of the English learners (88%) claimed that they really enjoyed using technology in the language class. On the other hand, 86% believed that they preferred to use technology in the language class even in future and for more learning. All of the evidence stated here supports the use of technology in the language class.

On the other hand, the second hypothesis “Language learners of different genders have different views towards the use of technology” is rejected. As it was noticed, the subjects of both genders expressed the same type of attitudes towards the given ideas and not much difference could be observed between them. In other words, boys and girls of the study strongly supported the effective use of technology in learning English and other courses.

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