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Level : Second Year Master

Module : ICC

**Course :** Four / Contributions and Constraints of ICT’s Integration in Language Learning

**INTRODUCTION**

English Language Teaching (ELT) has changed over the years, moving from very teacher centered

approaches to learner-centered ones (Richards, 1985). Innovations have brought changes in materials (supplementary, self-study, authentic, etc.) and technology devices (language laboratories, tape recorders, video recorders, computers, etc.). Yet, most learners think ICT is simply using the computer to develop one’s learning inside or outside classroom. Hence, such view shows a lack of knowledge on various ICT devices and tools available which could add a variety to classroom contexts. With ICT, learners can explore much more about the contributions and constraints of using these devices in education. Contemporary education has become so advanced that ICT is now part and parcel of the teaching and learning process. So it is better to explore, as times have changed, how new technologies have great role in stimulating both language teachers and learners to be eager and interested in learning using ICT. The evolution of technology around the world, and its influence has permeated into all facets of lives, including educational settings. The introduction of this new process has serious implications for the nature and purpose of knowledge and skills acquired that made learning possible continuously throughout the lifetime. ICT can help motivate, reengage learners and capture their attention with challenging tasks even more manageable and push learners’ participation to reach much higher levels of learning (Gorder, 2008).

In reality, the use of technology devices, such as televisions, tape recorders and video recorders have been incorporated as a tool for language teaching since 1960s. Therefore, ELT teachers are accustomed to frequent subject innovations like curricular changes that are usually made official from the Ministry of Education in each country workshops and short trainings that introduce new techniques and activities or promote new materials for more resourceful or open to new ideas.

**ICT use in English Language Teaching**

According to Ofsted (2004) English Language may be a difficult subject to non-native learners in their countries where it is not common to interact in English as an official language. An interactive teaching and learning atmosphere has to be created to sustain students’ interest in the subject. ICT is in many countries of the world an integral part of teaching and learning process. Kent and Facer (2004, p.25) say, “ICT in an educational point of view supports teaching, learning and a range of activities in education in various ways”. Some declare that teacher and students are required to be ICT literate.

In fact, Giordano (2007) points out that for learners to be equipped with ICT literacy and be lifelong learners, ICT must successfully be integrated into both the English Language curriculum and academic practice in general. Gumbo(2003) actually confirms that ICT is a tool that enhance language teaching and learning. Rumpagaporn (2007) confirms that with ICT learners can have a school magazine, do assignments, prepare a power-point presentation or just carry out research. With access to those tools, learners at the same time can make use of them, reflect on what they do and ultimately correct themselves. ICT usage is that it is interactive and dynamic, and as such meets individual students’ needs. Arnell (2012, p.9), notes that “Svensson (2008) defines four different ways in which ICT can be used in language teaching and learning: ICT as an automat, ICT as a tool, ICT as an arena and ICT as a medium”.

*1. ICT as an automat :*ICT involves reinforcing behaviour since grammar is being taught with computers can be used to teach English similar to that of Skinner (Arnell,2012).

*2. ICT as a tool, arena and medium :*As pointed byArnell (2012, p.10) who makes reference to Svensson (2008) that ICT is a learning tool that reinforces meaning “ ICT is used to facilitate communication with teachers, other learners and people outside a particular school setting”. The use of tools ensures an access to relevant information through the Internet. Therefore, both ICT and the internet help learners manipulate the device, interact with the English language and learn it (the language). As a medium, Arnell (2012) says Svensson talks of instances where ICT can be used to post information online on administrative and course related matters, like course outline, assessment and important dates about the course. So, the contributions of ICT is clear for the teaching of English Language in situations/countries where English is used as a medium of Instruction. Besides learning English Language, students acquire the necessary communication and computer skills that they will make use of in other subjects.

The integration of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning as a medium helps in implementing a variety of approaches and pedagogical philosophies. However, ICT as a teaching aid is more complicated in that it demands more specific skills from the teachers (Salehi,H., Salehi Z, 2012). Furthermore, the application of ICT for communication between peer learners helps to exchange information in real time, participate in blog discussions, work in teams on different projects, exchange emails, search for information, etc. By using the authentic material provided by the internet, learners can have a clearer insight into the culture of the country and its target language (Padurean & Margan,2009). ( Rozgiene, Medvedeva & Straková, 2008).

The contribution of ICT in the learning process can be summarized as follows (Houcine Salehi,2011):

- ICT increases learners’ motivation and thus enhances personal commitment and engagement;

- ICT improves independent learning;

- Learners’ collaboration and communication are more important;

- Learners’ attainment and outcomes are improved.

With technologies, learners can work independently in order to master a given knowledge and ensure a quality of learning (Kirubahar,J.S., Subashini, A., and Santhi, V.J.,2011). They find value in learning through the implementation of various instructional strategies and multiple alternative and authentic forms of assessments, while maintaining high standards of student performance in an environment which encourages students to do their best work by effective, nurturing teachers, will help increase the motivational levels of all students (Mullamaa,K.,2010). Web 2.0 tools can provide students with extra opportunities to do meaningful language learning tasks from the comfort of their own homes or local libraries. Thus, teachers that nurture learners with instructional strategies can face barriers that prevent them to use ICT in the classroom and develop supporting materials through ICT. These constraints are highlighted bellow.

**Constraints of ICT in Language Learning**

A study held to examine the high school English teachers’ perceptions of the factors discouraging teachers to use ICT in the classroom included 30 high school English teachers from the five main educational districts in the city of Isfahan, Iran. The findings revealed that insufficient technical supports at schools and little access to Internet and ICT prevent teachers to use ICT in the classroom. Besides, shortage of class time is an important discouraging factor for the teachers to integrate ICT into the curriculum. The following two sections explain the factors discouraging teachers to use ICT in the classroom.

**Teachers’ familiarity with ICT**

When asked about their personal experience with ICT, it was found that the majority of high school teachers (70 %) considered themselves as frequent or confident users of ICT. This belief does not necessarily mean that the teachers will integrate ICT into the curriculum. Less than one fourth of the respondents (23.3 %) were limited users of ICT and just two teachers had never personally used ICT. When the teachers were requested to judge about themselves regarding the use of ICT in the classroom, a total of them (76.6 %) stated that they never use ICT in the classroom or they prefer to use it very little. Based on teachers’ perceptions, just one sixth of the teachers (16.6 %) were frequent or confident users of ICT.

**Factors Discouraging Teachers to use ICT**

The obtained results revealed that there were 8 factors that discouraged teachers to use ICT in teaching activities in the classroom. The teachers believed that insufficient technical supports at schools and little access to Internet and ICT prevent them to use ICT in the classroom. Shortage of class time was another main factor that discouraged them to integrate ICT in the curriculum. More than half of the respondents (56.6%) also stated that the society’s views about the use of ICT and requirements of qualifications did not hinder to use ICT in the classroom.

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