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PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS ON ICT INTEGRATION IN EFL CLASSROOMS: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Language learning and teaching practices are shaped by the perceptions of ESL teachers, influencing how technology is integrated into classrooms. This study explores ESL teachers' perspectives on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language instruction, examining their roles and teaching practices in technology-enhanced environments. To investigate this, 35 English language lecturers from a public university were selected for study, including 12 females and 23 males. The data of the study were collected through a questionnaire survey. The findings reveal that ESL teachers frequently use online web chats and other digital platforms to engage with students. Additionally, they commonly use computers to prepare lectures and develop instructional materials, highlighting the growing role of technology in language instruction. However, while technology is incorporated into teaching practices, its full integration in ESL classrooms remains a challenge. This study provides valuable insights into teachers' perceptions of ICT in language education and its impact on instructional practices.

Keywords: Language, Learning, Teaching Practices, Perceptions, ICT, Web Chats, Technology.

Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) is a vital aspect of modern living and has a big impact on all aspects of human existence (Gnams, 2021). Comparably, Information and communication technology ICT has changed the educational landscape and made teaching methods more dynamic and effective (Lin et al, 2017). This is because it provides a range of instruments which can be utilized in online and traditional learning environments, and it also helps to create a proactive learning environment in the classroom. The integration of technology into instructional methods yields several advantages for students, including improved teaching quality (Akram et al., 2021a), development of skills, increased motivation, and quicker acquisition of information and knowledge (Chen et al., 2018). ICT supported the teaching and learning process on the one hand during the COVID-19 worldwide crisis when almost all the activities globally were halted in all spheres of human life. However, as a replacement for personal teaching, ICT integrated learning and teaching have given greater access to the learning possibilities (Akram et al., 2021b). Furthermore, second language teachers have encountered challenges in the better use of ICT technology in their teaching practices because of a lack of competencies in technology. Still, the temporary period

enhanced the digital skills of the teachers. Moreover, the use of Information and communication technology (ICT) in education to improve the effectiveness of pedagogical practices has been included globally in the last decades (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Additionally, research has also emphasized the importance of ICT integrated teaching methods to meet the learners' learning needs by keeping learners encouraged, which is viewed as a crucial anticipator of learners' academic growth. Furthermore, research has revealed that technology-integrated learning enhances the learning achievements and cognitive understanding of the learners. Likewise, ICT-incorporated learning and teaching practices also allow students to maintain relationships with their peers and teachers (through social media platforms), support learners unravel their academic difficulties and keep the learners sharing actively in the activities of learning (Liu Z. et al., 2021). Identifying the value of learners' actively participating in the learning tasks, Lius also recommended that instructors should create collaborative tasks by using computer-supported collaborative concept mapping (CSCCM) way to create an interactive setting of the classroom, which also increases learners' engagement. In a nutshell, ICT-integrated learning and teaching is the need of time, which permits second language learners to meet their language learning goals, and it supports instructors to correspond their teaching methodologies with international standards.

Similarly, the importance of ICT education is also identified by Pakistan, the country's instructional policies have shown that the government is particularly concerned about the integration of ICT technology into the learning and teaching practices to satisfy the needs of the globe (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2018). Yet, there are several aspects in Pakistan and other developing countries, which are lacking in ICT infrastructure such as internet and electricity (Akram et al., 2021a), Technological expertise and competence (Asad et al., 2020), and lack of training of teachers in institution (Abbasi et al., 2021), which poorly affects the utilization of ICT in a successful manner in ESL classrooms. In addition to the above discussed technology-related aspects, teachers' individual beliefs and perceptions play a crucial role in the integration of technology in a more effective way. The beliefs and perceptions of the teachers define the decisions of their pedagogy as how they integrate technology in their teaching, which helps the needs of learning and teaching in the 21st century (Tondeur et al., 2017). Old research has also analysed that teachers' practices are significantly affected by their teaching beliefs. Teachers prefer the technological applications with which their existing beliefs and pedagogical strategies align in the context of learning and teaching practices. To place in another way, use of technology is highly associated with perceptions of the teachers related to the context of learning, and teaching in a classroom. Considering this, renovative instructional strategies indicate that the integration of technology can only be understood better when the teachers' perceptions related to technology use will be considered (Watson & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2021).

1.1. Research Questions

- 1.** What are the EFL Teachers' Perceptions about the use of technology in EFL Classrooms instruction at university level?

2. How do EFL Teachers think about their roles, and practices in relation to technology integrated EFL Classrooms at university level?

2. Literature review

2.1. Information and communication technology (ICT)

The term Information and Communication Technology (ICT) refers to a broad spectrum of technologies that support the exchange, processing, and storage of information. In the context of education, ICT plays a crucial role in enhancing learning and communication. It includes tools and platforms such as email, SMS messaging, video conferencing, and social media, all of which facilitate efficient information sharing and interaction. These technologies not only streamline communication but also contribute to the advancement of education by providing diverse ways to access and distribute knowledge. (Perron & Taylor, 2010). Rajput defines Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as an extensive collection of communication tools, technologies, and services. This includes devices such as radios, televisions, mobile phones, and computers, as well as essential infrastructure components like networks, hardware, and software. (Rajput & Raghuvanshi, 2015).

In the field of foreign language education, ICT is employed in multiple ways, including as tools for locating and retrieving information, creating materials, facilitating interaction, and supporting instruction (Peeraer & Van 2012). Tools for location and retrieval enable educators to explore online resources, making it easier to access relevant learning materials for lesson planning and teaching (Scrimshaw, 2004). With internet access, educators can utilize a wide range of digital resources, including lesson plans, e-books, images, audio files, and videos. Additionally, ICT-based tools for content creation allow teachers to develop customized learning materials by integrating digital resources available online (Lewis & Goodison, 2004). Word processing and presentation software are essential tools in education, as highlighted by Aydin (2004). When it comes to interactive technologies, ICT plays a key role in enabling human-computer interaction by bridging the gap between technology, its applications, and user intent. By utilizing teaching tools such as a computer connected to a projector, educators can present pre-prepared materials, making lessons more engaging and improving the overall learning experience. (Peeraer & Van 2012).

2.2. Teachers' perceptions about language teaching and ICT

Ottenbreit et al. (2017) explored the relationship between teachers' perspectives on teaching and their use of technology in education. To achieve this, they analyzed existing research, specifically 14 qualitative case studies using a meta-aggregate approach. Their findings revealed a two-way relationship between educators' teaching beliefs and their integration of technology in the classroom. Similarly, Olofsson, Ertmer et al. (2017) investigated how university-level teachers perceived learning and adapted their teaching methods over a decade. Their findings indicated that, initially, most teachers leaned toward a teacher-centred approach when using technology in their instruction. However, over time, these same educators demonstrated a surprising ability to adapt and embrace change more quickly than their more experienced counterparts. In contrast, teachers with higher levels of expertise showed minimal shifts in their teaching beliefs. Attitudes stem from inner beliefs, shaping

behaviour and reflecting qualities such as morality, kindness, and responsibility (Schunk, 2012). Moreover, past attitudes can influence how individuals adopt new technology. As access to technological resources continues to grow, users' perspectives evolve, making them more open to adopting and using ICT (Dutschke et al., 2018). Additionally, Player-Koro (2012) examined the factors affecting educators' use of ICT in teaching. The study aimed to identify teacher-related elements that contribute to ICT adoption. The findings revealed that a positive attitude and strong self-confidence among educators played a key role in influencing their use of ICT. After this Zhou, Ertmer et al. (2017) conducted a study at a university in China, focusing on English instructors and their use of technology in teaching. The findings indicated that these educators generally had a positive attitude toward incorporating technological tools in education. Key factors influencing their acceptance of technology included social influences, supportive environments, and the perceived effectiveness of the tools. The study suggested that the university should further improve teacher training programs and assist educators in developing more effective strategies for integrating technology into their teaching methods. Nevertheless, traditional educators tend to use ICT as a supplementary tool to enhance learning resources, assign projects, and conduct online research (Ertmer, 2012). ICT is widely recognized as a powerful cognitive tool that encourages learners to develop essential skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving by engaging with real-world challenges (Ertmer, 2015). Prestridge, research has highlighted the significant influence of teachers' pedagogical beliefs on how they incorporate ICT into their teaching (Prestridge, 2012). Interestingly, some studies have identified discrepancies between teachers' perceptions of ICT and their actual integration of technology in the classroom (Chen, 2008; Judson). Lastly, Ertmer et al. (2015) explored the reasons behind these inconsistencies, pointing out that perceptions can be difficult to measure, their significance varies from teacher to teacher, and cultural differences further impact how ICT is adopted in educational settings.

2.3. Previous research on ICT integration in the EFL Classroom

Al-Munawwarah (2014) conducted a study to examine teachers' views on the use of ICT in the EFL teaching and learning process. The findings indicated that the participating teachers had a positive attitude toward integrating ICT into English instruction. The study also identified three key benefits of using ICT in EFL classrooms: supporting teachers in delivering interactive lessons, promoting learner autonomy, and encouraging student motivation. Another study conducted by Ahmed (2017) indicated that smartphone usage increased from 30% to 50% over two years. The study also highlighted that adopting new teaching approaches was largely neglected in Pakistani universities. The lecture method remained the most used teaching technique, positioning students as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants. Additionally, the most frequent use of technological tools was through platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, which were primarily used for non-educational purposes. Furthermore, Rashid (2018) conducted research in Pakistan to investigate how students use technology both inside and outside the classroom. The findings indicated that students are generally aware of and familiar with the use of technology. The study revealed that 97% of students own smartphones, while 85% use desktop computers or CPUs to address educational

tasks. Despite being on campus, most students rely primarily on their smartphones for academic support. However, carrying personal CPUs or using the processors provided by the campus was not a common practice. Similarly, Allamah et al. (2022) highlighted that student had a positive attitude toward the use and accessibility of ICT. They reported being satisfied with incorporating technology into their learning process, whether through web-based or non-web-based tools. Most recently, Vuong and Thu (2024) explored the perceptions of EFL pre-service teachers regarding the integration of ICT in EFL classrooms during their teaching practicum. The study involved 40 EFL pre-service teachers from a university in Vietnam and adopted a mixed-method approach to achieve its goals. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire based on the Technology Acceptance Model, while semi-structured interviews provided deeper insights. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses indicated that the EFL pre-service teachers generally viewed the use of ICT in classrooms positively during their practicum. The study also offered several recommendations to enhance the integration of ICT in the teaching and learning process.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To effectively analyze and interpret the findings gathered from various research instruments, this study adopts a quantitative approach. To enhance the reliability and depth of the results, the triangulation technique was implemented. According to Patton (1990), triangulation strengthens research by improving both the quality and comprehensiveness of the data.

3.2. Sampling

This study considered a sample of 35 EFL English language lecturers from the Department of English, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan. A total of 35 teachers participated, including 12 females and 23 males. All participants held a master's degree in English.

3.4. Data Collection

The questionnaire utilized in this study was originally adopted from Suwannasom (2010) and was further modified to align with the specific contextual factors of the research. It consists of two sections: the first focuses on participants' personal information, as well as their beliefs and perceptions regarding the use of information technology (IT) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. The second section explores their experiences and perspectives on integrating IT into EFL classrooms.

3.4. Data Analysis

To answer the research questions of this study, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS software.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Common Technological Practices in EFL Instruction: Examining Teachers' Frequent Instructional Behaviors

The study reveals that a significant number of teachers integrate technology into their instructional practices. Specifically, 40% of the participants reported using computers to prepare lectures and teaching materials, as well as accessing online resources to support EFL

instruction. Additionally, 5% of the respondents indicated that they utilize chatrooms to share materials with their students. However, the findings also highlight limited engagement in certain digital activities, as only two out of 55% of participants stated that they did not create online blogs or websites, nor did they incorporate online testing and assessment in their teaching practices. The findings of this study align with previous research by Murray (2005), which emphasizes that the primary objective of language learning in the digital era is to equip learners with the skills to communicate globally through digital tools such as computers and internet-based platforms. In this context, Chapelle (2001) highlights that language instruction aims to offer learners meaningful practice and experiences that are essential for effective electronic communication.

5.2. Level of Support and Encouragement for IT Integration in English Language Instructions at Your Institution

The findings reveal that most participants believe technology is moderately supported in their institutions, compared to those who feel it is either fully supported or not supported at all. This represents 70% of the total participants, indicating that while technology is acknowledged, it is only partially encouraged. In contrast, only 7% of participants strongly agreed that technology is actively promoted in EFL classrooms. Meanwhile, 23% of participants disagreed, stating that their institutions do not support or encourage the use of technology in language instruction. The findings align with the research conducted by Felix (2001), who argues that students often lack opportunities to receive feedback on their language-related tasks.

5.3. Beliefs about use of IT in Pakistani EFL classrooms

The highest mean value, recorded in the item, was at 3.48, indicating that EFL learners frequently engage with online journals and websites featuring essays and articles written by native speakers. Students perceive native speakers' writing style as an ideal model for mastering English. These findings align with the study by Kern and Warschauer (2000), which highlights that internet access allows language learners to interact with native speakers worldwide, thereby enhancing their linguistic competence. Native speakers provide authentic language input, offering non-native learners valuable exposure to real-world language use. This access enables learners to engage with English in various settings, including at home, in the workplace, and in educational institutions. The second-highest mean value in this study, recorded at 3.40, indicates that emails and chatrooms are commonly used as tools for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Students are encouraged to engage in online discussions, contributing to and exchanging ideas in digital spaces. These findings align with Kem (1996), who suggests that emails, web chats, and other digital communication platforms create opportunities for teachers to implement communicative language teaching in the classroom. Additionally, online interactions help reduce students' anxiety, as they feel more comfortable participating in language activities without the fear of making mistakes. This, in turn, enhances their motivation to learn a foreign language.

The findings of this study are consistent with Davis (2006), who emphasizes that Web 2.0 enables learners to engage in meaningful conversations and receive feedback. These

interactive opportunities benefit both teaching and learning, making the process more effective and collaborative. Most participants expressed a neutral stance on whether students use word processing tools to correct their spelling and sentence structure. Additionally, opinions were divided regarding the use of CD-ROMs and other web-based resources for learning pronunciation and completing grammatical exercises, with a similar number of participants agreeing and disagreeing on this point.

5.4. Incorporating Web-Based Activities in EFL Classrooms

This section discusses the findings on the use of web-based activities in EFL classrooms, drawing comparisons with previous research. The study reveals that EFL teachers occasionally maintain e-journals or web-based logs to document their teaching practices. According to Smith (1997), researchers and educators worldwide have recently incorporated various web-based resources, including Web 2.0 tools and Lesson Management Systems (LMS), into EFL instruction. Web 2.0 encompasses modern technological tools such as wikis, digital postcards, and social networks, which provide valuable support for both educators and language learners. However, the present study indicates that in the Pakistani context, teachers rarely maintain records using e-journals or other online platforms. It also finds that EFL teachers seldom engage their students in web-based discussions during classroom activities.

5.5. Summary of the Results

EFL teachers utilize online web chats and other digital platforms to interact with students and rely on computers to prepare lectures and instructional materials for language classes. However, almost 50% of the participants indicated that technology is supported and encouraged at their institutions, suggesting that technological integration is not strongly promoted in the Pakistani context. Additionally, a significant number of participants agreed that many students access online journals and manuals, often written by native speakers. The native variety of English is viewed as the ideal language model, and technology plays a crucial role in providing access to such resources in EFL classrooms. Despite these advantages, teachers in Pakistan face several challenges. They rarely engage students in online testing and assessment, and they do not maintain online websites or blogs that could enhance language.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to expand the existing knowledge on teacher cognition regarding IT integration in the Pakistani EFL context. In 2011, the Pakistani Ministry of Higher Education set objectives not only to improve English language skills but also to emphasize the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language education, aligning with international teaching standards. The findings of the present study indicate notable improvements in the Pakistani educational system, suggesting that the goals outlined by the Ministry are being partially achieved. However, several challenges continue to hinder the effective integration of IT in EFL classrooms. The study reveals that fewer than 50% of participants believe their institutions actively support or promote the use of IT in language instruction. Additionally, there is limited encouragement for online learning, and the existing system is not yet equipped to evaluate students' language proficiency through web-based assessments.

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