Assessing English Language Instructors' Knowledge and Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) In Taif University Campuses (TUCs)

Prof Hassan el-Banna M Gaballa

Prof of Linguistics & Research Consultant, Taif University Vice-Presidency for Graduate Studies & Academic Research Taif,   Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The success of the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into the teaching and learning of English language depends largely on the level of knowledge of ICT possessed by the instructors and actual utilization of these in the classroom. The study therefore assessed Taif University (TU) English Language instructors' knowledge and use of ICT in English Language classrooms. Attempt was made to provide answers to these four research questions using survey research design: (1) What is the level of knowledge of English language instructor about ICT? (2) Are ICT facilities available in Taif University Campuses (TUCs) for the teaching and learning of English? (3) Do English language instructors use ICT in English? (4) Is there any significant difference in the knowledge of ICT between male and female English language instructors?

The participants were 94 English Language instructors from 4 university campuses in and around Taif City. A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect pertinent data which were analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentage and t-test. Findings revealed that the level of knowledge of ICT possessed by English Language instructors was poor and as such, they rarely use ICT in English Language instruction. It was also found that there was significant difference in the male and female instructors' knowledge of ICT with the males demonstrating a higher level of knowledge than their female counterparts. Based on these findings, it is recommended, among others, that English language instructors must attend periodic seminars, workshops and in-service trainings to equip them with knowledge of ICT and its utilization in classroom instruction while instructor education programs in tertiary establishments must be reviewed to incorporate ICT-assisted instruction.

Keywords: language assessment, English language teaching, information technology, and language communication

INTRODUCTION

The enormous growth in internet connectivity in association with the development of other electronic communication technologies has resulted in changes in many spheres of the society. The internet has become a key element in what is seen as a globalization of society, providing technology that recognizes no national boundaries, that has no single owner, and that is not regulated or controlled by any single national or international legal framework. According to Adeyemi (2005) all major businesses have adopted it as a means of communications and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have found it to be an invaluable tool. The reality of this globalization might however be somewhat less clear. What is the extent of connectivity? Who really has access to the global information society? What impact does it have on the teaching of the English language as even the language of the internet (Lee 2001)?

The pace of change brought by new technologies has had a significant effect on the way people live, work and play worldwide. New and emerging technologies challenge the traditional process of teaching and learning and the way education is managed. Information and Communication Technology (ICT), an important area of study in its own right, is having a major impact across all curriculum areas. Rapid communication, plus increased access to ICT in the home, at work and in educational establishments could mean that learning becomes a truly lifelong activity, an activity in which the pace of technological change forces constant education on the teaching and learning in which the usage of the internet is widely and teaching-learning process itself (Strambi & Bouvet 2003). In response to the rising tide of the use of ICT in the higher educational sector, all over the countries in the world, it brings to concern in particular, the awareness, the easy access of the facility to the instructors of the language of the internet, which is English. It also gives room for thought on the level of commonly used as a medium of instruction in the teaching and learning process. Should it only be at the tertiary level of higher education as this is the level of education that its usage is common? What is the place of English language instructors in the use of the ICT as a means of teaching of English at the University Preparatory Year which forms the fundamental level before students proceed to higher levels of university education? The use of ICT as a strategic management and cognitive tool is critically significant in the teaching of English language. So, the awareness and usage of the ICT by instructors of English language right from the very beginning become imperative. Research works, e.g., Chattel 2002) and Cheng (2003), have shown that many educational establishments have either insufficient or no ICT tools to cater for the ever increasing population of students in the universities and where they are available, they are, by implication, a matter of out-of-bounds to students.

It was noted by Carey and Gregory (2002) and Ozoji (2003) that many educational establishments do not have software for the computer to function. One university has five computers against a student population of 900 and no internet software was installed. The facilities are grossly inadequate for any meaningful teaching or learning to take place. This reveals the state of ICT in some third world higher educational institutions.

In view of the above, one can deduce the place of ICT and its usage in English language instruction. English language being a general subject will need adequate availability of ICT facility to practically all students and instructors of English; hence, the necessary awareness of ICT usage to instructors and its availability is of significance. The causes of poor performance of students in English language at public examinations have been identified as the employment of indigenous and traditional methods of teaching (Slavin 2000), non-awareness of modern methods of teaching, and absence of dedication and resourcefulness (Sun 2000).

Several strategies have been proposed and adopted over the years. All these strategies have helped in one way or the other but have not led to improved performances of students in the English language. Carey and Gregory (2002) stressed the urgent need for the use of ICT to facilitate teaching and learning.

All these features can be actualized by introducing computer literacy in educational establishments. Invariably since English language is the language of education, the need for ICT in English language instruction cannot be over-looked. Technology use in the TU classrooms is one of the potential strategies to address the drop-out issue and improve the teaching and learning of the English language. The teaching and learning of English language has changed from the traditional chalk and talk method to broad techniques with the inclusion of technology in the instruction of English which has a significant positive effect on the language. In view of these uses of ICT in English instruction, one should keep in mind that instructors who are the facilitators of English language instruction in educational establishments should possess adequate knowledge of ICT in order to facilitate the teaching of English language. It is unfortunate that inadequate ICT infrastructure including computer hardware, software and bandwidth/access were recognized as a restrictive element to the use of ICT by the majority of instructors (Strambi & Bouvet 2003).

Statement of the Problem

There has been a worldwide clamor for a re-orientation of teaching and learning toward greater use of ICT facilities. The success of such clamor, however, depends largely on the level of knowledge of ICT possessed by teachers and its actual employment in classroom instruction. Hence, the study attempted to investigate the level of knowledge of ICT possessed by English language instructors in Taif University and the extent to which it is used in English language instruction in selected campuses.

Research Questions

The study attempted to provide answers to the following research questions:

What is the level of knowledge of English language instructors about ICT?

Are ICT facilities available in TUCs for the teaching and learning of English language?

Do TU English language instructors use ICT in English language instruction?

Is there any significant difference in the knowledge of ICT between TU male and female English language instructors?

Purpose of the Study

The study assessed English language instruction in selected TUCs. Specifically, the study aimed at finding out how knowledgeable teachers of English are about ICT and to what extent they use it in English language instruction.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in many ways. First, the study provided empirical information on the level of knowledge of ICT possessed by English language teachers as such level of knowledge would greatly determine the feasibility of revolutionizing English language instruction through the use of ICT facilities. It also offered information on the level of preparedness of governments for the use of ICT instruction in universities through the availability or non availability of ICT facilities in educational establishments. The findings from the study constitute an eye-opener to the problem militating against the use of ICT in teaching and learning in general and English language instruction in particular. Finally, findings from the study would have implications for teacher educators in colleges of education and universities in incorporating training in ICT-assisted strategies in teacher preparation program.

Scope of the Study

The study focused on assessment of TU English language instructors' knowledge and use of ICT in English language instruction in 4 selected TUCs. Specifically it focused on the extent of instructors' knowledge and use of ICT components such as web quests, web browsers and interactive board.

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design to assess the knowledge and use of ICT in English language teaching and learning by instructors in selected TUCs.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised most instructors (94) of English language in Taif University English Language Center. The selection of these sample subjects depended upon the random sampling technique.

Research Instrument

One instrument was designed and used for data collection, namely English language teachers knowledge and use of ICT questionnaire ELTKUIQ. The ELTKUIQ has three sections: A, B and C. Section A attempted to elicit demographic information such as name of campus, its location, gender, teachers qualification and years of experience. Section B contained question items which were carefully structured to elicit information that boarders on teacher's knowledge of ICT in English language instruction. Finally, Section C included items based on the usage of ICT by teachers in English language instruction.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The emphasis was on the content validity of the instrument used for this study. The first draft was given to experts in educational technology in the Faculty of Education, Taif University and all inputs were incorporated. In order to ascertain the reliability of the research instrument, it was test- run in two campuses not used for the main study, and using Crombach Alpha a coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. This proved that the questionnaire was reliable.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher and his assistants visited the selected campuses to administer questionnaire developed for the study. The 94 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents and collected back on the spot.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data collected from the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) especially for demographic information on the respondents. In addition, T-test analysis was used to determine the difference between the male and female instructor's knowledge and usage of ICT in English language teaching.

RESULTS

Answering of Research Questions

Research Question 1

What is the level of knowledge of English language instructor about ICT? 64.9 of the sample have not undergone any computer training. 88.3% supports the idea that ICT technology enhances language instruction. 53.2% had no idea of what ICT-assisted language learning is. Only 56.4% had knowledge of what ICT-assisted instruction is. 57.4% had knowledge of what computer software is, also the same percentage goes for those who know what computer hardware is too. 70% had no knowledge about language instructional software, such as *choice master* and *gap master*. This means that out of 88.3% of the sample that agreed that ICT technology enhances language instruction do not have the real knowledge of what it involves. A higher percentage of 53.2 is familiar with web quests while 69.1% do not know how to browse the internet for teaching materials. A higher percentage of 52.1 do not have the knowledge of the ICT enough to be able to teach with it.

The questions analyzed in the following table are further used to test the actual knowledge of the instructors in ICT.

Table 1a: English Language Teachers Knowledge of ICT

Statement	Yes	%	No	%
1 I have not undergone any computer training.	61	64.9	33	35.1
2 ICT technology enhances language instruction	83	88.3	3	3.2
3 I know what ICT- assisted language learning is	41	43.6	50	53.2
4 I know what a web-browser is	53	56.7	40	42.6
5 I know what ICT software is	54	57.5	70	74.5
6 I am familiar with soft ware, e.g., *gap master*	23	24.5	70	74.5
7 I am familiar with interactive board	50	53.2	42	44.7
8 I browse the internet to assess reading material	28	29.8	65	69.1
9 I know what *web quest* is.	54	57.4 .	38	40.41
10 I can access the internet but unable to teach with it. 41		43.6	.49	52.

Table 1b: Result of ICT Knowledge Test

Statement	Yes	%	No	%
11 *Choice master* software is used to teach	12	12.8	82	87.2
12 *Word store* enhances	16	17.0	78	83.3
13 *Gap master* software can be used to	11	11.7	83	88.3
14 ICT assisted language learning is a program	30	31.9	64	68.1
15 The meaning of interactive board	43	45.7	51	54.3

Table 2: Availability of ICT Facilities in Taif Campuses

Statements	1	2	3	4 5	Mean SD
1 My campus has enough computer hardware & software for language instruction	F-70% 74.5	F-9%9.6	Ft 12% 122.3	F-1%LI F-1%LI	1.41 .85
2 The Computer is available for teaching in my classrooms	F-62%66.0	F17%18.1	F10%10.6	F-1%LI F-1%LI	1.44 .85
3 Connectivity of the computer in my campus to the internet is possible	F-82%87.2%	F-1%L1	F-4%4.7	F-%0.0 F-2%2.1	1.13 .75

Table 3: Use of ICT in English Language

Statements	1	2	3	4	5 M SD	Mean SD
1 I can operate computer without help	F-52% -55.3	F-8%-8.5	F29% 30.9	F-2%-2.1	F-%	1.73 1.01
2 I can use computer to teach my students	F-73%77.7	F14%43	F14%-14.9	F-%	F-1%LI	1.31 0.76
3 How often I use computer to teach	F-90%-95.7%	F- %1.1	%		F-2%2.1	1.00 .27
4 I can use Microsoft word to teach English	F-72%-76.6%	F-7%-7.4%	F-1.11%-1.7%		F- 1.27 --	.72
5 I can use the computer to prepare my lesson	F-78%83.0%	F-7%-6.4%`	%6. %-6.4	F-%-	F-1.17 F-%58	
6 I can use power point to present my class lesson	F-76%-80.9%	F-6%-9.6%	F-% F-%-		-- -66	66
7 I can use only Microsoft word package on the computer	F-51%-54.3%	F-13%-13.8%	F-23%-24.5%	F-2%2.1	F-2%2.1	1.74 1.07
8 I can use *choice master* in English language instruction	F-71%-74.3%	F-8%-8.5%	F-7%-7.4%		-- --	1.19 .72
9 I browse the internet for fun only	F-53%-6.40%	F-3%-3.2%	F-26%-27.7%	1. -- --	81	1.26
10 I browse the internet for teaching material	F-71%-75.5%	F-3%-3.2%	F-15%-16.0%	-- --	140	-94
11 We use computer systems for administrative purpose only in my classes	F-61%-64.9%	F-17%-64.9%	F-3%-19.1%	-- --	1.59	1.25

Table 4: T-test Comparison of Male and Female Instructors' Knowledge of ICT

ICT Knowledge	No	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Remark
Male	40	17.33	3.94	--	--	--
Female	54	15.42	4.24	92	2.19	Sig.

The table further measures the actual knowledge of the instructors by asking them what certain language software is, e.g., *word store*, *choice master* and *gap master* are used for. Not all those who claimed to know what ICT-assisted language learning program could give the actual meaning to it. A higher percentage of 87.2 do not know what choice master software is used for, only 17% knew what *word store* is used for. 88.3 also do not have any idea of what *gap master* software can be used for. 31.9% got the meaning of *web quest* as against 56.4% who claimed to know what it is in Table 1a&b. 45.7% of the participants got the meaning of *interactive board* right. This shows that, generally, the knowledge of ICT is poor among the instructors of English language in the current study.

Research Question 2
Are ICT facilities available in TUCs for the teaching and learning of English language?
Table 2 shows that the TUCs do not have enough computer hardware and software for language instructions (X=1.41). The availability of computers to teach in TU is also poor, (X=1.44) and connectivity to the internet in TUCs is also very poor (X=12.13). All these imply that there is poor availability of ICT facilities in TU.

Research Question 3
Do English language instructors in TU use ICT in English?
Table 3 presents the extent of usage of ICT by English language instructors. To answer the above questions, TU instructors were asked to rate the level of utilization of ICT on a five point scale. The scale 1-5 ranges from poor, fair, average, much and very much. The response from the instructors is very poor, as the response under column one is generally on the negative side and it has the highest percentage. It can therefore be concluded that the use of ICT by TU instructors of English language is really minimal.

Research Question 4
Is there any significant difference in the knowledge of ICT between male and female English language instructors?
Table 4 reveals that there is a significant difference between TU male and female instructors in their ICT knowledge (t=2.19Ij, df= 92, P(0.05). The male instructors have higher knowledge with the mean score (17.33) than their female counterparts (15.42).

Summary of Findings
The study assessed instructors' knowledge and use of ICT in English language instruction in TUCs. Findings reveal that:

The knowledge of English language instructors in ICT is very poor and therefore not adequate to teach with.
There is poor availability of ICT facilities in TUCs which means that TUCs do not have enough computer hardware and software to teach English language.
TU English language instructors do not use computers in teaching and learning of the subject.
Male English instructors have higher knowledge of computers than their female counterparts.

DISCUSSION

Level of Knowledge of English Language Instructors on Ict
The result shows that the knowledge of English language instructors on ICT is quite poor. Only 14.9% of the sample had basic training in ICT. Those who even have the basic knowledge had no idea of software in English language instruction. Though some members of the sample teachers who claimed to know basic items and program in ICT such as *web browser*, *ICT* or Assisted *Language Instruction* could not give appropriate answers when asked to give the actual meaning. A very high percentage of 88.3%, however, know that ICT technology enhances language instruction. This is a view which corroborates the findings of Adeyemi (2005) that ICT has the potential of enhancing the teaching and learning of different aspects of English language.

Availability of Ict Facilities in TUCs Teaching and Learning of English Language
The availability of computers and its connectivity to the internet tend to non-existence in virtually all TUCs. Those who have computers do not use them in teaching but solely for administrative purposes. Only some buildings are

connected to the internet but the instructors do not have direct access sot it; therefore, they cannot utilize it in gathering information for the purpose of teaching and learning of English language instruction. The few buildings that have computers available do not have them in large numbers that will facilitate the teaching and learning process in English language instruction. Many reasons can be attributed to the non-availability of ICT in TUCs. These include location, accessibility to electricity, the high cost involved in establishing a standard ICT teaching and learning environment, the fear on the part of most schools in allowing students meddle with these components even when they are available. Aside from these, most TUCs have good security, in terms of well secured buildings that can house such facilities without the fear of theft.

Due to the sensitivity required in the handling of ICT infrastructures, most administrators TUCs do not believe that students and teachers are capable of delivering and the scarce supply of technical and maintenance staff for logistics when needed. This confirms the position that TUCs are ill equipped for the application of ICT.

Utilization of Ict by Teachers in English Language Instruction

The level of use is also dependent upon availability. With the results shown, availability is poor, thus its usability will be hindered. This agrees with the observation of Ozoji (2003) that non-availability greatly hinders access and the use of ICT is also hindered by the inability of the teachers to teach constructively using ICT due to lack of its technical knowledge and qualification on their part. The issue of usability arises from a number of factors which may include, as aforementioned, inaccessibility to the computers, relevant software in English language instruction not being available, reluctance on the part of the instructors and even inadequate training of the teachers on the use and application of the computer.

Knowledge of Ict of Male and Female English Teachers

The t-test result showed a significant difference in the knowledge of male and female English instructors. The male subjects have higher knowledge of ICT more than their female counterparts. This contradicts the findings of Adeyemi (2005) that today the margin of education awareness which stems from good educational background are no longer gender restricted, because enrolment level showed that more of the female are coming to the level of acquisition of facts, knowledge and are academically qualified as their male counterparts than in the previous decades. This, however, is not so in the case of ICT knowledge between male and female teachers of English language as the result has shown that the male teachers possess more knowledge of ICT than female teachers. This might be as a result of the submission that male teachers are more adventurous than their female counterparts in searching for information.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this study that the integration of ICT into the teaching and learning of English Language will go a long way in relieving instructors of the daily pressure they undergo in the teaching and learning of English language in abstract to the willing and eager learners who deserve an improved approach to their daily educational growth. However, as TU administration and other stake holders in higher education of the Saudi child clamor for improved quality of English language instruction in most Saudi universities through the integration of ICT, the need to equip the instructors with adequate knowledge and skills of using ICT to teach English language becomes imperative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended the TU administration should endeavor revisiting the curriculum with a view to incorporating the use of computer and ICT- assisted instruction in teaching English language. This should be implemented first by the training of instructors in computer literacy, then the adequate funding and provision of computer and ICT gadgets in all TUCs, the English Language Center and Departments of English. Also, instructors of English language should also be exposed to regular seminars and computer literacy workshops to keep them abreast of computer and ICT based instruction in English language. Furthermore, TU administration should endeavor to enlist the support of instructors and computer amateurs in the purchase and installation of computer and ICT gadgets in TUCs for effective teaching and learning of all aspects of English language in the university. The Ministries of education and Higher education in Saudi Arabia should also ensure that schools and universities do not just have computers and ICT facilities rather they should ensure that they are effectively utilized in instructional programs in schools.

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