

INVESTIGATING LIBYAN TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN SEBHA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Technology applications from the simplest to the most complicated has changed the way teachers teach and how students learn. The importance of using technology tools in the classroom has become a source of educational interest in recent years. This study aims to investigate Libyan English language teachers' attitudes towards integrating technology in teaching EFL students, and the difficulties faced in using technology in secondary schools in Sebha city. This research adopts a mixed method design. The conceptual framework of the study was adopted from Saaid (2010). A questionnaire adapted from Wozney and Abrami (2006) was administered to 40 selected Libyan teachers in Sebha city to elicit information on their attitudes towards integrating technology in teaching EFL students, their preparation to integrate technology, the types of technology used and the difficulties they faced in integrating technology. A semi-structured interview was also conducted with eight respondents selected randomly from the sample to collect in-depth data on their attitude towards integrating technology and problems faced. The findings suggest that most of the teachers had positive attitudes towards integrating technology in teaching EFL students. However, they faced problems related to time constraints and lack of administrative support. The findings of the study have implications for Libyan English Language teachers to incorporate the use of technology in their teaching to enhance students' learning.

Keywords: technology, education, preparation in using technology, attitude

INTRODUCTION

Today English language has become a main medium used in international communication for many purposes. English is also the world's most widely studied, read, and spoken foreign language as it has been the dominant language of education, commerce, communication, science, technology, and entertainment in the global village (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Warschauer and Kern, 2000). As a result, English has become more important than before. Since the emergence of teaching methods and approaches, educators have always tried to engage tools that facilitate the learning of English. Every type of language teaching method has its own tool to support it. For example, the best tool for the grammar-translation method is the blackboard while the tape recorder is the best medium for the audiolingual method. The latest change in this area is the integration of technology in teaching English by using the communicative language approach method. Technology in teaching refers to technological tools and services which consist of computers, lap tops, videos, over head projectors, digital video disks (DVDs), smart boards and the whole range of modern devices that have been developed by technical companies to be used in teaching (Saaid, 2010).

According to Percival (1984), the use of technology in the EFL classrooms is seen as highly beneficial for language learners and has been addressed by several writers. The birth and rise of the Internet and the World Wide Web since its inception in the 1980s has allowed both language teachers and students to explore various methods of learning. By incorporating technology into the teaching of English, the

role of the EFL teacher in the language classroom has shifted from that of a traditional teacher who uses textbooks to one who uses a variety of methods which includes technology.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the 1980s, the Grammar-Translation method was used to teach English in schools in Libya. Since the year 2000, the new English Language syllabus based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has been introduced. The main reasons for this educational change are due to the demands of the society to produce desired skilful teachers who can function well in the changing work environment and the desire to keep up-to-date with the constant innovations that shape human life.

In a CLT-oriented classroom, students are given various opportunities to engage in communication in the target language. The function of the instructor is that of a facilitator or coordinator whereby he or she prepares students for active learning through interactive, and communicative learning tasks (e.g. discussion, role-play) in order to engage students with authentic, meaningful, and contextualized discourse (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

However until today, the Grammar-Translation method is still being used by some instructors in Libya (Saaid, 2010). In the classroom, the instructor stands in front of students in using the Grammar-Translation method to teach students directly from textbooks. The instructor uses Arabic (the official language) to explain grammar and the meaning of EFL texts, and the students are asked to translate English sentences to Arabic, or *vice versa*. As a result of using this method of teaching, students' proficiency in English language has deteriorated. This effect does not comply with the goals of the syllabus which are to set standards for four domains of English language learning: social interaction; access to information; presentation; and appreciation of culture and language (Saaid, 2010).

The Ministry of General Education in Libya states that integrating technology in teaching English in Libyan universities can help improve students' proficiency in the English language. However, the situation is not the same in secondary schools. Secondary students have problems in speaking and writing. It is important to solve such problems by teaching using the syllabus based on the CLT Approach. "The goal of integrating technology in the classroom is to change the classroom atmosphere and to make the learning process more interesting. However, many teachers find this difficult without appropriate training" (Saaid, 2010). Providing teachers access to computers, software, and the Internet is only part of incorporating technology successfully into teaching, but not all of these teachers are using technology in their classroom. This has been an issue raised by the Libyan Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Report, 2009).

According to Saaid (2010), Libyan inspectors of teaching EFL from the Ministry of Education recommend that teachers integrate technology in teaching English, but many teachers ignore this call. This has resulted in students being bored with the same style of teaching approaches i.e. reading, translating, and memorizing. Students tend to lose their interest in learning the language and the aim of studying English is mainly to pass exams. When these students go to universities abroad, they face a lot of difficulties in their studies especially in fields like Medicine and Petroleum Engineering which require a high English Language proficiency.

As technology can play an important role in enhancing language learning, this study aims to investigate the attitude of teachers towards the integration of technology in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Sebha city.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research study are to:

1. determine the different kinds of technology integrated by English language teachers in teaching EFL students,
2. determine whether teachers are prepared to use technology in teaching EFL students,

3. identify the difficulties that teachers face in integrating technology in teaching EFL students and
4. investigate English language teachers' attitudes towards the use of technology in teaching EFL students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the different kinds of technology integrated by English language teachers in teaching EFL students?
2. Are the teachers prepared to use technology in teaching EFL students?
3. What are the difficulties that are faced by teachers in integrating technology in teaching EFL students?
4. What are the English language teachers' attitudes towards the use of technology in teaching EFL students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The significance of technology in education has been addressed as it offers many exciting approaches and opportunities for pedagogy. "Technology in language education can increase the variety or diversity of learning opportunities and the quality of the learning experience in making input of more varied kinds learnable and accessible to each individual learner" (Pennington (1996: p.89). The implementation of technology may be especially useful in a second or foreign language classroom, as it gives both teacher and student more accessibility to the target language in various aspects. As stated by Zhao and Frank (2003), instructional technology can help teachers put together different aspects of the curriculum, direct student learning, model an idea or activity, or connect curriculum to real world tasks and be more dynamic. Instructional technology can help students "to develop new ways of thinking, think critically, gather and organize information, explore a topic, be more creative, be more productive" (p.32).

Technology use in education is becoming an increasingly important part of higher and professional education. Technology does not only give learners the opportunity to control their own learning process, but also provides them with ready access to a vast amount of information over which the teacher has no control (Lam and Lawrence, 2002). Technology use in schools has influenced the way educators plan and design instruction, and assesses their students. Innovations in educational technology have changed systems of communication, learning resources, ideas, and professional development. Innovative technology facilitates creativity and learning productivity (Saaid, 2010).

Common types of technology in teaching

Prabhu (1987) emphasizes that educational technologies make great contributions to the creativity together with special objectives, text books, methods, tools and equipment, and evaluation and assessment. As a result of technological developments in today's world, new possibilities have been integrated into educational practices and thus the methods and settings have been enhanced (Barson and Debski, 1996).

Overhead Projectors (OHP) have been humorously defined by Jones, (2002) as "a well-built horizontal surface where mugs of coffee may conveniently be placed". It is as simple as effective. It is the only audiovisual appliance which was especially designed for teaching foreign languages in the early 40's. Since then, it has been widely used not only for teaching languages but it has also been a helpful, powerful, popular presentation device in other subjects or fields and in training or conference rooms for many years.

Videos on the other hand are teaching tools, characterized by the ability to present communicative situations in a complete way (Lonergan, 1984). The combination of both sound and image shown in a context is a powerful tool in the EFL classroom. The speakers, the setting and the gestures can be seen

and heard and at the same time, technical features of video players allow the teacher to pause, to go forward and backward or to play video recordings.

Loneragan (1984) stated that the audio player is one of the most common equipment used to teach languages. One of the reasons could be that most textbooks are supplemented with audiotapes to carry out listening activities. The most recent ones even provide the students with audio compact discs (CDs) so that they can practice the activities orally at home. Lonergan recommends the use of audios to improve speaking ability. Apart from what is available in the textbook, there is a great deal of recorded materials especially designed for teaching foreign languages: dialogues, songs, stories...etc.

Chapelle (2003) examines the use of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in the classroom as a way of developing certain skills such as grammar which allows practice through online materials. Therefore, teachers can use devices such as CALL to improve not only grammar but other skills including speaking.

Reed (2001) states that different forms of technology can be presented in the language classroom such as the Internet, computer, and Smart board which all can be used productively to improve the learning process. Teachers identify task requirements, apply search strategies, and use current technology to efficiently acquire, analyze, and evaluate a variety of electronic information. They use task-appropriate tools to synthesize knowledge, create and modify solutions, and evaluate results in a way that support the work of individuals and groups in problem-solving situations. Teachers communicate information in different formats and for diverse audiences. They should know how to plan, organize, deliver, and evaluate instruction for all students incorporating the effective use of current technology in teaching.

Teachers' preparation for using technology

Technology plays an important role in schools. It is considered to be the wave of the future, so naturally teachers are encouraged to embrace it. But the question that arises is whether all teachers can use technology in their classrooms.

Research shows that teachers tend to teach the way that they were taught. Therefore, if we expect teachers to teach in a constructivist way using technology, we need to be teaching them in constructivist ways using technology. In a course on educational technology for teachers, the goal should not simply be to teach the use of several technology systems, their advantages and disadvantages; instead, the goal should be to provide these teachers with opportunities to think like experts in making instructional decisions, selecting media for appropriate use, structuring learning activities and employing sound pedagogical strategies in real-life contexts (El Araby, 1994).

Technology should be an integral part of teacher preparation programmes. Lack of teacher's proficiency and lack of training are obviously closely-related. In a study that was conducted by Yaghi (1996) on teachers' preparation to use technology in Oman, it was found that the majority of high school teachers expressed an overwhelming need for teacher training. In Yaghi's study, high school teachers stated that computer training is the most important factor for increasing the implementation of technology in the classroom. Teachers need instruction that helps them clearly see the benefits of teaching with technology. When teachers engage with others in ongoing reflection about what they have learned about the instructional use of technology, they are more likely to critically evaluate their own pedagogical practice and redesign their instruction. Well-trained teachers tend to be more comfortable with learners and be more efficient teachers, while poorly-trained teachers may model bad experience that could cause negative attitudes towards classroom technology and among the students.

Difficulties in integrating technology

There may arise of difficulties in integrating technology in teaching and these include factors such as access to equipment, training, personal comfort levels, availability of equipment, and time. Barriers within a teachers' context may hinder efforts and meaningful use even when the value of technology integration is widely accepted by the academic institution (Maddux, 1998).

Ertmer (2002) identified widespread barriers to technology integration within teaching and these are: lack of computers, lack of quality software, lack of time, technical problems, teacher attitudes towards computers, poor funding, lack of teacher confidence, resistance to change, poor administrative support, lack of computer skill, poor fit with the curriculum, lack of incentives, scheduling difficulties, poor training opportunities, and lack of vision as to how to integrate technology.

Teachers' attitude towards integrating technology in teaching

As one of the main elements of this study, attitude could be defined as the perceived effectiveness assigned to a certain object (Zhao and Cziko, 2001). In this respect, it could be claimed that the effectiveness the teachers perceive in using technology in their teaching shapes their attitude towards technology itself. Therefore, one could maintain that the teachers who perceive computers as being effective in their teaching might develop more positive attitudes toward technology integration in their classrooms.

Teacher's attitudes and perceptions often prevent them from fully integrating technology into their course design (Teo, 2008). Positive teacher attitudes towards computing are critical if technology is to be effectively integrated into the curriculum (Becker and Riel, 1996). Becker and Riel believe that teachers who have been provided by their schools with a computer and all the necessary instructional technology within the classroom are more likely to have a positive attitude towards implementation of instructional technology. Positive attitudes can come from enthusiasm and personal desire to learn computer skills.

Davis (1989) in his study investigating the relationship between attitude and integrating technology found that teachers' attitudes were strongly related to their success in using technology. Gardner, Dukes and Discenza (1993) stated "the formation of attitudes can provide an understanding of teachers' decisions and perceptions. Attitude may serve to explain decisions educators apply to teaching and how they prepare to teach with technology". According to Christensen (2002), Vannatta and Fordham (2004), teachers' attitudes and experience are factors that influence the use of technology (computers).

Both a positive attitude towards technology and technology skills in combination are accepted precursors for effective use of technology (Christenson 2002; Migliorino and Maiden, 2004). Additional factors that influence attitude are self-efficacy, social norms, and external demands among others. Attitude is an informed predisposition to respond and is comprised of beliefs, feelings and intent for action. For example, teachers who believe that the use of web resources will benefit classroom teaching and learning will perceive web resources as being useful and hence tend to use web resources in their teaching. Because of their positive attitude toward such resources, they are more likely to attempt incorporating them into their teaching.

Behavior or in other words, using technology is viewed as the result of a set of beliefs on technology, which may in turn have a reciprocal effect on behavior.. Belief, being one of the main determinants of behavior, is also affected by the outcome, and belief and behavior reciprocally shape each other (Liaw, 2002). Beliefs follow behaviors and in turn cause an increase in the occurrence of those behaviors, hence highlighting the importance of building a teacher's confidence through successful experiences with small instructional changes before attempting larger changes (Ertmer, 2005: p. 33).

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework (see Figure 2.1) of this study is based on the adapted model by Saaid (2010). The model which is based on Wozney and Abramy's (2006) model specify the causal linkages between factors, and users' attitude and actual technology adoption behavior. The model suggests that users integrate technology when they overcome the factors that influence the integration of technology (Saaid, 2010).

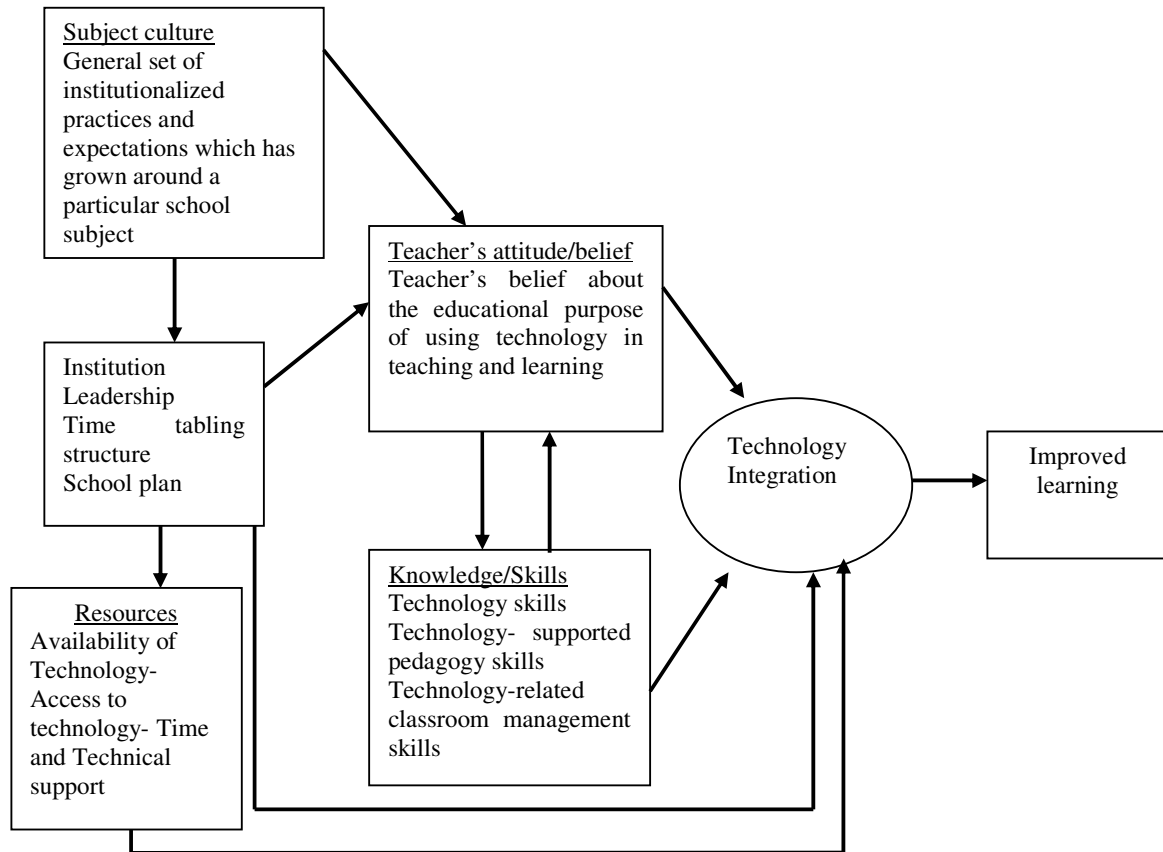


Figure 2.1 The adapted model of technology integration
Source: Saaid (2010)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a combination of the quantitative and qualitative research designs was adopted to address the four research questions above.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select the sample. Purposive sampling targets a particular group of people. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling (Polit & Hunglar, 1999). According to Polit and Hunglar (1999), purposive sample is a sample selected in a deliberative and non-random fashion to achieve a certain goal. When the desired population for the study is rare or very difficult to locate and recruit for a study, purposive sampling may be the only option. The sample of this study were 40 Libyan English Language teachers purposively-selected from 7 public secondary schools 3 private secondary schools in the city of Sebha. There were approximately four teachers in each school at the city of Sebha. The age range was between 23 and 40. They were 8 males and 32 females. Their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 23 years.

Instruments

In this study, two instruments were used to collect the data. These include a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview which followed.

The questionnaire is on teacher's attitude on the use of technology in teaching EFL students. This questionnaire was adapted from Wozney and Abrami's (2006) Technology Attitude Questionnaire. The number of items in the questionnaire is 20 and the responses to these items were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5 points) to Strongly Disagree (1 point). The sample was requested to express their extent of agreement or disagreement to the items by selecting the answer from the five options of the Likert Scale.

A semi-structured interview was conducted with eight randomly-selected teachers from the sample to gain a deeper insight into the attitude of teachers towards technology integration in teaching EFL students.

Data analysis

The responses in the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Descriptive statistics, (frequencies and percentages) were computed to analyse the data. These measures were used to describe the findings on types of technology that teachers used in teaching EFL, teachers' training to use technology, the difficulties involved in integrating technology in teaching EFL and the teachers' attitude towards technology.

The responses of the teachers in the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using key words and word counts. The verbatim was analysed to obtain in-depth information on the different kinds of technology used and the reasons why, training to use technology and its importance, the difficulties involved in integrating technology in teaching EFL and the teachers' attitude towards integrating technology.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings based on the questionnaire responses and interviews are summarized below.

Research question 1:

What are the different kinds of technology integrated by English language teachers in teaching EFL students?

Table 1. Types of technology

No	Types of technology	Percentage/ Frequency
1	Computer	22.5% (9) *
2	Compact disc (CD)	25% (10) **
3	Tape	22.5% (9) *
4	Video	12.5% (5)
5	Overhead projector	7.5% (3)
6	TV	10% (4)
Total		100% (40)

**Highest percentage *Second highest percentage

The findings in Table 1 show that teachers in the city of Sebha, Libya tend to use CDs (25%) and tapes (22.5%) in the teaching of EFL students. From the findings of the interview, CDs were stated to

be the most popular and effective type of technology because they were easily accessible, used extensively in the curriculum, easy to carry around by teachers and students and could help improve listening and speaking skills. On the other hand, the teachers found that using overhead projectors was a problem as this teaching equipment is not available in most of the schools and most of the teachers do not know how to use it.

Research question 2

Are teachers prepared to use technology in teaching EFL students?

Attended technology courses	Percentage/ Frequency
Yes	0% (0)
No	100% (40) **

**Highest percentage

All the 40 teachers claimed that they had not attended any courses on how to use technology in teaching EFL students. The responses in the interview show that no courses have been provided to them by the school or the Ministry of Education.

Research question 3

What are the problems that are faced by teachers in integrating technology in teaching EFL students?

No	Problems in integrating technology	Percentage/ Frequency
1	No access to equipment	12.5% (5)
2	No training	17.5% (7)
3	Personal comfort level	5% (2)
4	Time constraints	30% (12) *
5	Poor funding	2.5% (1)
6	Lack of administrative support	32.5% (13) **
	Total	100% (40)

**Highest percentage, *Second highest percentage

The findings show that most of the teachers quote poor administrative support (32.5%) and time (30%) as the most common problems that hindered the use of technology in teaching EFL students. These problems were followed by 'No Training' (17.5%), 'No access to equipment' (12.5%), and 'Personal comfort level' (5%). Poor funding received the lowest percentage that is (2.5%). The respondents in the interview claimed that the headmasters of their schools and the management staff do not encourage them by providing the needed tools or maintaining the technological tools from time to time. They also added that the English lesson time which is 45 minutes is not enough to integrate in their teaching.

Research question 4

What is the English language teachers' attitude towards the use of technology in teaching EFL students?

Table 4 Attitude towards technology

Item no	Strongly Agree (SA) %/Frequency	Mostly Agree(MA) %/Frequency	(SA+MA) %/Frequency
Item 1	50% (20)	40% (16)	90% (36)
Item 2	65% (26)	30% (12)	95% (38)
Item 3	37.5% (15)	55% (22)	92.5% (37)
Item 4	32.5% (13)	47.5 (19)	80% (32)
Item 5	35% (14)	32.5% (13)	67.5% (27)
Item 6	40% (16)	27.5% (11)	67.5% (27)
Item 7	50% (20)	40% (16)	90% (36)
Item 8	60% (24)	40% (16)	100% (40) **
Item 9	32.5% (13)	67.5% (27)	100% (40) **
Item 10	42.5% (17)	55% (22)	97.5% (39) *
Item 11	67.5% (27)	27.5% (11)	95% (38)
Item 12	12.5% (5)	52.5% (21)	65% (26)
Item 13	65% (26)	30% (12)	95% (38)
Item 14	37.5% (15)	55% (22)	92.5% (37)
Item 15	62.5% (25)	27.5% (11)	90% (36)
Item 16	2.5% (1)	32.5% (13)	35% (14)
Item 17	17.5% (7)	47.5% (19)	65% (26)
Item 18	50% (20)	40% (16)	90% (36)
Item 19	47.5% (19)	52.5% (21)	100% (40) **
Item 20	17.5% (7)	37.5% (15)	55% (22)
	Percentage mean =41%	Percentage mean= 42%	Percentage mean = 83%

**Highest percentage, *Second highest percentage

The findings show that most of the Libyan teachers (percentage mean=83%) had positive attitudes towards integrating technology in teaching EFL students. From the interview, the reasons quoted were:

1. Everything operates by using technology;
2. Technology enhances students' learning;
3. It makes the learning process fun and interesting;
4. It helps teachers be facilitators or coordinators, and
5. It helps integrate language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) rather than teaching these skills in isolation.

The findings support the conceptual framework of the study by Saaid (2010). Saaid suggests that technology integration is affected by other factors such as training, difficulties in integrating technology and teachers' attitude towards integrating technology. Users can integrate technology only when they overcome the factors that influence the integration of technology.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that most of the Libyan teachers in Sebha city tend to depict a positive attitude towards integrating technology in teaching EFL students. The most common type of technology used were CDs as they were easily available and used extensively in the syllabus. Tools like overhead projectors were unavailable in classrooms and as teachers also lacked the skills in

operating this equipment, they were hardly used. Further to this, teachers also were not prepared to use the more sophisticated types of technology such as the computer as they claimed that they had not been trained to use them.

In terms of difficulties, the teachers stated that the main problems were related to lack of support from the school administration and time constraints to short duration of lesson time. The findings of this study has implications for the Ministry of Education in Libya, school administrations and teachers in planning and enhancing teaching methods for effective language learning among secondary students in Sebha city through integration of technology by teachers in the classroom.

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