



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Incorporating Information and Communication Technology: A Study of the Perceptions of ESL Teachers at Secondary Level**

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**ABSTRACT**

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The present study explores the essential aspects of integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English language teaching at the secondary level in district Vehari in terms of its effectiveness, availability, technical facilities, and pedagogical implication toward teaching the English language. This qualitative research highlights how modern technology helps students effectively learning a foreign language. Structured interviews were conducted from 43 ELT teachers. The recorded opinions were rearranged employing content analysis as per the thematic categorists taken as the basis for the items of the questionnaire for interview. The results showed that the use of ICT in ELT classes provided a motivating learning environment making students attentive and active learners. The teachers endorsed that technology integration in their pedagogical practices made their teaching more effective and involving. The problems faced by teachers during the use of ICT include technical faults in machinery; troubleshoot the problem in software, limited capacity of the labs, and in some cases, slow speed of the internet. Recommendation to improve the integration of ICT for English language teaching is given at the end

**Introduction**

The modern age assigns different tasks to the teachers. The process of teaching has been changed due to the modern tools used in classrooms as laptops, multimedia, cell phones, and projectors, etc. Technology delivers many opportunities for assisting teachers thought-provoking and more creative in terms of constructive and productive variations. The use of technology is one of the most

important drives of the improvement and transformation of society and individuals. Information and communication technology (ICT) is the digital processing and utilization of information through the use of electronic devices. Technology is also used for collecting, editing, storing, and passing on information in various forms. The development and advancements of ICT bring revolutionary changes not only in social life but also in the whole education system around the globe. ICT in teaching refers to a number of technologies that provide students and teachers access to information and communication. It includes wireless internet, cell phones, and other communication mediums. Corporations and higher education centers are increasingly adopting ICT as a tool for learning and also for communication, curriculum, collaboration, development, and staff development. Hartoyo (2010) concluded that ICT and language learning, either foreign or second, is just like such an aspect of the education system that cannot be dealt with separately. This development changes our conceptualization of teaching and training. It brings a change in education and improves practice and policies in education (Peterson, 2014). ICT, if employed successfully and effectively, helps reduce barriers of time and place in educational institutions. (Lea, Rogers & Postmes, 2002). Teaching and learning opportunities can be expanded and enhanced through the appropriate application of technology in language classrooms. In Pakistan, an adaptation of complementary organizational design is very slow and differs from one institution to another but the use of ICT has become an important part of education with time. Teachers have identified the exploitation of technology and the tools provided by it as an instrument of effective learning. Technology provides many opportunities for the teachers as making them creative and constructive. In Pakistan, many urban schools have established their ICT labs and the language teachers use ICT tools for teaching and learning purposes. ICT enhances learning when it is planned properly. ICT has positive effects on teaching and it is considered one of the most important building blocks of society. The present research attempted to explore the utilization of ICT with special reference to English language teaching.

### **Literature Review**

The world has become a global village and we are now connected all the time with the recent developments being adding to it. It is all just because of the technology. According to Way & Webb (2007), there are two terms used in teaching: instructivist and constructivist. These terms provide activities that are used in classroom activities for the help of students, (Kennewell and Morgan, 2006). Technology has been used as rising support in education, trade, and private life for a long while. Now a day's people use electronic mail instead of writing letters and send it internally or externally as an effective way of communication. People send e-cards to their friends, relatives, and colleagues for birthday wishes rather than paper cards. The data and information have no longer been kept into the files printing it on papers. ICT plays an essential role in teaching and learning

English language skills. Kay and Honey (2005) suggests that language teaching and learning by using technologies at a different level has positive results.

Kent & Facer (2004) argue that ICT enhances teachers' abilities by presenting different activities in education regarding modern technologies. According to Boakye & Banini (2008), ICT has become the need of every human being in society. ICT provides benefits both to the teachers and students. The teacher used ICT to provide benefits to the students and present meaningful learning for society (Webb, 2005). Teachers use technologies in class with a positive attitude and encourage students to use ICT in learning that presents positive results ( Friend and Pope, 2005).

Obgonnaya (2010) asserts that ICT provides a strong link between teachers and students and makes them more competent and cooperative. In this way, students pay more attention to learning and their communicative skills improve. Discussion and arguments in classrooms create an environment of understanding the social problems of the student and try to solve it in a better way. Teachers create friendly environments that provide opportunities for group discussion to both teacher and student. ICT is not just a tool used in classrooms everyday but skillfully use of teachers in classrooms. Teachers provide an individual level response of feedback but it is not difficult for a computer to perform such kind of tasks. ICT helps students to understand difficult topics and perform difficult tasks in classrooms. More than 75% of students at the secondary level show that they have understood their topics using ICT in classrooms.

Teachers develop their skills and knowledge by using ICT in English language teaching (Mumtaz, 2000). Teachers designed the syllabus, make activities, engage the class in group discussions, and make the topic easier and more effective by using ICT teaching classrooms. Teachers use ICT to bring change in their teaching method and replace their traditional teaching method with the modern method. Teachers do not need a high level of technology used in the classroom but need higher skills and confidence to use technology in classrooms.

## **Material and Methods**

The present study is qualitative. There are certain advantages to using the qualitative method. Firstly, we can explain our thinking using words, ignoring numbering forms that qualitative research pays its focus usually on words rather than focusing on collection and analysis of the data and as in the present study we are aimed at finding out the participants' feelings, experiences, and opinion so qualitative method is the best to do this. Secondly, it helps us to understand the meanings of the words that people have in their minds (Wheeldon, 2010).

The data was collected by conducting structured interviews. The items for the interview were adapted from a published research article by Mahdi and Al-Dera (2013). The teachers were informed that their views would be recorded. With the consent of the participating teachers, the researchers recorded and in some

cases noted down the conversation held between the researcher and the participants. By considering their opinion and the major themes identified in the content received from the participants, the data was arranged in terms of thematic categories to conduct a content analysis of the collected data.

As discussed earlier, the questionnaire was adapted from Abate (2014) to record the opinion of the teachers. There were ten statements relevant to the following topics:

- a) Using ICT in the English language classroom by teachers and students
- b) The students' response to ICT
- c) Effectiveness of ICT in language teaching practices
- d) Problems in using ICT
- e) Pedagogical implications of using ICT

The data was collected from the secondary school teachers both female and male from district Vehari. The total sample comprises 43 English language teachers randomly selected from the abovementioned schools. There were 18 female and 25 male teachers as participants from the 22 secondary schools of district Vehari. The schools were selected randomly to collect the data.

### **Data Analysis**

As discussed in the previous section, ten items were included in the interview and these items were discussed with the language teachers.

### **Using ICT in the Classroom**

The first category discusses the type of technological tools used by the teachers in language teaching. The data showed that the teachers use their tabs or laptops to have internet access in the classroom. The most widely used tool is multimedia because it engages the class in different activities and group discussions. A teacher can arrange and record the syllabus of the class into different ways and design activities to be presented by multimedia for the whole academic year. The teachers expressed that arranging the topic of study by using computers and laptops etc can give them a benefit for using them for future purposes. The use of multimedia helps teachers in teaching classes with a maximum number of students especially when they need to instruct the whole class to conduct some activity or assign some tasks. The teacher reported that they use the internet in the classroom to access different educational websites for the comprehension of constructs and concepts during language teaching. All of them have online monolingual or bilingual dictionaries on their mobile phones and they use them in the class for teaching the pronunciation of certain words in the class. Some of them reported that they use Google translator to search the meaning of some given text. The online resources help teachers to access the latest and up to date information available for better understanding. However, it is not always

possible for them to get access to the internet equipped lab because of the limited resources. They also added that the teaching of a second language would become more operative if they are provided with uninterrupted high-speed internet and capacious labs.

### **The Students' Response to ICT**

The response of students towards using ICT in language teaching was reported as assenting and encouraging. The respondents added that there are a majority of the students who have not been provided with computers or the internet facility at their homes but they showed a boosting and affirmative response when these tools were used by the teachers in classrooms or labs. The participants stated that the outcomes of using ICT tools were far more inspiring than teaching without them. The students showed a motivating behavior towards learning and they performed well in all the four language skills after the technological support was added to the teaching practice. The students who have previous knowledge of doing tasks and assignments enjoyed more than the other students. The respondents added that the practice of using ICT tools keeps the students engaging and attentive. Interactive teaching helps students in enhancing their confidence. However, this interest was reported to be found more in male students than the female ones. The female teachers reported that it is partly because of the unavailability of the internet etc. at homes and partly because of the social roles in the society assigned to the females. There are some financial and technical issues for having less or no previous knowledge of using technologies. It was informed that some students could not afford smartphones, laptops or computers, etc due to financial constraints while others live in some remote areas where high-speed internet does not work. But despite the limitations, they appreciate to learn ICT skills and they enjoy being taught through ICT devices.

### **Effectiveness of ICT in Language Teaching Practices**

While discussing the effectiveness of ICT, the teachers reported that it is quite helpful in best teaching practices. The teacher can deliver more and effective knowledge by using less time. ICT is helpful for the class that needs the teaching extensive courses. It helps the teacher to arrange a test or quiz schedule for the classes with a maximum number of students. The activities and the tasks assigned to the students can be controlled and monitored easily and without wasting the time the instructions can be imparted to the students about their assigned tasks. The teacher can check the activities of the class in less time and make the whole class more active. At the end of the lecture, the teacher can take a small oral or written test because there is enough time to arrange the class in group activities or group discussion. There are a number of benefits of using technology in classrooms like it improves speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills. It improves the communicative and argumentative abilities of the students.

### **Problems in using ICT**

Every boon comes with some disadvantages. Although ICT has made language teaching practices easy and effective yet teachers at the secondary level reported that there is a lack of technological support. The absence of an expert in operating the tools and solving the troubleshooting causes many problems for the teachers. The respondents said that the teachers have not been provided with the training sessions in using the tools properly and that's why they could not benefit themselves from all the features of the technological instruments available. The teachers are always dependent on some technical staff to operate the tools and if that specific staff member is absent the whole planning is lost. They further added that the ICT labs are not capacious and most of them informed that there is no backup solution to continue with the lessons in case of power failure. They stressed the need to provide an uninterrupted power supply for the ICT centers in the schools. Some teachers reported that special permission is required to be sought from the administration every time a teacher wants to use these tools.

### **Pedagogical Implications of using ICT**

The discussions regarding the pedagogical implications with the respondents showed that the language teachers are quite in favour of using ICT in language teaching particularly in our country where the students and teachers have no exposure or direct contact with the native speakers of English. The respondents speak high about the use and the future of integrating the ICT in language teaching practices. They affirmatively described that the incorporation of ICT in language teaching would be helpful in effective teaching if employed properly. It is quite obvious that all of the teachers have a great insight into the significance of using ICT in language teaching. They conveyed that right from the lesson planning to get the feedback ICT is a wonderful way to manage the time of the class while presenting extensive teaching materials to the students. ICT helps to share and save teaching and learning materials. Almost all of the respondents agreed that the incorporation of ICT in language teaching helps the teachers and students to teach and learn by keeping pace with this age of globalization.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings of the study reveal that language teachers prefer using ICT in teaching over the traditional methods. They have a clear idea of using ICT in language teaching. The use of ICT in English Language teaching classroom makes teacher competent and cooperative, reduced time barriers, encourage students to explore new thinking and bring positive results in communication. The use of ICT enhances the abilities of the teacher to deliver a lecture more easily. The technology assists both teachers and students to keep pace with the modern teaching practices in language teaching and learning. There is not a great difference between male and female teachers regarding using ICT however, female teachers are reported to use if less often than the male teachers do. Similar results have been reported by Mahdi and Al-Dera (2013). There are, however, some problems that teachers face

while using ICT in English language teaching. These problems should be taken up by the stakeholders. Some recommendations in this regard are as following:

1. The government should retain the school teachers by training them in using ICT tools to equip them with the latest technology in language teaching. The lab or ICT Centers must be taken care of by professionals to keep it updated.
2. Fully equipped language labs should be established with a focus to be used only for language teaching purposes. It is also recommended that ICT centers should also be established in schools to get maximum benefits from ICT devices.
3. The curriculum should include ICT as a course so that the students should also be trained.
4. Refresher sessions should be arranged by the institutions along with pedagogic seminars and workshops for the teachers so that they may be able to teach while introducing the latest trends in teaching practices.
5. The students should clasp themselves with the new concept of 'cyberspace' to meet the needs of upcoming developments in the field of language learning. They should be motivated to learn ICT skills to meet the needs of the cyber world of education.

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