

“English Language Teachers' Perspectives on the Use of ICT to Develop Students' English Language Speaking Proficiency in the Saudi Public Schools”

Prepared by:

Wafaa Hamed Mohammed Al- Sulami

Master student of English Language Curriculum and Instruction

Ministry of Education - University of Jeddah - Faculty of Education - Curriculum and Instruction Dept.

Supervised By:

Dr. Mai Mohammed Lutfi Alnajami

Associate Professor of English Language Curriculum and Instruction

Faculty of Education - University of Jeddah - Jeddah – Saudi Arabia



Abstract:

The current research investigated English language teachers' perspectives on using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to develop students' English language speaking proficiency in Saudi secondary public schools. The study adopted the descriptive method, which depends on describing the nature of a demographic segment without covering "Why" it happens. The study sample consisted of (35) female teachers of the English language in Saudi secondary public schools. For data collection, the researchers designed a 3 points Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 7 items. The findings revealed that teachers have a positive perspective toward integrating ICT in teaching to develop students' EFL speaking proficiency in Saudi secondary public schools. The research recommends that EFL teachers use ICT in teaching to develop students' language skills.

Keywords: ICT, Speaking proficiency, EFL teachers' perspective.

Introduction:

Teachers' perspectives or attitudes towards using Information and communication technology (ICT) in English language teaching are significant in facilitating the infusion of ICT in language teaching. Conversely, their beliefs or perspectives can be a critical factor in encouraging or impeding the use of ICT. Despite the widespread and diverse use of ICT tools in English language teaching, EFL teachers' beliefs and perspectives play a significant role in reinforcing or ignoring the importance of such usage.

Teachers play a crucial role in implementing new forms of technology in their teaching (such as using ICT), which may contribute to educational reforms' success or failure (Fullan, 2001; Allen, 2002), proving that teachers' perspectives need to change to improve student learning.

Since the emergence of the digital world, the learning process has been developing. As a result, we are compelled to use ICT in our classrooms. Using ICT in the classroom transforms the teaching style to develop an unprecedented learning process, as students are encouraged and motivated to participate actively in the context. Integrating ICT into the English language classroom is crucial because it meets the real needs of students growing up with technology and learning English (Chapelle, 2010).

Learning a language means speaking it well, fluently, and accurately. Hence, speaking skill is too important to be the goal teachers need to emphasize. Many students get tired and bored in the EFL classroom and become sleepy. This creates extra efforts for EFL teachers to increase students' engagement and interest while motivating them to improve their speaking skills. Teachers need to use practical tools and strategies for active learning and a higher level of motivation (Toumi, 2015).

EFL students must practice the language in real communication situations where they learn to express their opinions and views to improve their speaking. While speaking proficiency is the target that English language students must achieve, it is considered a significant problem in foreign language teaching how to prepare students to speak the language. (Fraoui, 2016).

Research has proved that ICT plays a significant role and presents a big challenge that can change speaking classes and motivate English language students. Still, ICT is not optimally used by EFL teachers in their English language teaching because not all are willing to use ICT. Some teachers still prefer traditional teaching methods despite being quite familiar with ICT; however, this is rare. Therefore, there is a need to understand these teachers' perspectives, whether as a user or non-user. Accordingly, this research answers the following question: What are the EFL teachers' perspectives towards integrating ICT to develop students' English language speaking proficiency in the Saudi Public Schools?

Research Problem

Despite all the benefits and advantages of using ICT in the teaching of language skills in general and in the teaching of speaking in particular, teachers' attitudes and perspectives about the use of ICT in the teaching of speaking play a vital role that one cannot ignore. Teachers' perspectives and attitudes can either facilitate or hinder the progress of educational reform,

so teachers are seen as active performers in the process of change and implementation of any new notions (Woodrow, 1991). Kim (2002) emphasized that the key factors influencing the effective integration of technology into the classroom correlate with teachers' perspectives and attitudes toward teaching and adapting ICT in their classes. Conversely, teachers' perspectives are key factors that encourage or prevent teachers from using ICT in their teaching. The current study investigates EFL teachers' perspectives toward integrating ICT in teaching to develop students' English language speaking proficiency in Saudi public schools.

Literature Review

Teacher's Perspective

A teacher's perspective is a complex and difficult term to define. However, according to the IGI Global dictionary (2020), teachers' perspective means beliefs, thoughts, or mental images teachers have about their professional activities and their students shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences which affected their professional behavior.

The term perspective is primarily used interchangeably with other terms such as perception, attitude, values, beliefs, and opinions (Pajares, 1992). However, an extensive review of the literature by Pajares (1992) claims that teachers' perspectives have the same meaning as teachers' beliefs and thoughts about the subject matter teachers teach, their roles of responsibility, their students, the curriculum, and their classroom. Therefore, it is essential to understand teachers' perspectives because there is a "strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices" (Pajares, 1992, p. 326).

The importance of teachers' perspectives

According to Toyoda (2001), perspectives are different from one person to another. Teachers' use of ICT depends on their perspectives of technology; they are more likely to translate their beliefs and perspectives into instructional practices (Ihmeideh, 2010; Kim, 2008). While the majority of teachers agree on the importance of integrating ICT into language teaching, their use of ICT might be different because of their beliefs (Kim, 2008). Several researchers claim that teachers' beliefs about the role of ICT are the most critical factors that determine their use of ICT in their classrooms (Becker, 1991; Campoy, 1992; Ertmer, Addison, Lane, Ross & Woods, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to determine teachers' perspectives towards ICT directly affecting their classes' and their students' success and motivation.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

The acronym ICT evolved from two concepts, "information technology" and "communication technology." Information technology (IT) deals with equipment such as personal computers, scanners, digital cameras, and software elements that allow individuals to "access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate and present information by electronic means" (Zhao, Lei, & Conway, 2006, p. 685). While communication technology (CT) is the term used to describe technologies that can access or receive Information, these include phones, faxes, modems, and computers (Zhao, et al., 2006).

According to Toomey (2002), "ICT generally relates to those technologies used for accessing, gathering, manipulating and presenting or communicating Information. The technologies could include hardware (e.g., computers and other advice); software applications and connectivity (e.g., access to the internet, local networking infrastructure, and videoconferencing)" (Toomey, 2002, p.3).

Speaking Proficiency

In the Cambridge dictionary, Speaking means the act or skill of giving a speech at a public event. According to Chastain (1998), "Speaking is a productive skill, and it involves many components. Speaking is more than making the right sounds, choosing the right words or getting the constructions grammatically correct". (Chastain, 1998, p101-107)

In addition to the previous definition Cameron (2001) says, "Speaking is the active use of language to express meanings so that other people can make sense of them" (Cameron, 2001, P40).

Bygate (1987) stated that to become a proficient EFL speaker, learning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, etc., is not enough but the ability to use this knowledge to communicate successfully is indispensable.

Speaking proficiency is the ability to communicate orally with the target language functionally and accurately. A high level of speaking proficiency is applying linguistic knowledge to new contexts (topics) and situations (Omaggio, 1986).

Speaking is one of the most critical skills in teaching English as a foreign language. Many EFL students give much more importance to speaking in their learning because if they master this skill, then they will be considered as if they have mastered all of the other skills. Teaching speaking means teaching students to use the foreign language to communicate effectively and efficiently. Because of that, EFL students have to improve their speaking skills to master them in oral courses and even in real-life situations. (Benmeddah, 2017). Speaking is an essential skill that EFL students must improve to reach a good level of communication. However, Speaking can be a significant challenge for EFL students when dealing with this complex skill. EFL teachers should allow their students to develop their speaking ability to speak fluently and face the outside world, not in the classroom. This can be accomplished just when EFL teachers change their traditional teaching style and use different techniques and styles integrated with technology.

Integrating ICT in the Teaching of English Language Speaking

Using ICT in any field, notably teaching, has significantly changed learning methods, specifically speaking. Integrating ICT in teaching English skills helps improve teaching quality in several ways by increasing students' motivation and engagement. Silviyanti & Yusuf (2015) conducted a study to identify EFL teachers' perspectives on using ICT in their teaching. The findings revealed that teachers are highly motivated to use ICT because they believe it is vital in ELT as it makes learning enjoyable, engaging, and compelling, among other constructive outcomes. In addition, (Fitri & Putro, 2020) investigated how EFL teachers perceive ICT-ELT integration in terms of effectiveness and barriers to incorporating ICT. The results of this study revealed that EFL teachers had positive perspectives on integrating ICT due to its effectiveness.

Research Questions:

The present research intends to answer the following primary question:

Q. What are the EFL teachers' perspectives towards integrating ICT to develop students' English language speaking proficiency in the Saudi secondary public schools?

Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Investigate the perspectives of English language teachers towards integrating ICT to develop students' English language speaking proficiency in Saudi secondary public schools.

Significance of the Research

The current research significance can be highlighted in the following:

1. Achieving 21st objectives by integrating ICT into the educational process in order to develop students' digital skills.
2. Drawing decision-makers' attention to the importance of using ICT in teaching to develop English language speaking proficiency.
3. Enhancing EFL teachers' motivation to integrate ICT in their classrooms to teach English language speaking skills.
4. Adding further knowledge to the educational research theoretical framework, findings, and recommendations.

Research Methodology

The current research adopted the descriptive method, which depends on describing the nature of a demographic segment without covering "why" it happens.

Research Population and Sample:

The population consisted of all female teachers of the English language in secondary public schools in Saudi Arabia.

The sample consists of (35) female teachers of the English language in the Saudi secondary public school.

Limitation of the Research:

The present study is limited to investigating English language teachers' perspectives on the use of ICT to develop students' EFL speaking proficiency in Saudi secondary public schools, during the second semester of the academic year (2020 - 1442).

Research Instrument

The researcher designed a 3-point Likert scale questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was designed by revising the related literature and previous studies on ICT integration in teaching English language speaking skills. The EFL teacher's perspectives questionnaire was submitted to a panel of experts specialized in curriculum and instruction of the English language to determine validity. Considering the experts' opinions and comments, the researcher modified and added items to make the questionnaire relevant and appropriate for English language teachers. The Alpha-Cronbach coefficient was applied for questionnaire reliability, while Pearson correlation coefficient was used for the construct validity of the questionnaire.

- Reliability of The EFL Teachers Perspectives Questionnaire

The EFL teacher's questionnaire's reliability was measured using the Alpha Cronbach Coefficient as shown in the following table (1)

Table 1: The EFL Teachers Perspectives Questionnaire reliability coefficient

Reliability coefficient	Reliability Value	N of Items
Cronbach alpha Coefficient	0.71	7

Results

show that reliability is achieved with value of (0.71), indicating good reliability of the questionnaire.

- Validity of The EFL Teachers Perspectives Questionnaire

Face validity was used to ensure the validity of the teacher's questionnaire. It was submitted to jury members specialized in the related fields in different educational degrees who had experienced teaching for many years. The jury members were asked to comment on the suitability of each question. The teacher's questionnaire was modified according to the jury's comments and suggestions.

Pearson coefficient was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient between the scores of each item and the total score of the tool, as shown in the following table (2).

Table 2: Pearson correlation of The EFL Teachers Perspectives Questionnaire

Item	Correlation with total
1	0.489**
2	0.565*
3	0.632*
4	0.466*
5	0.435*
6	0.654*
7	0.558**

* Sig at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ** Sig at $\alpha \leq 0.01$

Results in table (2) indicate that items correlated with total score were all sig at $\alpha \leq 0.01 - 0.05$ and were(r) ranged between (0.435- 0.654) that mean internal validity of the test was achieved.

Findings and Discussion

Q. What are EFL teachers' perspectives towards integrating ICT to develop students' English language speaking proficiency in the Saudi secondary public schools? To answer the question, the Means and SD were calculated to judge on items, as shown in table (3).

Table (3) Means and SD

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Level
It is necessary for the teacher to use technology to teach speaking skills.	3.74	0.66	7	high
I think using ICT (information communication technology) in teaching suits students' abilities.	4.00	0.00	1	high
ICT in the EFL classroom helps students become more motivated to learn the English language.	3.94	0.34	5	high
I believe that Students should have access to ICT facilities in their English language classes, especially speaking classes.	3.97	0.17	4	high
I believe that using ICT can spread knowledge faster.	4.00	0.00	2	high
Using ICTs in EFL teaching will give students more practical activities to improve their speaking proficiency.	4.00	0.00	3	high
EFL Teachers should encourage students to use ICT outside the classroom to practice and develop their speaking skills	3.94	0.34	6	high
Average	3.94	0.21	high	

The results in table (3) show that the averages ranged between (3.74 to 4.00), and the standard deviations ranged between (0.00 to 0.66), that the highest average of the item (I think that using ICT (information communication technology) in teaching suits students' ability.) The lowest mean of the item (It is necessary for the teacher to use technology to teaching speaking skills.) In addition, the general average (3.94) with SD (0.21) at the level of (High). The results indicate that EFL teachers believe it is essential to use ICT in their classrooms because they think it encourages students, makes learning faster and enjoyable and helps students to develop their speaking proficiency. Also, the EFL teachers revealed positive perspectives toward integrating ICT in teaching English language speaking skills, which the researchers (Fitri &Putro, 2020) and (Silviyanti & Yusuf, 2015) emphasized in their results.

Conclusion

The integration of ICT in English language teaching classes is reaching agreement among the English language teachers. Speaking proficiency requires the use of ICT for many reasons. According to EFL teachers' perspectives, some of the reasons are encouraging students and suit their abilities, spreading knowledge faster, helping students become more motivated to learn English, providing students with more practical activities to improve their speaking proficiency, and encouraging students to practice and develop their speaking skills. The results suggest that teachers of the English language in Saudi secondary public schools have a positive attitude and perspectives towards using ICT in teaching to develop EFL speaking proficiency in English language classes.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the current research, the following recommendations can be made:

1. - EFL teachers should adapting Information and communication technology (ICT) as part of their teaching technique of the English Language subject.
2. - EFL teachers should train their students on the effective uses of ICT that helps improve their language skills.
3. - EFL teachers must be supportive and encouraging to students and help them to get rid of their speaking shyness and anxiety.

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