Towards an Effective Use of Computer Related Technologies in Reading Literary Texts: a Pilot Study

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Abstract

Technology can have a reciprocal relationship with teaching. The emergence of new technologies pushes teachers to understand and accommodate these technologies for classroom use; at the same time, the on-the-ground implementation of these technologies in the classroom can directly impact how these technologies continue to take shape. One method of accommodation to education is through the use of technology in literature circle. The literature circle is a cooperative activity involving higher level thinking that is being used to support the process of learning. Technology can be used to accommodate students with different levels in a literature circle by providing accommodations to student interactions, reading material and role activities and assignments.

Today, every teacher is a reading teacher, because every teacher is responsible for promoting literacy in his/her content area. Teachers are also expected to teach their students to use higher level and critical thinking skills and are required to make accommodations for all students in their classes, an occurrence that has become more common in today's schools.

It is a fact that the use of computers becomes a revolution in the history of human life in all aspects and the process of language learning and teaching could not be exempted from this. Many institutions around the world have integrated computer-assisted language learning (CALL) into their curricula. The main aims of this paper is to shed the light on the impacts of ICT on the process of language learning and literature teaching and to explore the attitudes of students in the department of English in the university of Chlef- Algeria towards using technology in literature class besides demonstrating the significance of ICT in maximizing students' autonomy. The findings show that students have very positive attitudes towards utilizing ICT in literature classes on one hand, on the other hand, because of the challenges that might hamper the use of ICT in class there should be more actions that will be taken to promote the use of ICT in Literature lessons in the future.

Key Words: CALL, The literature circle, technology, reading, ICT, attitudes.

1- INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to share with the readers the findings of a study conducted to investigate the level of ICT use among teachers. Also, this study seeks to investigate the attitudes of teachers towards the use of ICT for educational purposes. Technology is now at the threshold of its maturity within all the sectors. An overview of the research in the value of using ICTs in teaching and learning process proved that the utilization of ICT has had a major influence on the teaching and learning process. On other words, ICTs had proved to be an effective tools for educational purposes, although it has extend and transformed the way students learn and teachers teach.

It is a fact that the use of computers becomes a revolution in the history of human life in all aspects and the process of language learning and teaching could not be exempted from this, which pushed many institutions around the world to integrate computer-assisted language learning (CALL) into their curricula. Moreover, reading a piece of literature in a language classroom can be a source of valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and to develop personal involvement Collie & Slater (1987). In addition to that, literature is also a motivating material and help learners to develop their interpretative abilities Lazar (1993) especially when linked to the learners' own lives and experiences. The use of technology as a complementary tool to support language learning among students is a teaching strategy that continues to gain popularity day by day. Teachers are currently using various forms of technology like computers, emails, multimedia and internet in order to imp

rove understanding of their courses. Trends in technology have indeed altered the educational landscape and have caused changes in the way courses are organized and delivered Hicks, Reid, & George (2001). Other findings on this topic suggest that when used appropriately, technology helps to enhance various aspects of learning Ehrmann (2002). Chamber (1999) claims that learning occurs more easily when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language being studied and learning in general. Gardner (1985) in his studies gives evidence that positive attitudes toward language enhance proficiency as well. Language attitude studies explore how people react to language interactions and how they evaluate others based on the language behavior they observe.

2- THE IMPACTS OF TECHNOLOGY ON TEACHING LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE STUDIES:

Basing on the impacts of technology on the process of teaching and learning the teaching of literary texts in language class is no exception. Technology, then, can make an undeniable contribution to the teaching of literature, given sufficient time and resources and using appropriate ways of integration. Therefore, it is useful to consider some of the wider implications of using technology to learn about literature and culture. The verb 'learn' is used advisedly because it is in benefiting the student and developing the learning process that the advantages of technology are most apparent, Porter (1999). The most striking advantages are in offering benefits to the learners above and beyond the quantity and quality of contact in the usual teaching situation. The most relevant advantages that can be offered to both the learner and the teacher are summarized in the following section, as claimed by Porter (1999). Technology can give students a greater degree of control over the delivery of their learning: by using technology, students can access information, learning spaces, and other resources at times which suit their lifestyle and their other commitments. Technology allows students to choose the suitable time to have access to the needed resources. Technology-based resources can be integrated into a course of study and used to complement classroom interaction and guarantee library resources. Technology also promotes students' autonomy so that they feel that they have control over their own learning and this mitigates the stress and anxiety that accompanied foreign language learning, Asher (1977).Another advantage of technology is the use of emails, social media and conferencing systems and other computer-mediated communication tools provides a rich environment in which communication can continue outside the classroom. As pinpointed by Porter (1999) students can communicate and discuss ideas together, even when they are not physically together. The latter makes student-to-student and student-to-teacher contact time under increasing pressure. Technology offers advanced research tools and it can also provide the interface which helps the teacher to guide the student through the implementation of new techniques and help to provide the motivation to learn and experiment: new teaching methods which will provide the student with added interest in the course and impetus to develop their own learning. Technology is only one method which can be adopted and is not guaranteed to be successful by any means, but with carefully thought-out uses and

proper integration into courses, there can be significant benefits to both teacher and student, Porter (1999).

3- THE NATURE OF ATTITUDE

Attitudes are defined as *"a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols"* Hogg & Vaughan (2005). In the educational environment, attitudes expressed by teachers as well as students play an important role in the achievement of educational objectives. Specifically with regard to the use of new innovations in the classroom, traditional teaching methods are being forced to accommodate what are sometimes incommensurate information technologies. The attitudes of students play a prominent role in educational interaction as well as instructional choices and as such are fundamental in examining the outcome of technological integration in the classroom; Becker, Ravitz, & Wong, (1999).

Regarding attitudes, there are two main aspects that characterize the latter. The first, which is the most important, refers to *"readiness for response."* That is, an attitude is not behavior in itself, not something that a person does; rather it is a preparation for behavior, a tendency to respond in a particular way to the attitude object. The term attitude object is used to include things, people, places, ideas, actions, or situations, either singular or plural. This aspect appears in many other definitions like that of Jung (1971): "*readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way"* as cited in Oskamp and Schultz (2005). The second aspect is the *"motivating"* or driving force of attitudes. That is, attitudes are not just passive result of past experiences. Instead they have two active actions expressed by Allport (1935) cited in Albarracin (2005) as *"exerting a directive or dynamic influence".* Dynamic influence means that it directs the form and manner of behavior into specific ways.

In the same vein, attitudes are also characterized by other features like their relatively *"enduring nature",* even though it is not true for all attitudes for some of them can be static whereas others can be changeable. All attitudes take a stance - positive or negative – but they can vary in intensity, Gilakjani and Leong (2012).

Attitudes towards ICT usage have been defined as a person's general feelings towards ICT and specific computer and Internet related activities, Becta (2004) claimed that *"… students with low levels of motivation and feelings of uncertainty regarding their learning capabilities can show more positive behaviour during lessons using computers than during traditional lessons".*

Personal characteristics such as educational level, age, gender, educational experience, experience with the computer for educational purpose and attitude towards computers can influence the adoption of a technology, Schiller (2003). Among the factors that affect the integration of ICT in Literature classes the students' attitudes which are seen as one of the most influential factors. Albirini (2004), stated that attitudes have major predictive value to the use of new technologies in the classrooms. It can also be related to the amount of ICT being used by the teachers. Thus, attitudes play an important role in shaping our reactions towards different situations in class and outside the class. Marjaana and Anna (2003) held that motivation and interest play important roles in students' learning. The assumption that ICT increases student motivation is seen as a reason why ICT should be used in schools. It is common to say that students are interested in using ICT; students found it more pleasant, more appealing, and more motivating to study with computers than with traditional means. Harris and Kington (2002) revealed a range of positive impacts of ICT on students, including increased ability to work independently, enhanced confidence in communicating with others outside their school and family circles, improved attendance at school and improved group work and cooperative skills (Software and Information Industry Association 2000) . Students who used educational technology in school felt more successful in school, were more motivated to learn and have increased self-confidence and self-esteem, Becta also quoted Rockman (2000), "laptops motivated students to work longer and harder with an increased pride in their work."

Teachers will be in a position to use ICT tools and resources effectively in the classroom only when they realize how useful these tools are in presenting materials to the students and overall learning process. The impact of ICT on teaching and learning is also l based on the perceptions and attitudes of the teachers who are responsible for using this technology (Joseph, 2013). Joseph continued by stating that teachers' attitudes' besides their talent and desire will brought a strong impact to the integration of computers in the classrooms and that teachers needed to be encouraged to continuously explore the usefulness of ICT in the classrooms in general and in literature classes in particular. Besides students another basic agent for establishing and working this system is the teachers. It is argued in a study revealed by Melor, Norazah,Salehi, Mohamed Amin Embi and Salehi

(2014) on Future of ICT as a Pedagogical Tool inESL Teaching and Learning was done among the ESL teachers in secondary schools that successful integration of ICT in education enables teachers to transform instruction from teacher-centered to student-centered where learners may interact with their peers and use the computers and Internet for their own learning needs.

Learner autonomy is often defined as learners' ability to take control of their own learning (Holec, 1981). However, the development of learner autonomy is widely varied depending on teachers' roles and overall classroom environment.

4-THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNER AUTONOMY

Learners can control their learning processes as much as possible and can become quite independent of teachers when they work with computers. Jones (2001) states that teachers play a great role in developing learner autonomy in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). For example, students formulate their tasks independently without teachers' detailed instruction (Toyoda, 2001) and they often reflect on their and their interlocutors' responses through Computer Mediated Communication(CMC)(Shield,Weininger&Davies,1999).

According to Kohonen (2001), making choices about learning contents and processes, reflecting on their learning process and being aware of their achievements and discovering new needs are the essential parts of developing learner autonomy. In a word, to develop learner autonomy, it is crucial for learners to have opportunities to reflect on what they have done and how they achieve their goals.

Technology has often been used for repetitive practice for language learning with authentic audio and video texts. The practice of pronunciation, spelling, and grammar are popular examples of using technology as a tool for language learning.

5 -METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

The present study utilized quantitative methodology. It employed the use of questionnaire as the research instrument. The data collection was based on the questionnaire distributed to the respondents and this served as the primary instrument. The questionnaire was designed in order to accumulate enough information pertaining to the objectives of the study.

The survey was based on a detailed questionnaire which was completed by 100 students during a 2 weeks period in December 2013. The questions were broken down broadly into 4 sections designed to elicit information and views on:

-Student ownership and use of computers
-Attitudes towards the use of computer related technologies
-Attitudes towards traditional teaching and literature

5.2 Sample

The students involved in this study are first year LMD students at the English Department at Chlef University. They are100 students from females and males aged between 20 to 22 years old. They were randomly selected to complete a questionnaire about both their attitudes towards literature and towards the use of ICT in literature classes.

6-REFLECTIONS ON THE FINDINGS, A BRIEF SUMMARY:

In this study that aims to determine attitudes of students towards computer assisted English literature classes, it can be said that the participants owe very positive attitudes. Computer attitudes of students do not change according to gender. As a result; it is found that students' attitudes towards computers are at "highly positive" level. In this situation, it can be said that since the students' attitudes are positive, it can affect computer assisted activities in a positive way and it led us to predict the students' success in the tasks assisted by computer. Again, this led us also to expect that the students will achieve good marks in the exams; the latter is among the students' priorities.

Klassen and Milton (1999) found that students who studied with visual aids or information do better when compared to the traditional way. Visual information enhancement can be via computers.

The availability of material at home will help the students to practice and do their researches any time they need to do so.95% of students who have computer at home is a motivating result that shows that it is an important tool for them which will help them to use it more efficiently and will be more familiar with it if they use it apart from the school, this also supports the claim that working with the computer frequently will enhance self confidence to take risk and not to be afraid from mistakes in learning. The computer ownership can be linked to the positive attitudes that students have.

Students' positive attitude towards CALL will motivate them to improve their learning strategies exploited via CALL and help them to get more in the exams, which is an intended purpose for the student who aims at passing to the following year. In other words, students' good attitudes towards CALL enable them to benefit more from technology in learning the English language skills.

The findings show that the students perform a wide range of activities like writing emails, surfing the net and do their researches, playing games, listening to music and watching videos. Hence, the teacher can integrate various types of activities and tasks to promote and facilitate studying English, particularly literature. Results from this study are encouraging because they demonstrate that many students do use these electronic resources and are confident in doing so, so using different activities, in classes, help learners love the literature of the language. ICT provides activities with infinite variety to teach language skills making language learning more exciting and attractive. The activities include using the computer programs to stimulate discussions, writing or critical thinking and using the word processors, spelling and grammar checkers. If the access to the net is available, authentic materials are provided to be familiar with the literary texts. The power of multimedia to ensure a combination of texts, graphics, cartoons, animated graphics and sounds helps the teacher enhance literature learning environment.

The students are self reliant because the findings reveal that 70% do their own search if they did not understand their teachers. Self-reliant students help creating a student-centered class and enable the students to take responsibility to decide upon the materials that they need. The major aim of self-reliance at the university level is to increase the students' determination to get rid of the traditional way of teaching, which largely depends on the flow of information only from teacher to student and rarely from student back to the teacher. It goes beyond the slavish imitation of the teacher's interpretations and personal opinions. Peck and Dorricott (1994) confirmed that view and summarized ten reasons that technologies should be used in education:

> ➢ Technology helps the teachers to individualize learning, the fact that allows students to learn and develop their capacities at their own pace in a "non-threatening environment".
> ➢ They suggested that the students should be proficient at accessing, evaluating and communicating, and information.
> ➢ Technology improves the students' capacities to think and their writing skills through the use of word processors.
> ➢ Technology assists the students to develop their critical thinking in a way that enables them to organize, analyze, interpret, develop, and evaluate their own work.
> ➢ Technology encourages the students' artistic expression.
> ➢ Technology helps students to access resources outside the school.
> ➢ Technology makes the learning experiences to students novel and enjoyable.
> ➢ Students need to feel comfortable using computer, because it will become an increasingly important part of students' world.
> ➢ Technology creates opportunities for students to do meaningful work.
> ➢ Schools need to increase their productivity and efficiency.

To sum up, we can say that teachers are "change agents" in educational environments, be them schools or universities. They play an essential role in the implementation of all forms of technology in the classrooms. It is important for them to possess positive computer attitudes since attitudes have been found to have a direct effect on future use and variables that determine successful technology

integration in education. In other words, computer attitudes, whether positive or negative, affect how teachers respond to technology in an instructional setting or learning environment. Moreover, The presence of the teacher is still very essential to promote learning and to reinforce what was already learned. Students discuss all that they receive and acquire new information via interaction and cooperation with the teacher or the classmates rather than the Teacher stands at the front and dispenses wisdom and the students passively absorb it, they learn to interpret new information and teacher needs to be closer to his students and attempt to design courses that fit the different needs and attitudes toward CALL properly.

Jones (2007) summarizes the main roles of students and teachers in class:

> *"A student-centered classroom isn't a place where the students decide what they want to learn and what they want to do. It's a place where we consider the needs of the students, as a group and as individuals, and encourage them to participate in the learning process all the time. The teacher's role is more that of a facilitator than instructor; the students are active participants in the learning process. The teachers (and the textbook) help to guide the students, manage their activities, and direct their learning. Being a teacher means helping people to lea learn – and, in a student-centered class, the teacher is a member of the class as a participant in the learning process." Jones (2007: 2)*

In the process of implementing technology in language class, what really matters is that the systematic use of computers and not using them as a goal.

The recommendations that are developed under the light of this research are below:

➢ Since a number of students owe an average attitude toward computer assisted classes, studies should be held in this field in order to make them develop positive attitudes. For instance, giving much more computer assisted education and teach the English module with computer simulations.

➢ Similar research can be done in various institutions, at various education levels, and with various age groups.

➢ Testing is very important way of proving the efficiency of CALL in this department, after analyzing the students' attitudes. With regard to the way of testing we recommend that we select a population from the students in this department, divide it into a control group and an experimental one, the control group will receive the same courses with the experimental group, however, the control group will receive the courses in the traditional way i.e. the teacher explaining and the students taking notes. The experimental group will receive the courses in CALL atmosphere i.e. sitting in front of a computer and enhanced in a variety of activities with minimal interference from the teacher. The period of time can be adjusted according to distinct constraints. After that the researcher will compare the results of both groups.

➢ Creating a flexible, enjoyable, convenient and comfortable classroom environment. To this end, the teacher should encourage active learning, cooperative learning and self-learning, thus diversifying ways of improving students' language skills.

➢ In order to improve the way of teaching English for computing it is recommended that teachers of English should be trained in computer assisted language learning methodology and computer literacy should be a compulsory requirement for English teachers.

➢ The way of teaching English in this department should be updated to include courses assisted by computer in order to meet the expectations of the students who are very positive towards literature and CALL.

➢ Administrators in the department should update the technology related materials, especially computers, and enable the students to access to the internet and use the computers any time they need.

➢ If the ministry is looking for tens of ways to develop the way of teaching foreign languages in universities, providing a high quality teaching materials is one way.

➢ CALL should be integrated into the traditional literature classes where the instructor is also available for further assistance and questions so that students are not deprived of human contact.

➢ Learner autonomy can be maximized through the integration of computers because 'fast' and 'slow' learners are given equal chances to study and review the materials according to their own pace.

> - Teachers should help students practice reading passages or articles on a computer and some activities should be provided in order that students become familiar with reading and accessing to reading materials online.
> - Listening skill is improved through computer activities because students are given the opportunity to repeat as many times as they want and according to their own pace, which is not the case in a traditional language classroom. In traditional classrooms listening skill is generally ignored or given little importance, even the teacher does not read the passage before it allows individual reading. Self-access materials should be set up so that students may enjoy improving their listening skill through computers.

7-CONCLUSION:

To conclude it is believed that this is only the beginning of a new era. The progress of dialogues between literature and technology overspreads. In fact, they have never stopped, from Play Stations to movies, literary and technology narratives are interweaved. It is mutual and complementary. The new inventions of technology as eBooks readers,3D printers and machines spur our imagination, push all the different kinds of people, visionaries, writers, critics, the general public to constantly update ourselves and how we impact on economies, culture, society and ideology.

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