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TEACHERS OF ENGLISH NOTIONS REGARDING THE USAGE OF TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING

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Abstract

This study used qualitative research methods to explore English language teachers' notions about regarding the use of technological tools in their classes at Alberoni University (AU) Kapisa, Afghanistan. The purpose of this study was to identify different teachers' methods and strategies used in the class room to support ELLs, as well as to identify some technological tools, such as computers, tablets and projectors that can be used to assist classroom teachers and English as second language (ESL) teachers and their students during the language learning process. The data collection relied on interviews with experienced teachers. They were used as strategies of data collection to nonnative English language instructors from Alberoni University (AU) participated in this study. Instructors' pointed out three areas (a) access to technology, (b) training to use technology, and (c) to overcome technical barriers to apply technology in classrooms. They were also determined to use technology for language teaching in the future.

Keywords: Teachers perception, application of technology, technological tools, technical barriers, classrooms.

1. Introduction

Instructional technology has become a vital part of modern global educational system. Afghan Universities also a part of it. Recently, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the president of Afghanistan has made huge educational revolution and has made it a very clear that universities in Afghanistan must be upgraded and should be developed. Many Universities have been upgraded and equipped with the new technologies. Similarly, many new faculties and numerous departments have been established. Afghanistan is taking special initiatives to educate its people in every possible way. That's why highly educated faculty members are hired. .To some extent, latest instruments, labs, and equipment have been provided to a number of universities across the country. Specifically, English language teaching is also one of the

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significant subjects for Afghan language learners' (LLs) that needs further research consideration to reach a better solution. Each university has its own English Language Departments.

In the beginning English was taught according to old- fashioned and traditional methodologies using black boards and grammar translation method. Because of lack of professional English instructors and not having access to technology. Now a days, university lectures have a computer and language labs are somehow equipped with modern technology included software programs, internet, computers, and audio visual aids and so forth.

Alberoni University (AU) is one of the oldest Universities in Afghanistan. Many types of technology equipment such as projectors and computers have been provided to faculties to teach different courses. The application of technology for teaching English as a foreign language is next plan of the university. There were examples of failure of computer labs. So, I as a researcher decided to explore the perceptions of English language teachers. As I am currently teaching at Alberoni University (AU). Therefore, I as a researcher am well aware of the Afghan context educational system, culture, and norms. Teachers play a major role in students' learning process.

Literature Review

Technologies have played a significant role in accelerating how information is communicated and transported (Black, 2009; Smythe & Neufeld, 2010). Technologies brought about by globalization have an effect on how individuals communicate and apply skills necessary to live and perform everyday tasks. As educators, it is increasingly important to understand how students negotiate digital literacies and what role technology plays in learning a second language. For ELLs, technology mediated learning and literacy practices may be effective in connecting out-of-universities communicative spaces with formal learning environments.

New literacy studies focuses on the use of technology as a valuable academic tool and has attempted to "extend the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy to account for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies...[and] variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies" (Black, 2009, p. 689). Black's research explored the use of virtual environments to promote affiliation with composing and interacting in English. Foulger and Jimenez-Silva (2007) suggest that access to technology is important to students attempting to learn a second language. Authentic uses of technology are often dismissed as being too difficult by

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those who believe limited English proficient students must first demonstrate mastery of basic language skills before more sophisticated material is introduced.

As society continues to advance, the demand for digital technologies to be used in the classroom increases (Saine, 2012). To accommodate this change, technologies like the iPod, iPad, and SMART Board are continuing to find homes within classrooms. Technology is an integral part of academic instruction, particularly vocabulary instruction.

1.1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study is to explore English teachers' views about the application of technology for language teaching as well as to understand the needs of ELLs in a classroom setting, and to learn the methods or strategies that either ESL teachers or regular classroom teachers use to encourage both language acquisition and learning the language. It explores the methods and strategies used by teachers in the English Department at (AU) to help ELLs achieve academic success, and explore how technology can be helpful to ELLs, as well as for teachers and results of this study might be helpful for policy makers. Little is known English teachers' beliefs for language teaching in Afghanistan. This study seeks to identify teachers' beliefs about technology based language learning (TBLL). The study will

investigates what does technology mean to teachers? What concerns do they have about the application of technology for language teaching? What assumptions do they have about TBLL?

1.2. Research questions

My main question is: what does technology mean to teachers? What the perception of English language teacher about applying technology in supporting ELLs in today's classroom? My sub-questions that support my main question are:

- What concerns do they have about the use and application of technology?
- What assumptions do they have about technology based language learning (TBLL)

3. Method

For this study, I followed a qualitative research methodology, as my main objective was to gain a profound understanding of teachers' perceptions concerning to the application of technology in supporting ELLs in today's English classrooms. As well as explore strategies used nowadays to help ELLs. We chose this methodological approach because it enables researchers to interpret and make judgment about immeasurable data. This research study was conducted in a particular setting which was Alberoni

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University (AU) situated in Kapisa province.

3.1.Participants

Important characteristic that I looked for my participants were:

- Teachers who currently applying technology to help their ELLs in their classroom. This was important because I was looking to attain as much information as I could about the application of technology to help ELLs achieve their goals while learning the new language.
- Teachers who have years of experience using technology. This ensured that the data I collected was from participants who were well-informed practitioners, and who had lots of experiences with which to from in order to provide detailed responses. In the study, the participants were toe experienced instructors one with master's degrees in the field of teaching of English as second language for speakers of other languages (TESOL) at the Alberoni University (AU).

3.2.Data Collection and Analysis

Before conducting the research informed consent was taken from all the participants. I interviewed teachers, one by one for one 20 minutes. Every teacher had enough time to speak about his perceptions pertinent to the topic. They were told in advance that the interviews were about the strategy and use of technology for language teaching at Alberoni University (AU). In order to analyze my data, I first transcribed each of the interviews myself. After having transcribed and reread both interviews, I wrote all the information in the word processor. After that, all the participants had a look on themes in order to know their exact perceptions. When I started discussion I made sure that all the participants were aware of technology. For example one of the participants said, "I know that pen is also a technology but, here, I mean digital technology included mobiles, tablets and computers". I found and described four main themes.

4. Key Findings
4.1.Access to Technology

Computers and projectors have already to some extent provided to teaching staff. However, all the teachers raised the issue of access to technology and internet for language teaching. A sampling of teacher comments is as under; One participant said, "I think we don't have language labs, without language labs we can't improve students listening skills". Another said, "We need internet for classes. The use of internet is very helpful for language teaching especially YouTube, google, and online dictionaries. Definitely, I'll use it in the future". Talking about software one of the teachers said, "Our language classes

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need some language teaching soft wares to improve students' all four skill".

4.2. Training to Apply Technology

One instructor told that he/she had already used technology for language teaching at their previous careers in other institution. The other instructor raised the issue of training to apply technology for language teaching one teacher said, "It is very important to us to know how to use and apply language labs and how to maximize the benefits of language labs. I have seen many language labs were closed because teachers were unable to use them". One teacher pointed out student training as well. He said, "Students training is also vitally important. In this way they can use soft ware's and internet for learning at home. Teachers just provide them guidance". Another teacher said, "Our graduate courses don't teach us how to use technology for language teaching. So, training in application of technology is a basic to succeed in 21st century".

4.3. Technical Difficulties

The third issue raised by all the teachers, was technical difficulties. They talked about technical difficulties and how to overcome these obstacles. Some examples of their comments are as under; One teacher's comments, "I like to teach English through technology but when I think about soft wares I back up, if someone helps us by providing us the soft wares then

obviously we will apply it". Another teacher said, "Power is the vital element for application of technology in (AU) unfortunately, our university hasn't provided with stable electricity".

4.4. Future Use of Technology

Some of the instructors had already used technology time to time for language teaching and they were willing to use technology. Rest of the teachers who didn't use technology were also anxious to use it for teaching and learning English as a foreign language. They felt the need of application of technology is basic requirement in 21st century. One of the teacher said, "I sometimes used technology for language teaching but it is a new technique and I'm curious to use it all the time". The other said, "I think in this century we need technological literate learner. So, we should need teachers who are well aware of use of technology". Another said, "I would like to use technology and internet for language teaching. I'm interested in learning outcomes of technology enhanced language learning".

5. Discussion

This study was conducted to explore the perceptions and ideas of English language instructors at the Alberoni University (AU). The findings present a detailed picture of teachers' beliefs about using technology for language teaching. It is clear that all the

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participants were determined to use technology for language teaching. Even to some extent they were not certain about the effectiveness of technology based language learning. They were clear about their own roles as English teachers and facilitators. I found four main beliefs of English language teachers about teaching language through technology at Alberoni University (AU). All of the participants highlight the access to digital technology to teach English language, which is being provided step by step just like other universities in Afghanistan. After the access to technology, there is also need to train the staff i.e. how to apply and use this technology effectively. The results provide evidence supporting previous findings that the role of technology for foreign language teaching is very important and there are also barriers to apply technology.

Instructors in (AU) were interested to know the effectiveness of technology based language learning and they were willing to use to gain a new experience. In terms of implications for research, my study was limited to Alberoni University (AU). I do not know about other than English faculty members' beliefs about using technology for teaching. I also do not know the perceptions of English teachers at other universities in Afghanistan.

6. Conclusion

According to the respondents, the application of technology has proved to be successful and very much effective in all areas of teaching and learning process. As the technology was introduced, students' knowledge level grew and, subsequently, technology was used for more than just an occasional activity. Now teachers are 100% dependent on technology integration and are now assisting one another, both suggesting how to incorporate technology into lesson plan. This represents true importance of application of technology. In addition, all teachers are now using technology in the classroom. Lastly, this makes the classrooms more enjoyable and effective as well as the teaching strategies that engage modern students in enhanced thinking activities which ultimately lead to success.

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