

## **Pre and In-Service English Language Instructors and Their Practices of Technology Integration Techniques**

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### **Abstract**

Technology has become a challenge to its users especially instructors as it is changing rapidly and this challenge is due to the lack of training in this field. The sample of this study is done by seven PhD instructors with more than six years of professional experience. These instructors are facing burdens to cope with the implementation of integration technology in the classroom.

Data were collected through open-ended questions. An inductive analysis method was used to analyze the data. Results indicated that the participants had positive views about the good role educational technology plays in enriching instructor's performance in their classes. They also assured the importance of training for both instructors and students on how to deal with technology. It concluded that participants get the added advantage of the use of technology to teach academics and linguistics, urge students to seek knowledge, expose students to new strategies and different learning styles, equip students with techniques to use the existing resources on the Internet and finally create a tempting environment for learning.

**Keywords:** Instructor perceptions; technology integrated teaching; ICT; ELT; EFL; Pre-service & in-service instructors

### **Introduction**

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Integrating technology in the classroom has been considered the most recent development in teaching and was seen as the great step towards meeting the society's needs (Keating, 2005). The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the curricula and instruction has provided invaluable assets to the teaching - learning process. It has changed the learning patterns. Therefore face-to-face instruction has stepped aside to give way to web-based instruction via the Internet.

Technology can be a valuable learning facilitator. It can improve teaching and make learning more effective. However, integrating technology in teaching is a process that requires instructors qualified at using it in the classroom. The manner by which instructors integrate technology and how often they use it and if they succeed or not are related to factors, for example, their perspectives about technology integration, their attitudes towards it, their competence, and their worries about technology application in the classroom.

This great movement to integrate technology within schools was very difficult to achieve as it demanded major changes in the curricula, methods of instruction, as well as resources. Integrating technology in the English classroom is thought to bring about authenticity and meaning to language learning within the context of English Language Teaching (ELT). The instructors' reluctance to incorporate technology in their instruction has also been considered a critical factor in the slow embracement of technology as a creative movement (Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2007).

Computers and Internet access are both available in King Saud University (KSU) in every classroom. However, usage level statistics are not provided. This study will define the level of technology usage and competence along with the opinions of English Department faculty members in KSU in Saudi Arabia. This study will also investigate instructors' computer competence, what the obstacles facing technology integration are, what factors affect computer awareness and use, and what learning gains instructors get from incorporating technology in ELT. These data can help define the amount of technology integration in public universities in Saudi Arabia.

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## **Background of the Problem**

The world has become a small village. The Internet has created revolutions in almost all aspects of life worldwide including education. Due to these revolutions, societies' needs as well as educational needs have been changed rapidly. To meet these needs, educational tools have always been developed in order to achieve the required goals which were mentioned earlier. It was believed that tools could lead to educational change and this belief is not new, in fact, it dates back to many years ago, even to ancient times when instructors had tried sand to enhance their teaching lessons. (Cambre & Hawkes, 2004) Hew and Brush (2007) said that from the birth of the motion picture in 1922, to the advent of the computer in the mid-1970s, educators have been intrigued with the potential of technology to help transform education and improve student learning.

The presence of new technology has been looked at as the key solution for the difficulties and problems the educational system faces (McKendrick, 2001). Consequently, educators have gone on thinking of how to find ways that are beneficial to the educational system. It is undoubtable that the presence of computers and the Internet in the 1980s have led to great integration in education.

Berkowitz, 2000; Cuban, 2001; and Yildirim, 2000 in their conducted studies claimed that ninety percent of the availability of jobs will need technological training, so the integration of technology into education has become vital in schools and colleges in order to meet the society's needs.

Referring to what is mentioned above, the integration of technology into education may lead to a better learning and may facilitate the instructor's role and make the teaching process easy. Namely, in the field of ELT, the power of ICT cannot be underestimated as it provides solutions for the problems ELT has faced for decades. Besides, it can provide authentic materials for the students. Furthermore, students will have a better learning environment. Finally, the

Internet will make it easy for the students to access authentic texts and different cultures (Braul, 2006; Kim, 2004; Salaberry, 2001).

It is important to stress that computers or the Internet is just another field to be used in the teaching and learning process. Besides, the computer is just a machine and people who use both the Internet and the computer are required to do a lot of training in order to be efficient, if they want to technique the integration of technology in language teaching.

Despite all the treasures it makes, the surveys show that technology integration statistics are still inconclusive including the developed countries like the UK (D. Reynolds, Treharne, & Tripp, 2003) and developing ones like Saudi Arabia, although the amount of money spent on technology and training is increasing more and more every day. As the number of computers is increasing at all faculties of the university, still the instructors report that they reluctantly use this new technology and when they do use them to asset their teaching, the use is only for low level tasks, such as word processing or presentations using the PowerPoint (Albirini, 2004; Barton & Haydn, 2006; Kesten, 2006; Pope, Hare, & Howard, 2002). This could be due to several reasons: lack of training, low computer competence, the attitude towards computers and being in doubt about the usefulness of computers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims at gaining an insight into the educational significance. English instructors approve technology integration, making it evident they have a vivid idea of the importance of the technology usages, specifically (namely) using computers as —student tools. It is hopeful that the data collected may equip and supply a new track for future research.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons. First, as mentioned earlier, the absence of the data of ELT instructors in terms of technology, attitudes and competence are absent in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the findings of this study are hoped to shed light on this and prepare the ground for future researches on technology integration.

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Second, earlier researches were mainly done on either in-service instructors or pre-service instructors and while doing so, these researches ignored the real practices of the in-service instructors (Albirini, 2004; Dexter& Riedel, 2003; Doering et al., 2003; and Toker, 2004)

## **Research Questions**

To achieve the pre-mentioned purpose, this study will address the following research questions:

1. What are the pre-service and in-service English instructors' attitudes toward computers, their personal computer competency, perceived barriers to technology integration and the degree of their computer usage?
2. What factors affect pre-service and in-service instructors' attitudes toward computers, their personal computer competency, perceived barriers to technology integration and the degree of their computer usage?
3. What are the factors that affect in-service instructors' technology usage, competence, attitudes and perceived barriers?
4. Is there a significant difference between pre-service and in-service instructors' use of technology, competence, attitudes and perceived barriers?
5. What pedagogical value do the instructors assign to using computer technology in language teaching?

## **Definition of Terms**

*Information and Communication Technology* (ICT) refers to technologies and tools that people use to share, distribute, and gather information, and to communicate with one another through the use of computers and interconnected computer networks (Albirini, 2004).

*Pre-service Teacher*: This term refers to a student of Education Faculties, who is currently studying to become a teacher.

*In-service Teacher:* A teacher who earned a University degree in Education and is teaching in his/her educated subject area.

*Technology integration:* Technology integration is the infusion of technological tools and services, such as computer systems and the Internet, into the educational environment within various subjects' areas (McDonald, 2002).

## **Related Studies**

Chen and Tseng conducted a study in 2012 in Taiwan. They investigated the reasons that have an impact on the in-service instructors' acceptance of the web-based e-learning systems. The findings of the study showed that instructors who have strong desire to use the net to facilitate their learning systems were the ones who really support the good uses of those systems.

Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur and Sendurur (2012) also reached the same findings that Chen and Tseng claimed in their conducted study.

Besides, Al-Ghazo (2008) conducted a study on technology integration. His sample was university instructors. They sat for a training program using this technology. The results echoed the participants' positive attitudes towards the program and they considered that as a good investment in the field of education.

Rahimi and Yadllahi (2011) investigated EFL instructors' attitudes towards technology in Iran, computer anxiety and ICT integration in English classes. Their findings showed that computer anxiety among instructors was due to age. The use of ICT in their English classes decreased as their computer anxiety rate was high.

Ellinger, et al. (2001) conducted a study on the use of internet in language classes. They believe that internet, as an important tool, encourages students, increases autonomous learning potential and brings enthusiasm into the classroom.

Moreover, Karl (2011) investigated the elementary instructors' grasp about technology and motivation to merge technology in their teaching at schools in the United States. The findings of the study showed that instructors were highly motivated to utilize technology in addition to their positive opinions about technology. The study also confirmed instructors' confidence that technology would make them more successful and would lead to a better performance.

## **Method**

- **Participants**

This research is based on the data collected from English language department instructors at King Saud University. The university provides computers, projectors, smart boards, and wireless Internet connections in all lecture rooms. The study sample included seven instructors. They had teaching experience ranging from 6-13 years and all had a PhD in English language teaching.

- **Data Collection**

The study used an open-ended questionnaire. The participants were requested to express their opinion by providing detailed answers in writing. The questions concentrated on the instructors' competence in using technology including training, their perceptions about technology integration and how often they use it in their classes, their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of using technology, and their opinions about students' feelings about technology integration in their classroom.

- **Data Analysis**

The instructors' responses on the open-ended questions were classified and then analyzed. The analysis was based on coding the meaning, and interpreting it as shown in Miles and Huberman model (1994).

The participants were given a week to send in their responses. All participants returned their answers on time.

It has been proved by many researchers that these technologies help increase the potential of teaching and learning (BECTA, 2007).

To determine reliability, the number of agreements was divided by total number of agreements and disagreements. The findings revealed that initially there was 85% of agreement. The disagreements were resolved in further meetings. In the same vein, pattern coding was used to reduce large amounts of data into smaller number of analytic units. At times meanings expressed by the participants were abridged and condensed into shorter forms so as to look for natural meaning units and explicating their main themes” (Kvale, 2007).

### **Findings and Discussion**

The instructors’ understanding of students’ views in technology integrated ELT showed that students realize technology positively, because it aids them in their learning as it equips them with stimulus, about being practical, efficient use of time and be more attentive to the instructor’s remarks and feedback. Besides, it makes them give much appreciation to peer learning and provide them with more opportunities to share their learning production among them.

The majority of instructors believe in the benefits of technology and its positive reflection on students. Besides, instructors concentrated on the close relationship between their students’ positive understanding of technology integrated language teaching and the real use of technology in students’ real life.

But, some students criticized technology as it kept them isolated and prevented them from interacting with their colleagues because of being involved in their tasks. Besides, when technology was integrated in the process of teaching, it caused a pause in instructor-student interaction due to some pattern changes.

It was believed that students were totally occupied with technology and they also mentioned that technology kept them away from each other. They added that technology created



a kind of distance between them which finally was proved to be right. They also claimed that before technology, their relations between the instructor and the students were natural and they were closer. With the presence of technology these relations had changed although technology had increased their motive for learning.

In addition to high motivation, students also liked technology, because they found more activities that helped them accomplished their tasks. Those at King Saud University seem to have associated the educational technologies with the academia and, consequently, attribute value to using them.

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