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Investigating the Role of ICTs in Enhancing the Students' Oral Production: The Case of First Year Students of English at the University of Naama

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of **"Master"** in **Linguistics**

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Dedication

We dedicate this work:

To our parents respectfully for their never- ending love, patience, and unconditional support and encouragement to complete this dissertation. May ALLAH bless them now and forever

To all our extended family
Who never forgot us in their prayers

To all our best friends: the whole groups

To all those who helped us

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, it is very important to talk about the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the educational learning process. ICTs are diverse sets of technological tools and resources used to create and store information, as well as to communicate with others. The newest Information and Communication Technologies are used in teaching; especially in the EFL classes to help learners develop their speaking skills. Many researchers believe that Information and Communication Technology tools play a major role and present a big challenge that can change oral classes and motivate EFL learners to speak. The aim of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of ICTS in improving the quality of learning and mastering the speaking skill by first year students of English at the University Center of Naama. Hence, this research was designed specifically for first-year students. They were given a questionnaire to answer; however, an interview was done with some of their professors. Results have shown that students have positive attitudes towards the use of ICTs in oral expression classes as this helps them in developing their oral production skill.

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General Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Using ICTS alone does not raise the quality of education and raise the level of students; however, it strategically and systematically modifies our way of thinking, in a reflexive way, and consequently shows some results. In fact, it positively enhances self-discovery, the relationship with others in the classroom including the teacher. It facilitates as well the flow of information and learning will become more dynamic. Consequently, teachers and students will become partners in accessing information and achieving good learning results.

Nevertheless, the focus is sometimes on the medium and the profit-making rather than the promotion of scientific results, as stated by Rieber and Welliver (1980, quoted in Newhouse, 2002) when they highlighted the fact that the main focus seems to be broadcasting technology as if we tend to be slaves of computers. However, without the systematic arrangement in its use, it does not lead to the required.

EFL students generally, and first year students especially, find that oral courses represent a neighborhood of defeat for them. Thus, to facilitate the task, the use of ICT represents a crucial link to enhance the quality of learning in general and oral production in particular; since the ability to produce a talk in a good manner is in itself an important issue when learning a foreign language.

Accordingly, the aim of this work is:

a. To identify reliable sources of published works, including books and articles, in order to present to the reader an account of the basic concepts related to the general topic.
b. To unveil the way in which ICTs would improve the students' ability to learn and produce a foreign language.
c. To discuss the major impact that ICTs would have on students; for the sake of obtaining positive results at the end.

To explore this topic, two research questions have been identified:

a- How can ICTs improve the students' ability to learn?

b- What is the main factor, in the use of ICTs, which plays an important role in improving the quality of education?

In relation to the previous research questions, two hypotheses have been put forward:

a- ICTs will play a major role in improving the teaching of oral production in particular.

b- Teachers' use of the ICTs will increase the learners' exposal to the target language, and consequently will improve their speaking performance.

This research includes two main parts. The first chapter concerns the literature review where the definition of these information technologies is presented in additions to a set of related concepts. The other chapter, however, concerns analyzing and discussing the data collected from first-year students at the university center of Naama, as well as their professors.

Chapter One

1.1.   Introduction

The use of ICTs is a major matter within organizations in a diverse way for the process of managing and storing information. The use of ICTs has become an integral part today in some contexts in teaching and learning such as: replacing white boards with interactive digital whiteboards, student smart phones, as well as the "flipped room" model, where students watch lectures received on the computer. These methods are believed to lead to high-level thinking skills, and give technical and personal choices to college students. Accordingly, this chapter represents the theoretical background for this research where basic concepts are defined.

1.2.   Definition OF ICTs

Information and communication technologies is a categorical term that emphasizes the importance and role of unified communications as well as the integration of wired and wireless communications telephone lines and wireless signals and computers, in addition to middleware, storage and audiovisual, which allow users to access and store information.

1.3.   Components of ICTs

The computer has given institutions, organizations and universities excellent work characteristics, which have been marked in the era of computers. In fact, the computer contains a set of components known as the knowledge system that deals with data collection and organization, and it consists of five basic components (Gregersen, 2007).

1.3.1. Computer Hardware

In short, this is the physical aspect that deals with information such as: the smart phone and the supercomputer. It includes the keyboard, disk drives, and devices that deal with broadcast and the Internet

1.3.2. Computer Software

The role of the program is what the devices do, and there are two types:

- **The system program:** which is known as windows, and IOS; which manage the operation of the device.
- **The application program :**is what performs some tasks such as: Creating a document, scheduling data, and creating a web page ...

1.3.3. Telecommunications

The work of this component revolves around connecting devices with each other to create a network. Connections are often wired, fiber-optic, or wireless, such as wifi. Computers in a specific area are linked through LAN and WAN if they are more dispersed.

1.3.4. Databases and Data Warehouses

The data base means the place where the data is collected and the possibility of its retrieval through specific criteria. The data warehouse contains all the information and data of the institution. It was of great importance while the emergence of big data known as the huge amounts of data that would be analyzed and collected.

1.3.5. Human Resources and Procedures

The human element, which is the manager, is the necessary element to operate the system and so that the knowledge that they carry out within the data bases becomes a learning. This way, the past is interpreted and the future is guided (Gregersen, 2007).

1.4.   Inclusion of ICTs in the Field of Foreign Languages Education

Technology lies at the heart of the globalization process, affecting education, work, and culture (Graddol ,1992). Information and communication technologies can be a valuable tool that enhances the process of learning and acquiring English as a

foreign language (Altun, 2015). It has wonderful positive effects on English teaching and learning.

Technology can be applied to teaching practices to enhance and facilitate foreign language learning. Computer, internet, smart boards, cell phones, videogames, music players and so on are used in the target language learning process to raise students' motivation and language awareness (Shuo, 2011). ICTs make the English language environment interactive, flexible and innovative. The application of computer technologies in language instruction:

- provides a student-centered learning environment.
- enables course administrators and teachers to vary lesson presentation styles.
- motivates students of varying interests.
- provides learning opportunities outside the classroom, and
- is perceived to cater more for individual differences.

Integrating technology into language instruction reduces teacher-centered understanding and students' language learning anxiety, but encourages them to be risk takers to practice target language as they are digital natives (Al-Mahrooqi and Troudi, 2014).

The positive impacts of ICTs on English language teaching depend basically on the following points:

- The availability of materials.
- The students' attitudes.
- Learners' autonomy, the sense of helping teachers, and self-assessment.
- The availability of a large body of authentic materials such as images, animation, audio and video clips; which facilitate presenting and practicing language (Jayanthi and Kumar, 2016).

1.5.   The Benefits of ICTs in Teaching and Learning the Foreign Language

The use of information and communication technologies is believed to increase the rate and quality of education, as it provides high-quality educational materials and learning independence. It also helps in creating school curricula through technical means and participatory work by learners; which may enhance cultural diversity, have positive psychological effects and raise self-esteem.

The Potential advantages of ICTs will give a substantial profit in supporting learning. Integrating technology in the learning process would create active learners as they will be able to bear in mind what information they want, why they want it, and how they will get it (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking cited in Huffaker, 2003). Additionally, they would become self-managed in their learning method. Indeed, self-managed learning permits the learners to be self-motivated and self-reliant (Jarold and Sue, 1992).

1.6.   Defining the Speaking Skill

Speaking is described as the ability to express oneself in a certain situation, the activity to report acts, or, in precise words, the ability to converse or to express a sequence of ideas fluently (Ladouse 1991). Speaking is a language skill that is developed during childhood. It gets developed with the help of the listening skill. Actually, speaking is one the four basic competences that the scholars ought to study well for its importance in communication (Tarigan, 1990).

1.7.   Types of Speaking Performance

There are several types of speaking performance; they are presented as follows:

A/ Imitative

It is the ability to easily reformulate a word or a sentence; which is difficult in oral production courses.

B/ Intensive

It is the production of short extensions of the language to demonstrate the ability to have a set of grammatical and expressive rules. Intensive assessment assignments include guided response tasks, reading aloud, sentence completion and dialogue.

C/ Responsive

Responsive evaluation tasks include interaction and insight into understanding and this is at some restricted level of short conversations such as regular salutations, low speech, direct request, comments, and so on (Brown, 2003).

1.8.   The Role of ICTs to Enhance Speaking Skill

Talking is an important aspect in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language; however, this skill seems to be difficult for most students (Naciri, 2014). Speaking has a great role in teaching a foreign language; as it is one of the skills that must be improved and strengthened to enable the learner to communicate.

Therefore, teachers must include ICTs during the class to improve the skill of speaking; since ICTs enhance interaction between students and teachers, help them to have critical thinking, makes learning a student-centered one, increases students' independence, helps to feel confidence and harmony and create a fun atmosphere between them (Drent, 2005).

1.9.   The Benefits of Using ICTs during Oral Expression Sessions

ICTs offer a wide variety of authentic materials for the target language to teachers and students. They motivate learners to develop their verbal skills and they link the culture of the target language to the learning process (Cited in Ghedeir and Nesba, 2019)

1.10.   Conclusion

It must be recognized that technology has brought advantages and challenges to the field of teaching, especially for teaching and learning foreign languages. Therefore, the role of ICTs in the educational community should be appreciated. Accordingly, this chapter represented the theoretical grounding for this research work. Numerous concepts have been presented throughout the work including information and communication technologies, their components, their role and benefits for language learners. The next chapter will be the practical part where the collection and analysis of data will be discussed.

Chapter Two

2.1. Introduction

Information and communication technology tools give education a lot of considerable benefits. Indeed, it is considered to be one of the most rapidly growing areas of education; which is becoming accepted and indispensable within the academic system in both developed and developing countries. The aim of this research is to shed some light on the introduction of ICT in Algerian education; more specifically, within classes of first year English students. This chapter, then, represents the practical part of this study. It discusses basically the participants and the instruments selected, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the results.

2.2. Research Methodology

This section provides a detailed description of the research methodology by providing a rationale for selecting the current research method. Accordingly, this research work is a case study involving some of the English teachers and first year students at the University Center in Naama. In this research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods has been adopted, to provide valid and reliable results that can represent a complete and true picture of the role of technology in oral production.

2.3. Data Collection

Collecting reliable information is a difficult task and the method of collection here depends on the research objectives. The collection of data can be done by an observation, an interview or a questionnaire. In this research, an interview for teachers and a questionnaire for students were used. The items are described below and the procedure is done starting with highlighting the profile of the participating sample.

2.3.1. The Research Setting

As stated before, this study was conducted at the English Language Department at the University Center in Naama, where the researchers dealt with both first year students and teachers of the English language.

2.3.2. The Participants' Profile

2.3.2.1.   The Teachers' Profile

Dealing with teachers in this research was decided in order to give direction to them regarding the use of technology in the oral production cycle. It also helps to understand the effects of information technology on the speaking qualities of the students. Participants either hold a doctorate or a magister degree and their fields of research vary between linguistics, psycholinguistics, ESP, sociolinguistics or even didactics.

2.3.2.2.   The Students' Profile

This study took place at the Department of Foreign Languages/The English section, and the participants have been randomly assigned from the first year level.

2.3.3. Research Instruments

One of the building blocks of any investigation is the tool used to collect data. To ensure a multi-method approach, the researchers selected multiple resources from data collection tools, basically an interview for teachers and a questionnaire for first year students.

2.3.3.1. The Teacher's Interview

Interviews are done to provide an explanation of and a discussion about the world in which participants live in addition to how they deal with situations from the point of view of their needs. The present interview was designed to include 5 items including close ended and open ended questions.

2.3.3.2. The Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is certainly the most commonly used method among researchers; to collect data. In this case, it was administered to find out the extent to which students use information and communication technology, and it included 10 questions.

2.4.   Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section is concerned with analyzing the information gathered from the interview and the questionnaire. These information made it possible to understand the situation of using information technologies in oral production classes, and then everything was translated into tables.

2.4.1. The Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

The interview was directed to four English language teachers; aiming to communicate their views on the role of information and communication technologies. The interview included 5 questions that will be analyzed as follows.

Item one: How many students do you have during the oral production class?

The question here was made to know the number of students that teachers have in the class. They stated that they usually have between 15 and 25, and this represents a burden on professors when it comes to managing the class.

Item two: What method do you use during your oral production class?

Three teachers stated that they use audio visual methods; however one teacher said that he uses a combination between dialogues and the CBA. This is mainly done in order to create an appropriate atmosphere and authentic situations in their teaching process; which helps them to communicate with foreigners in a suitable way.

Item three: Are you for or against the use of ICT in teaching oral production?

Most of them are with using ICT tools to help them to vary their teaching techniques and motivate learners to interact with native speakers in the target language.

Item four: Do ICTs have disadvantages?

Two teachers said that ICTs have no drawbacks because for them it is very useful, and two others are quite amused with it.

Item five: what are the advantages of ICTs?

The question was directed to obtain their opinions. They stated that it is useful for gaining time, effort and information.

2.4.2. The Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to diagnose students' skills in oral production and invite them to share general information about their actual situation and to demonstrate their position on the use of information and communication technologies and their effect on their oral abilities. The questionnaire was presented to 30 students from different groups.

Part one:

Table 2.1: The participants' background information.

gender	Male	Female	total
number	20	10	30

Question One: How long have you been learning English?

Table 2.2: The number of years students spent in learning English

Years	8 years	9	10	11	total
Number	25	3	2	0	30

Question two: Why did **y**ou choose English?

As for this question, it was given to know the reason for their choice, i.e. whether they have chosen English or was it the choice of their parents. 20 of them had chosen it with conviction, and for only 6 of them the choice was random. For the remaining students, the choice was from their parents 'side.

Question three: Do you like studying English?

Table 2.3: The degree of love for the English language

	Yes	No	Somehow	total
number	12	8	10	30

Question four: What is your favourite skill?

Table 2.4: The student's favorite skill

Skill	speaking	listening	Reading	Writing	All of them	total
numbeer	3	10	5	8	4	30

Question five: How good is your oral performance?

Table 2.5: The Students' Speech proficiency level

Level	Excellent	Average	Weak	Total
Number of students	6	15	9	30

Question six: Do you face any difficulties in speaking English?

Table 2.6: Students' opinion about having Speech barriers

	Yes	No	total
number	25	5	30

When students were asked to mention some difficulties, they mentioned the following:

- The lack of vocabulary and participation, and
- Teachers who work only by themselves.

Question seven: How do you find the lectures of oral production?

Table 2.7: The students' view about the oral lectures

The description	Interesting	Ordinary	Boring	Total
The number of students	17	5	8	30

Question Eight: Do you use ICT resources with your teacher to improve your speaking skill?

They stated that all of them use ICT in their lectures

Question nine: Do you support the use of ICTs in the classroom?

Table 2.8: Students' support for the use of technology

The Students' Opinions	Yes	No	total
The number of students	27	3	30

When students were asked to state the reason behind their opinion, they added that the process is motivating and it makes learning more enjoyable. However, those who are against ICTs explained that it is difficult to work with these technologies.

Question ten: Does the use of ICT enhance your level in speaking?

Table 2.9: The students' view about the effectiveness of technology in developing speech

The students' opinions	Yes	No	total
The number of students	18	12	30

When they were asked to add the reason behind their opinion, they stated that it helps them to improve their oral performance. However, some students who do not support the use of ICT tools stated that for them technology is not always interesting

2.4.3. Discussion and Interpretation of the Main Results

The results showed that the students had awareness about the topic and how to raise their oral skills, and they were also in the process of comparing the previous and current learning methods.

2.5.   Conclusion

In this chapter, the researchers tried to analyze, present, and discuss information and data using both methods. Results showed that the majority of students support the use of information and communication technologies. In addition, the role of ICTs in helping students was clearly shown. Thus, this chapter represented the practical part of this research.

General Conclusion

GENERAL CONCLUSION

ICTS devices represent an important addition to be included in the educational system. Thus, the rate of their acceptance by academics and scholars is urgent, clear and required, and this can bring about a great revolution in the method of teaching and learning as well as increasing acquisition significantly. In addition to that, ICTs are considered to be a good way for rural supply because it enables information to reach rural areas, and through this, even its use will be developed; to finally raise the level of the educational system and help deeply in the development of the human being and the state.

Accordingly, this research has been made for the sake of exploring the positive impact of the use of ICTs in English classrooms on the students' engagement and learning outcomes. A questionnaire and an interview have been administered to first year students as well as their teachers and the results have been analysed and interpreted.

References

References

APPENDICES

Appendix 01:student' s questionnaire

Dear students, the main objective behind this questionnaire is to show the EFL students' attitudes towards the impact of ICTs in improving their oral language proficiency.

Gender   Ma☐   Femal   ☐

1/ How long have you been learning English?

8 years   ☐   10 years   ☐

9years   ☐   11 years   ☐

2/Your choice of English was?

Parental   ☐   Personel   ☐

Other   ☐

3/Do you like studying English?

Yes   ☐No   Somehow   ☐   ☐

4/What is your favourite skill?

Reading   ☐   Writing   Listening   ☐   All of them   ☐

5/How good is your oral performance?

Excellent A☐rage   Weak   ☐   ☐

6/ Do you face any difficulties in speaking English?

Yes   ☐No   ☐

Mention some difficulties

……………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………

7/ How do you find the lectures of oral production?

Interesting ☐   Boring   ☐ Ordinary   ☐

8/Do you use ICT resources with your teacher to improve your speaking skill?

Yes ☐   No   ☐

9/ Do you support the use of ICTs in the classroom?

Yes ☐   No   ☐

State why

………………………………………………………………………………..

10/Does the use of ICT enhance your level in speaking?

Yes ☐   No   ☐

State why

………………………………………………………………………………..

APPENDICES

Appendix 02:Teacher s Interview

1/How many students do you have during the oral production class?

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

2/What method do you use during your oral production class?

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3/ Are you for or against the use of ICT in teaching oral production?

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4/ Does ICTs have disadvantages?

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

5/what are the advantages of ICT?

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Appendix 02:Teacher s Interview