

The Praxis Of Information And Communication Technology In English Language Teaching And Learning Classes: The Case Of Grade 11 Teachers And Students At Four Selected Secondary Schools In Wolaita Zone, Southwest Ethiopia

Getachew Geno Alala¹

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia, East Africa. Email: gegpro@gmail.com

Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate the praxis of information and communication technology (ICT) in English language teaching and learning classes: The case of grade 11 teachers and students at Gesuba, Boditi, Areka and Bedesa Secondary Schools in wolaita zone. The researcher used descriptive research design and mixed research method in conducting this study. All the schools were purposively selected. So, from a total of 690 grade 11 students in the secondary schools 69 students were selected using simple random sampling (lottery method). The researcher took 9 teachers from 4 school using purposive sampling technique for interview. Classroom observation was used to triangulate the results from questionnaire and interview. Data were gathered via classroom observation, semi structured interview and questionnaire. The data gathered through classroom observation and interviews were analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis and questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively using numbers and percent. Thus, the findings revealed that the majority of English teachers didn't practice communication strategies in English language classes. The most serious problems which affect the implementation of communication strategies in English classes were: teachers' lack of deep awareness about communication strategies, students' lack of interest in learning English, lack of training ICT and limited target language proficiencies. Most teachers think ICT is the computer which shows lack of knowledge on various ICT gadgets and tools available which could add variety to classroom contexts. The paper further highlights what needs to be done to help overcome challenges and promote integration of ICT in English Language classrooms. Teachers should embrace the use of technology as times have changed and learners need to be stimulated to be eager and interested in learning using ICT. In sum, ICT has not yet been given full attention at the said secondary schools. Based on the findings and the conclusions, it has been recommended to roll out a robust implementation plan to train teachers, to solve the scarcity of ICT devices and to extend the study to other schools.

Keywords: Praxis, Information communication technology, English Language Teaching.

I. Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICT) play a transformational role in education.

ICT helps to address key challenges of the educational sector of the developing world. The term ICT is used in this research to refer to the contemporary computer, computer network,

internet, and the increasingly pervasive and affordable mobile technologies, which alone or in combination, is used to facilitate learning anytime and anywhere.

The twenty-first century has brought a serious moment for reconsidering English language mastery and teaching agendas. The technological revolution has facilitated and increased human communications in everyday interactions including digital interfaces. Language, text, and discourse norms and practices are being rapidly expanded and reinvented in response to new media and global networks. ICT has created new masteries that are required by learners of all ages if they are to fairly contend for academic and economic success. Most recent researchers, agree that modern learning environments should include ICT as a learning tool with great potential for both children and teachers (Haywood and Hutchings, 2004).

According to Barr (2004), the introduction of ICT in a classroom in order to facilitate behaviorist and constructivist forms of learning started already in the early seventies. Generic and specialized Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software is used to enhance the learning capabilities of students.

Therefore, the praxis of ICT represents a significant advance in contemporary English language teaching methods. In this regard, Ahmadi (2018) maintains that electronic teaching

programs have become the predominant preference of instructors since they arguably boost positive student engagement with teachers and incentivize overall English language learning. Thus, ICT is now generally accepted as an important educational tool across a range of teaching and learning contexts, it is particularly true of English language teaching and learning since it affords a number of potential opportunities to enhance both the content and delivery of the pedagogies typically associated with traditional English language instruction. This is achieved by enabling the students and/or teachers to revisit problematic content time until it is fully understood and assimilated (Shyamlee and Phil, 2012). It is noted that teachers often play a key role in operating the different tools and teaching methods. Moreover, many such programs are specifically designed to promote effective English teaching whilst simultaneously increasing learner understanding and attainment of English language skills (Haywood and Hutchings, 2004).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

On the basis of the instructors' experiences in teaching at secondary schools, the core problems of foreign language teaching derive from traditional methods which lead the students rely on precise curriculum contents and outdated learning aids such as blackboards and textbooks. The students have merely been communicated the information without considering the positive or

negative results. In other words, the traditional methods that rely on simple strategies could not meet the purposes of learning or basic needs in the process of teaching. Since such teacher-centered pedagogies situate the learners as recipients, their overarching goal is the extent to which the students can replicate information without necessarily understanding it. The students receive sounds and images as opposed to interaction and discussion with their teachers. Accreditation by means of setting texts tend to foster boredom and loss of motivation and attention in attainment, as opposed to ICT which inheres numerous incentives that increase the likelihood of acquiring English language skills in a timely and positive way.

Since the current era is epitomized by the pervasive use of technology, it follows that technology has penetrated the field of teaching on a worldwide scale. In fact, since most educational institutions now absorb ICT into current and future curricula, technological and/or media-based pedagogies have assumed considerable prominence due to proven enhanced learning outcomes, especially in comparison with traditional teaching methods.

In light of the challenges mentioned above, the present study will pave the way for ring-fence the causes at the heart of the problems and attempt to resolve the issues by introducing a range of modern ICT to the context of English language teaching and learning.

A single study may not be conducted in Ethiopia with regard to The praxis of ICT in English language teaching and learning. Of course, fruitful studies have been carried out in various parts of the world. For instance, Stepp-Greany (2002) used survey data from language classes based on a range of technological approaches in order to determine the importance of the role of teachers, the relevance and availability of technological labs and individual components, and the effect of using technology on the learning process of a foreign language. Warschauer and Meskill (2000) proposed two different ways to integrate technology into the class: a cognitive approach which gives learners an opportunity to meaningfully increase their exposure to language and thus make their own knowledge; and a social approach which gives learners opportunities for authentic social interactions as a means to practice the real-life skills obtained through engagement in real activities.

when using modern techniques in English teaching. In fact, it is clear that students are more likely to learn from electronic curricula and that English language teachers prefer to employ ICT rather than traditional methods of instruction. Therefore, it is important to pose the general and specific objectives of the study given in the next section.

1.3. General Objective of the Study

The general aim of this study is to explore the praxis of ICT as a way to teach and learn English

as a foreign language (EFL) at secondary schools at the higher level (grade 11), and what benefits English teachers and learners encounter when using ICT as an education gizmo.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives of the Study

As per the general objective stated above, the specific objectives are to:

1. Identify whether or not there are an adequate number of trained teachers and learners for the praxis of ICT in teaching and learning English language.
2. To explore how effectively English language teachers and learners react or interact with the use of ICT.
3. To find out available information and technological materials to practice a successful English language teaching and learning.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

The fast-growing advance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has made potential contributions to English language education for the past few decades. As a matter of fact, the use of technologies provides learners with unprecedented opportunities to practice English and involve themselves in authentic environments of language use (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). For instance, they can use Skype Chat for interaction (Dalton, 2011), or social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter for writing practice (Cheng, 2012).

Since the benefits that ICTs bring to English language learners are, for example, motivation

enhancement (Schoepp & Erogul, 2001), learner independence and acquisition of skills (Galavis, 1998), they have been adopted by a large number of educational institutions in many countries in the world (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012).

2.2. Definition of the term ICT

It is defined as “forms of technology used for creating, displaying, storing, manipulating, and exchanging information” (Meleisea, 2007, cited in Nguyen, et.al, 2012: 3). This definition seems to be general; thus, within the scope of the current study, ICT specifically refers to computer-based technologies such as desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and software and internet-based technologies including email, websites, and social networking sites for the purpose of English teaching and learning (Davies & Hewer, 2009).

2.3. ICT Use in Education and English Language Learning and Teaching,

There are a variety of ICT applications in English learning. Collis and Moonen (2001) categorized the applications of ICT into three groups, namely “learning resources” including educational software, online resources, and video resources, “instructional organization of learning” referring to software and technology tools for lecturing in the classroom, the course management system like computer-based testing system Hot Potatoes, and “communication” consisting of email systems, and websites offering communication options. The New Medium Consortium (2005)

mentioned the technological areas that potentially contribute to the field of education as follows. The first one is called Extended Learning, in which traditional teaching and learning is enhanced through new communication tools or social networking sites such as facebook, twitter, blogs, wikis, and instant messaging. In other words, the process of teaching and learning is not confined to the classroom setting any longer, it is enhanced beyond the classroom via these social networking sites where learners can engage in a communicative platform that “facilitate collaborative discussion, exchange of opinions, and critical thinking” (Cheng, 2012: 2).

The second area is called Pervasive Wireless, which deals with “the rapid penetration of wireless networks” (Jung, 2006), fostering students’ flexibility in learning via the use of their portable or mobile devices including laptops, tablets, smartphones, and so on. Intelligent Searching, which is the third area, enables learners to search, organize and retrieve data in a more effective way. The fourth category is Educational Gaming, made up of games and simulations, is deemed as a learning tool to have beneficial effects on motivation, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

2.4. Benefits of ICT Applications in English Language Learning

A considerable amount of literature has highlighted the benefits of ICT in language learning. Jung (2006) stated that an online

language support system helps promote Teaching English with Technology. Another contributing factor of ICTs, according to Kuo (2009), is motivation. The blossoming of multimedia technology including visual aids, sounds, video clips, animations, and so on motivates learners, “attracts their attention and elevates their interest in learning”. In addition, the internet connection allows learners to gain access to a huge amount of authentic materials to make English learning more enjoyable (Dang, 2011). Hence, the application of the online resources available to the inside and outside classroom activities can result in the enhancement of their competences in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

3. Research Design and Methodology

As it was introduced in this article, the present researchers have advocated the post-positivism paradigm and mixed research approach. Based on this, the descriptive research design was employed. Kothari (2004) stated that the descriptive research design is appropriate to make investigation with narration of events and drawing of conclusions based on the information obtained from relatively large and representative samples of the target population. So, it has been considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to gather information from the respondents on the praxis of ICT in English language teaching and learning at the said secondary schools.

3.1. Selection of Secondary Schools

As the researcher is familiar with the listed areas, he felt comfortable in conducting this study. In this regard, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) said that convenient samples often involve people whom the researcher knows or people who live close to the research site. Of the many secondary schools found in Wolaita Zone, the researcher, based on Vanderstoep and Johnston' notion, used the convenient sampling technique to choose Boditi, Areka, Badesa and Gasuba Secondary Schools for the research. This is because, the schools are familiar with the researcher and situated within 'Wolaita Sodo' where the researcher has been living. In addition, the researcher believes that the selected secondary schools are similar to other governmental secondary schools in Wolaita zone concerning teachers' qualifications, number of students in the class, nature of classrooms and materials used for the teaching learning process.

3.2. Selection of Grade Level

There are grade eleven and twelve students at Areka, Badesa and Gasuba Secondary Schools. For this study, grade eleven students were selected because they may give due attention to the research better than grade twelve students who were obsessed in preparing themselves for Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination. Twelve graders are also observed not to attend classes properly after they have taken first semester examinations. Therefore, grade 11 was selected purposively. There were

690 grade 11 students in 4 schools. The researcher used simple random sampling technique to choose samples. 69 participants were selected from 690 students by random number generator software. Besides, all grade 11 English teachers were selected purposively because they are 9 in number. Purposeful samples are selected people having knowledge and experience about the research (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). The researcher believes that the praxis of ICT in grade eleven English language teaching and learning classes might help the teachers and learners imbibe a great deal of knowledge about ICT.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

3.3.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaire as data gathering instrument is popular in many fields including communication, education, psychology and sociology. In this regard, Dornyei (2007) stated its popularity by saying that it is relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily accessible. Based on this, the researcher prepared questionnaire by adapting Booyesen and Grosser's (2008) questionnaire to examine the students' knowledge of ICT.

3.3.2. Interview

In addition to the data processing based on the questionnaire, an interview was carried out with

teachers. According to Borg and Gall (1989), the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to conduct a relatively unbiased research with the introduction of a more thorough understanding of the respondents' opinions. The reason for choosing the semi-structured interviewing method is to be able to ask both core questions and more open ones. Borg and Gall (1989:452) refer to this type of interview as "most appropriate for interview studies in education". The interviewees were 9 grade 11 teachers of English at the four selected secondary schools in Wolaita zone.

3.3.3. Classroom Observations

Observation gives firsthand account of data (Robertson, et.al, 1995). The researchers conduct classroom observations while ICT teaching and learning activities are being taken place. Therefore, to examine ICT in English language teaching and learning classes, observation was carried out as a data gathering tool. The observation checklist points were adapted from Johnson and Jenkinson (2008) and modified by the researcher. The observers familiarize themselves to the school environments and in both the students and teachers for one week before starting to collect the actual data. The researcher observed twice and record as to how English language teachers and students were practicing ICT in different sections of the already mentioned secondary schools. For this study, the selected grade 11 from sample schools were observed.

3.4. Procedures of Data Collection and Analyses

In collecting the data, it is important to use procedures which elicit high quality data since the quality of any research depends largely on the quality of the data collected and the data collection procedures. The researcher analyzed the data obtained from questionnaire, interview and observations. To find the required information, the following procedures were used. First, the questionnaires were administered to students of all the said secondary schools after the researcher had given orientation to participant students in the selected sections. This was done to triangulate the data found through different tools properly. Then, the teachers and students were observed after checking their willingness while ICT was being conducted in the classes. All the teachers who were observed in the classrooms were interviewed to triangulate the findings of the data.

After gathering all data through the data gathering tools mentioned above, they were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The data collected by observation and interview were analyzed qualitatively using narrative description form and logically interpreted based on the objective of the study. Quantitative data were coded, tabulated and analyzed using quantitative method such as frequency, percentage, and mean. Then, the results were presented with tables. In

addition, the computer software SPSS version 20 was used to analyze the data.

4 Results and Discussions

, The results from questionnaire are presented in

the format of tables that explicate the percentage rates and the participant numbers. Besides, the results of the semi-structured interview and observation are also discussed. After that, the results are discussed one by one and compared to the ~~the~~ researchers' data in the literature review.

4.1. Kinds of ICTs used by students of Boditi, Areka, Bedesa and Gesuba Secondary Schools

Kinds of Technology	Participants No. 69	%
cellphone,	45	65.2%
computer/laptop	18	26.1%
tab/ tablet / ipad	3	4.3%
television / Radio	10	14.5%
mp3 player, cassette / audio CD player, ipod / flash player	14	20.3%
data show/projector	9	13.05%
printer / scanner / photocopier	4	6%
Not using all the items	9	13.05%

The common types of ICTs that are frequently used by the students at **Boditi, Areka, Bedesa and Gesuba Secondary Schools** are devices, such as cellphone, computer/laptop, tablets, TV/ radio, flash player, printer, scanner and photocopier. Among these devices' cellphones, computers, TV/radio, flash and audio players are the most common used in the schools or the educational environments by the participants, especially, cellphones which scored (65.2%). This might be because cellphones are more handy and portable that students can install many English language oriented applications on them. They also use it for communication which is another factor, as Christenson (2010) defines ICT

as technologies that provide access to information. It is similar to in IT which includes the wireless networks, cell phones, and other communication mediums. This definition clarifies that the devices are more communicative purpose oriented. After that, computers, then audio players come. After that television and radio, then printer and photocopier, and tablets scored the lowest. These devices seem to be available to some extent in the schools.

However, there is a small amount of the participant students who do not use ICTs at all (6%). Levy (2009) and Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) agree that computers and any electronic

devices, which are used for teaching such as multimedia, smartphones, tablets count as ICTs. In that respect, Njoku (2015) indicates to some of the ICT devices such as radio, television, videotape, audiotape, tape recorder, compact disc (CD), digital versatile disc (DVD), flash drive, telephone (both fixed line and mobile), satellite

systems and computer hardware, software and networks. . As a result, the students can take benefit from any of those devices that are available for learning English and enhancing their skills. In spite of ICT types, there are benefits and reasons of using ICTs in the next section.

Table 4.2: Reasons of Using ICTs

Reasons of Using ICTs	Participants No. 69	%
Attraction more at the lesson	18	26.1%
Saving time and effort	18	26.1%
Feeling independent and confident	22	32%
Understanding and improving comprehension	11	16%
Increasing collaboration between students	11	16%
Knowing how native speakers speak English	6	8.7%
All the reasons	15	22%
None of the reasons	3	4.3%

As in Table 4.2 shown, saving time and effort and doing homework is another benefit that the participants are using ICTs. A considerable percentage of them (26.1%) think that using ICTs can save them time and effort. For this purpose, Mcilroy, Sadler, Boojawon (2007) claim another benefit for both teachers and students is using it for library catalogue, accessing electronic journals and conducting keyword searches in order to take benefit for updated research materials; that helps both students and teachers in accomplishing their tasks. In this way teachers and students can save time and effort looking for resources. In addition to that, Khan, Bhatti, and Khan (2011) talk about the use of ICT which reduces the time that is necessary for achieving

information for students. This result of the students and teachers in the said secondary school indicate that they are using technology for doing their tasks in schools for ICTs facilitate their work.

32% of the respondents replied that they feel independent and confident in using ICT for playing game. A good example is by Yip and Kwan (2006) who indicate that online games provide independence for the students. They mention that there is a difference between those students who learn vocabulary through ICTs and those without it (the traditional or face to face learning). Through using online vocabulary games and the traditional way of learning vocabulary, they found out that playing online

vocabulary games allows students to learn better and be able to recall more words than the first group who did not try the online game. This result can be interpreted with that for the group who showed more vocabulary acquisition is that those learners like being independent, which is

something that the online games provide. Students at the said secondary schools can be more independent and have more confidence when they learn the English language, because through using technology they can reach more sources without their teachers' help.

Table 4.3: Using Technology with Textbook

Usage	Participants No. 69	%
Using	47	68.1%
Sometimes Using	15	22%
Not Using	3	4.3%

The results in Table 4.3 show that (68.1%) of the participants want to use ICTs with their textbooks at school, and (22%) would like to use it sometimes. Only a small amount of them (4.3%) do not use ICTs with their text books.

Chapelle (2010) supports the idea that using Computer Assisted Language Learning has a good impact on using textbooks for language learning. He indicates that the students improved their use of textbook.

Table 4.4: School Encouragement of Using ICTs

Government Encouragement	Participants No. 69	%
YES	16	23.1%
NO	44	64%

This shortage of caring from government might be the reason that (73.3%) of the participant students in Table 4.4, mention that the government or school administration does not encourage using ICTs. In addition to that, (23.1%) of the participants think that government or school administration encourage using ICT. In relation to this Balisane (2015) found out that

there is very little evidence points to embracing modern approaches in relation to computer use being applied in the classroom. Interpreting this might belong to the same reason of lacking care from government. In general Fu (2013) shows that capacity building, curriculum development, infrastructure, policy, and government support are required in order to lower student barriers and

improve the effectiveness of ICT use in the classroom. There are other issues as internet or electricity that government should care for; as a result, there should be a big budget for

implementing ICTs in education at the secondary schools found in the said districts. Relating to the use of ICTs, interest on online learning is mentioned in the next section.

Table 4.5: Interest in Online Learning

Interest in Online	Participants No. 69	%
YES	63	91.3%
NO	6	8.7%

The results in Table 4.5 show that high percentage of (91.3%) are interested in online learning, but a low percentage of (8.7%) of the participants are not interested in online courses. In this regard, Mirriahi, et.al (2015) argues for the benefit of the effect of online learning methodologies alongside the growing demand for learner-centered online learning opportunities and the quick growth of Massive Open Online Courses. Thus, from the results in the table, the students in the four districts are interested to attend different language courses through online and this in turn has encouraging effects on the betterment of their language skills.

4.6. Interview for Teachers

The second data collection method employed in this study is interviews. An interview is essentially a conversation between two people, where one is the researcher and the other is the respondent (Gray, 2009). Gray believes that when considering the validity of interviews, it should assess what it was planned to assess and nothing

further. Making it imperative that interviews be standardized, and the exact same questions asked to every candidate in the same order. The interviews aim to focus on answering the questions stated below.

1. Do you have access to computer and some other devices like smart phones, tablets, etc.?
2. What technological devices are available in your schools for teaching English?
3. Do you think the textbook you teach needs to be supported by technological devices?
4. Do you feel confident to use a computer or technological devices in class?
5. Does the Ministry of Education support and provide technology for teaching English in your school?
6. Have you ever taken any training course for using any technological device for teaching English?

To the question of accessibility of using ICTs, all the respondents in the four schools expressed that

they don't have access to different types of ICTs with the exception of cell phones. They further assured that there has been Wi-Fi in their schools but it doesn't give appropriate functions because of shortage of electricity and inefficiency of megabyte. Though they were keen interest in using them in the process of teaching and learning, they have not employed the instruments yet. To the kind of technological devices that they were asked to be used, all the respondents unanimously said that they are dependent on their PC, tablets and cell phones at homes.

To the question that they were asked whether or not their textbook needs to be supported by ICT, some interviewees agreed that they want the textbook that they used is supported by ICT as this creates for the teachers and students to refer to issues related to their textbook for further clarification and this, in turn, enables the teaching and learning process to be more effective. Those who do not fully agree that ICT are more effective for teaching and learning than printed materials and that technology can be used to effectively manipulate instructional contents and materials. ICT is just to assist us in teaching, but I see ICT sometimes makes the students lazy to think. You see, discussion in the classroom is to provoke students' critical thinking, but when they can easily get the answers from the Internet, they don't make the effort to think for the answers anymore. I can teach with or without ICT. ICT is important, but the most important thing is how

the teachers teach the students. How they make the materials better understood by the students. To me, the important thing is the innovation and motivation of the students to think creatively. In contrary to this, the other teacher believes that information that is easily accessible by students in technology-based instruction can lessen their creativity in learning and thinking. Therefore, these teachers did not put the use of ICT at the forefront in their teaching;

Most of the respondents said that they haven't taken training course for using any technological device for teaching English but other interviewees who said we have taken training on ICT couldn't implement their knowledge and skills because of scarcity of ICT at their schools. To the question do you feel confident to use a computer or technological devices in class, those teachers who took training on it feel confident to use ICT in contrast with those who haven't taken training courses on it.

Does the Ministry of Education support and provide technology for teaching English in your school? In response to this, the interviewees explained that the Ministry of Education provides computers but we do not have the internet to be accessed. We have to use our own hotspot from our smart phones to look for teaching materials, or when we really need the internet for teaching.

The challenges that the teachers faced in using ICT are lack of enough experience and training in

the use of ICT in the classroom and unavailability of access to internet to make use of the internet found in the school.

4.7. Classroom Observation

The results of the observation result also triangulate the findings found through questionnaire and interview. The researcher observed that ICT are not available in the classrooms; the textbook is not supported by ICT, so the teachers and students do not use ICT for the purposes of doing class activities, group work, searching information, working on project, doing homework. As a result, conducting online teaching and learning of English through ICT is difficult for them. Since ICT has not been used in the four secondary schools where the research was being conducted, the teachers were not concerned with the issues of feeling confident to use a computer or technological devices in class, allotting sufficient time to practice and implement ICT while the English language is being taught and giving solution/s to the challenges occurred while using ICT to teach and learning in the class.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This study concludes that ICT brings teaching and learning activities enjoyed and interesting. ICT makes teachers to be more creative in teaching and students be more independent in learning. Even though, using ICT still has very

limited access but it cannot decrease their spirit to learn more. Moreover, the praxis of ICT in EFL classroom is the newest innovation for education. In addition, giving ICT earlier to the students could support them to increase their ability through language skill. Moreover, they believed that technologies bring better impact for their learning which they can create their own style in their learning and reach their goals.

5.2. Recommendations

- The Ministry of Education should roll out a robust praxis plan to train teachers on the use of ICT in English language classrooms.
- The principals at the four secondary schools should contact the concerned body to solve the problem of availability of technological devices.
- The study should also be extended to other secondary schools in Ethiopia to get an overall picture of teaching and learning English Language using ICT.

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