Investigating Teachers' Perceptions Of Information And Communication Technology (ICT) Integration In Language Teaching: Issues And Challenges

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Abstract — At a minimum, learning in the 21st century requires the integration of ICT. Despite the need for ICT established in different literatures, this seems not to translate to actual usage in classrooms. Using qualitative-phenomenological research design, this study investigated teachers' perception of the integration of information and communication technology or ICT in language instruction, with emphasis on the issues and challenges that may arise during the integration. Purposive sampling was used to identify teachers who were interviewed using a researcher-made and validated questionnaire. The study found that language teachers generally have a positive outlook on ICT integration in language teaching. However, it should also be noted that interviewed teachers expressed concern about equity and access. Even with a generally positive perception of the integration of ICT in language teaching of language teachers, they emphasized the concerns about the availability of ICT materials and resources inside the classroom. The language teachers' perspective implicated the readiness and willingness to incorporate technology into the classroom. This may be considered an important springboard for the effective integration of ICT into language instruction. This poses a challenge to allocate resources in providing information and communication technology upgrades to schools.

Keywords — : Information and Communications Technology, language teaching, ICT integration in language

I. Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) is becoming a crucial instrument in education, especially when teaching languages. As pointed out by Ghavifekr (2015) ICT integration will help teachers meet the global need for technology-based teaching and learning tools and facilities in place of traditional teaching techniques.

Ghavifekr (2015) reported that in Malaysia ICT is considered as one of the key components that will alter the nation for future growth. As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Education has

included the value of technology-based teaching and learning in the national curriculum for schools in its most recent Education Blueprint (2013-2025).

One of the significant benefits of ICT integration in language teaching is its ability to enhance student engagement. According to Gikas and Grant (2013), the use of ICT tools, such as interactive whiteboards, online games, and multimedia, can help students stay focused and motivated during lessons. As from the words of Kuo (2009) ICT tools can provide opportunities to motivate learners, which can improve student participation and elevate interest in learning.

Another advantage of ICT integration in language teaching is that it prepares students for life in the 21st century. Students that master ICT skills are prepared to take on issues in the future with the right understanding (Grimus, 2000). According to Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), the usage of ICT can aid students in gaining the skills necessary for the present globalization. This is due to the fact that ICT may support students in expanding their knowledge and information, improving their motivation, and developing their abilities (Grabe & Grabe, 2007; Hussain et al., 2011).

Thamarana (2017) conducted a research study of 85 English instructors in India to determine their attitudes regarding the usage of ICTs in the classroom. The study's findings show that 47.06% of male and female respondents agreed with the claim that ICT will have an impact on how students learn English in the classroom.

Despite the numerous benefits of ICT integration in language teaching, there are also several challenges that teachers may encounter. One significant challenge is the lack of technical skills and training among teachers (Gikas & Grant, 2013). Tondeur, et al. (2007) claims that there is a gap between the proposed ICT curriculum at the macro-level and the actual use of ICT in the classroom. This demonstrates that the aspirations of national educational authorities to foster ICT integration in schools do not easily result in concrete changes in instructional practices at class level. Teachers need to be proficient in using ICT tools to effectively integrate them into language teaching. However, not all teachers have access to adequate training and support in using these tools (Abel, et al., 2022).

The possible distraction that ICT gadgets may provide is another difficulty. During class, students could be enticed to utilize their gadgets for non-educational activities like social networking or gaming (Manzoor, 2023). Due to the potential detrimental effects on learning and engagement, teachers may need to closely supervise how their students use technology in the classroom.

The confluence of both positive and negative benefits of ICT integration in language teaching leads one to reflect on some teachers' adamance toward its classroom application. The study of Merillo, et al. (2019) is an exemplification of this. Despite the study's findings of the positive teachers' attitudes toward ICT usage in language teaching, it recommended further research on investigating the factors or challenges hindering teachers from incorporating ICT in

instructions (Merillo, et al., 2019). Additionally, Abel, et al. (2022) said that the perspectives of teachers are essential for successful ICT integration and a key factor in determining whether or not they use technology in the classroom.

This study aimed to investigate teachers' perception of the integration of information and communication technology or ICT in language instruction, with emphasis on the issues and challenges that may arise during the integration. The study's goal is to investigate how different elements, such as teachers' technical proficiency, pedagogical understanding, and stakeholder support, influence how they see the use of ICT in language instruction.

Additionally, the purpose of this research is to explore the manner in which various variables, such as teachers' technical proficiency, pedagogical understanding, and stakeholder support, influence how they see the use of ICT in language instruction.

Finally, this study seeks to identify the difficulties instructors have when incorporating ICT into language instruction and how they overcome them.

ICT Integration in Education. Mahboudi, et al. (2017) articulated that a new generation of learners who have acquired information and communication technology (ICT) since childhood has carved space into educational centers, and what sets them apart from the generation of learners that came before them and their teachers is their use of ICT. Prensky (2001) added that this difference was so significant that the nature of education itself must fundamentally change to accommodate the skills and interests of these new breeds of learners, he regards as digital natives.

The rapid rise of ICT over the last two decades has made it one of the most important topics of debate among researchers of education because ICT may foster a dynamic and progressive teaching and learning environment (Ghavifekr, et al., 2014). In the past years, ICT's rapid development has helped with improving education quality by incorporating the Learning Management System. This is because in most nations, technology has replaced traditional means of information sharing. The way people think, work, and live has completely altered as a result of advancements made possible by technology integration today (Grabe, 2007).

In education, Ghavifekr and Wan (2015) defined integration of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) as that pertaining to the use of computer-based or computer-based communication that incorporates into the daily classroom instructional process. Additionally, the concept generally means technology-based teaching and learning process that closely relates to the utilization of learning technologies in schools (Ghavifekr & Wan, 2015). Meanwhile, Ghavifekr, et al (2014) articulated that Integration of ICT in education refers to the incorporation of information and communication technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning process. This involves the use of modern tools and facilities to provide a dynamic and proactive learning environment. The aim is to improve the quality of education by enhancing the teaching and learning process through the use of technology. This includes the use of computers, software,

networks, satellite links, and related systems that allow people to access, analyze, create, exchange, and use data, information, and knowledge in ways that were almost unimaginable.

Similarly, Tondeur, et al. (2006) defined the concept of integration of ICT in education as that referring to the use of technology, such as computers, tablets, and other digital devices, to enhance teaching and learning". The goal is to create a more interactive and engaging learning environment that prepares students for the digital age. This can involve using educational software, online resources, and multimedia tools to support student learning. This is somewhat synonymous with the definition of ICT integration in education by Mahboudi et al., (2016) which says that the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as computers, tablets, smartphones, and the internet to enhance teaching and learning processes. Their study further explains that said concept can include using digital tools for research, collaboration, communication, multimedia presentations, and online assessments. The ultimate aim of ICT integration is to improve the quality of education by making it more engaging, interactive, and accessible to students.

Jamieson-Procter et al., (2013) ICT integration in schools, specifically in classrooms, is vital because of the fact that students are familiar with technology and they will learn better within a technology-based environment. This means that using technology in education makes a significant contribution to the pedagogical aspects, where the use of ICT will result in effective learning with the aid and support of ICT elements and components (Jamieson-Procter et al., 2013). Jorge et al., (2003) claims that technology-based tools and equipment help students study nearly all subject areas, including mathematics, physics, languages, the arts, and other important topics. Moreover, ICT offers assistance and supplementary support for both instructors and students when it comes to successful learning using computers as learning aids (Jorge et al., 2003).

The review on the application of computers in education inside and outside of Iran by Mahboudi, et al. (2016) enumerated several benefits of integration of ICT can bring to the teaching and learning process in schools. Some of the benefits include: (1) Improved student engagement: This means that the use of digital tools such as multimedia presentations, interactive simulations, and educational games can make learning more engaging and interactive for students. (2) Enhanced collaboration: ICT tools such as online discussion forums, wikis, and shared documents can facilitate collaboration among students and between students and teachers. (3) Increased access to information: The internet provides a vast amount of information that can be used for research and learning purposes. (4) Personalized learning: ICT tools can be used to tailor instruction to individual student needs, interests, and abilities.

Tondeur, et al. (2006) added that the use of ICT in education has several potential benefits. Some of these potential benefits are improved student engagement and motivation, enhanced learning outcomes and academic achievement, increased access to educational resources and information, more personalized learning experiences, and improved teacher professional development opportunities.

Moreover, Finger & Trinidad, (2002) communicated that ICT may be applied in a variety of ways to enhance teaching and learning in a variety of topic areas. This means that a technology-based approach to teaching and learning provides a variety of engaging methods, such as educational videos, stimulation, data storage, database use, mind-mapping, guided discovery, brainstorming, music, and the World Wide Web (www), will enhance and deepen the learning experience.

Although several researches present positive influence of ICT in education, it should be noted that the effectiveness of ICT integration in education depends on several factors, including the quality of teacher training and support, the availability of resources, and the development of a shared vision for how ICT should be used in the classroom (Tondeur, et al., 2008).

In addition, Dudeny (2010) said that technology-based teaching and learning can make many changes in the classroom only if proper planning and policy making are placed. In the same vein, Chan (2002) said that national ICT policies can serve several crucial purposes. Such important functions include provision of a rationale to a set of goals, and a vision of how education systems run if ICT is integrated into teaching and learning process, and they can be beneficial to students, teachers, parents and the general population of a given country. She further cited Malaysian policy under the Ministry of Education on ICT integration which revolves around three policies. The first policy insists that all students are given the opportunity to use ICT. This is aimed to reduce the digital gap amongst the schools. The second policy focuses on the role and function played by ICT in education. Besides that, the third policy stressed the use of ICT for accessing information, communication, and as a productivity tool (Chan, 2002).

Moreover, Mahboudi, et al., (2008) identified several factors that can contribute to the effectiveness of ICT integration in education. These include: (1) Adequate infrastructure which means that schools need to have access to reliable electricity, internet connectivity, and appropriate hardware and software to support ICT integration. (2) Teacher training which pertains to teachers' need to be trained on how to effectively use ICT tools in their teaching practices. (3) Curriculum alignment which refers to the use of ICT tools which should be aligned with the curriculum goals and learning objectives. (4) Student-centered approach which refer to the necessity to be student-centered of the ICT tools. This means that they should be used to facilitate active learning, collaboration, and critical thinking. (5) Ongoing evaluation which necessitates that the effectiveness of ICT integration should be regularly evaluated through formative and summative assessments.

Consequently, the failure of ICT integration in education may depend on the following reason. These reasons include the lack of infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, resistance to change, inadequate curriculum alignment, and lack of evaluation.

The study of Peeraer and Van Petegem (2012) claims that to ensure successful ICT integration in primary schools, it must be emphasized that promoting better learning outcomes

depends heavily on teachers. Thus, it was recommended in the study of Hamidi et al., (2011) teachers of today should always be ready and well-equipped with ICT competencies and must have a positive attitude toward providing ICT-based learning opportunities for students to improve their learning quality.

Sabiri (2019) added one of the most challenging issues for ICT integration was the lack of time to cover the syllabus and the appropriate use of ICT. The contradiction of opinions between the teachers and student-teachers was found as another impediment for integrating ICT into teacher training programs.

Mahboudi, et al. (2017) found that teachers are frequently considered to be the most important influence on classroom learning and, as such, play an invaluable role in ensuring that pupils use ICT effectively inside the school. Consequently, the study recommended that Iranian EFL teachers are advised to consider what the computer industry offers for their classrooms, and should consequently motivate their students to use them efficiently and wisely after necessary training.

The study of Al-Senaidi, Lin, and Poirot (2009) about the "Barriers to adopting technology for teaching and learning in Oman" found that teachers' confidence, access to ICT, inappropriate training, lack of time to use technology properly, technical faults as serious determinants to ICT integration. Moreover, the study of Ghavifekr, et al. (2015) recommended that further studies can be made based on what barriers teachers are facing in using ICT in their daily classrooms in schools.

Language Learning and ICT Education. Language learning, as defined in the study of Jeong, et al. (2021), refers to the process of acquiring a new language or improving one's proficiency in a language that is not their native tongue. This can involve learning the grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other aspects of the language, as well as developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language learning can take place in a variety of settings, including classrooms, online courses, immersion programs, and social interactions with native speakers.

The study by Otroshi and Bourdet (2012), enumerated several positive effects of the use of ICT in language learning which can include: (1) Increased motivation which can be achieved by the use of digital tools such as multimedia presentations, educational games, and online discussion forums that can make language learning more engaging and motivating for students. (2) Enhanced collaboration which can be attested by how ICT tools such as wikis, shared documents, and video conferencing can facilitate collaboration among students and between students and teachers. (3) Improved language skills. This pertains to the effective use of ICT tools such as speech recognition software, online dictionaries, and language learning apps that can help students to improve their language skills. (4) Personalized learning. ICT tools can be used to tailor instruction to individual student needs, interests, and abilities. Lastly, increased access to authentic materials: This pertains

to the use of a vast amount of authentic materials such as news articles, videos, and podcasts for language learning purposes.

The study of Panangalage & Pasqual (2008) found that ICT also benefits students by developing their confidence in using ICT and developing competency to be more successful in the future high technological world and Ahmadi, Keshavarzi, & Foroutan, 2011 said benefits include positive significance of ICT in student learning achievement in subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and English Language.

Huong Thi Bao Dinh (2015) noted that English as a Foreign Language teachers used ICT in general for powerpoint and word processors and sometimes as language dictionaries and online videos to support their teaching. Unfortunately, the use of ICT as tutorials and drills as web-based activities was very low. Worth noting further that most of the faculty had never used any online communication tool or channel to assist their teaching and students' learning, though they used ICT for email communication.

Chan (2002) reported that in the Malaysian Policy of integration of ICT into schools, browser-based teaching-learning materials in English language was included in its pilot-project, she concluded the success of such project depends on the support from many stakeholders, including all agencies in the educational system and sufficient funds to establish and maintain ICT in the schools. She added that the continuing professional development for teachers, school heads, and other educational personnel must be instituted.

II. Methodology

Neubauer, et al., (2018) articulated that phenomenology seeks to explain the significance of the experience in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced. In simpler terms, phenomenology, as an approach, is focused on examining the phenomena from the viewpoint of the individuals who have experienced them so as to understand their essence.

The use of phenomenological approach in this research can provide rich and detailed insights into how teachers experience and make sense of the integration of ICT in language teaching. The findings of this study can contribute to the development of more effective strategies for supporting teachers in integrating ICT into their language teaching practices.

The participants are language teachers from Paquibato District in Davao City. They are currently teaching English or Filipino in elementary schools from the said district. The schools from said district are far from the downtown of the city from which the district belongs, and the supply of electricity is expected to be intermittent and students coming from said schools have little to no access to technology. This study used purposive sampling in selecting the research participants of this study. Creswell (2008) stated that in qualitative research, the principle of purposive sampling is best applied. This indicates that the reason the researcher chooses particular

people and study locations is so that they may help clarify the research topic and the study's main phenomena.

Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which people are sampled because they have experience of the phenomenon being studied. Contrary to probability sampling in which each element in the population has a known nonzero chance of being selected through the use of a random selection procedure, this non-probability sampling does not involve known non-zero probabilities of selection. Subjective methods are used to decide which elements should be included in the sample. The population, further, may not be well denoted (Lavrakas, 2008).

Participants in this study included five (5) teachers who were all identified from distance classes during the pandemic. They are coded T1 for the first teacher-participant, T2 for the second teacher-participant, T3 for the third teacher-participant, T4 for the fourth teacher-participant, and T5 for the fifth teacher-participant.

III. Results and Discussion

Perception of teachers on integrating ICT in Language Teaching

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of the perception of teachers on the integration of ICT into language teaching. Through different interviews conducted, the following were found:

1. *Positive perception of ICT integration*. Teachers have a generally positive perception of integrating ICT in language teaching. Some even believe it to be highly beneficial and transformative while some believe it can make language

2. *Integration of ICT and language teaching poses equity and access concerns*. While there are positive perceptions of the integration of ICT in language teaching, some teachers express concerns about equity and access as there are disparities in access to technology. Teachers recognized the good intentions behind the integration of ICT in language teaching, however, there remained a challenge to access and equity as some teachers admit to having limited access.

3. Integration of ICT in language teaching enhanced learning. ICT provides access to different ideas that could help enhance knowledge of learning capabilities among students. Teachers perceive the integration of ICT in language teaching as something that can open opportunities to develop language learning.

Perceived issues and challenges in the integration of ICT in classroom

1. *Access and equity are prevalent.* Getting the full benefit from the integration of ICT in the classroom remains distant because not everyone has access to ICT. It is worth noting that the challenges in access to ICT do not only reside in students but also teachers as some of the interviewed teachers are teaching in far-flung areas of Davao City where the stability of the supply of electricity remains an issue.

2. Issues on digital literacy and skills remained unresolved. Teachers and students' lack of access to ICT is not only the issue, the skills necessary for the effective integration is also a problem. Teachers recognized the insufficient digital and literacy skills prevalent among teachers and students. Some teachers even reported that some teachers are adamant about the use of ICT tools.

3. There is a lack of institutional support and investment. Coupled with the lack of access by some teachers is the problem of the lack of institutional support. Teachers emphasized that support and investment from institutions are important to realize the endeavor of digitalization of teaching language. A teacher interviewed even articulated that teachers and students may only be resistant to the use of ICT tools because there are no ICT tools they can use and there are no institutions that can provide it for them.

Discussion

The positive perspective of language teachers towards ICT integration in language teaching suggests that there is a readiness and willingness to incorporate technology into the classroom. This positivity can serve as a strong foundation for the effective integration of ICT into language instruction.

The idea that ICT may be revolutionary and extremely helpful for learning languages implies that educators are hopeful about the possibilities for better educational results. This suggests that ICT may improve language acquisition and make it more effective and enjoyable when used properly.

Despite the positive outlook, the expressed concerns about equity and access imply the need for strategies and policies that ensure all students have equal access to ICT resources. Addressing these concerns will be essential in making ICT integration truly inclusive.

The lack of ICT materials and resources in the classroom raises questions about whether schools and other organizations should spend money on the equipment and infrastructure needed for successful ICT integration. Ample resource allocation is necessary for the success of its implementation.

IV. Conclusion

For students who were not able to join remote classes due to a lack of internet access or devices, or because they had to take on additional jobs and home responsibilities during this time, teachers found other creative ways to connect. Many reached out via text and arranged phone calls and even some home visits with proper social distancing.

Unfortunately, creating and sustaining strong student-teacher relationships can be difficult. Even before remote learning began, the large class sizes, hectic pace of the school day, and impossibly busy student and teacher schedules often impeded the type of personal connections we know are critical to student success.

Though many students missed their extracurricular activities, some found that the reduction in structured activities, along with the shorter school day, and lack of commute, resulted not just in more sleep, but in more playtime, downtime, and family time. Time spent serves as a protective factor in keeping kids mentally and physically healthy.

In a pre-COVID world, some students didn't find out their homework for the night until class that day. During remote learning, the students appreciated being recognized as whole people with varying home lives and multiple commitments and needs.

Flexible approaches to whole class instruction can also benefit students. We heard from one student that during a class held on Zoom, the teacher shared a lesson and then dismissed students as soon as they could demonstrate that they understood the concept.

Educators have an exciting opportunity now to redesign lessons and pare learning goals down to those that are essential in each subject area. Even when students face comprehensive end-of-year exams, for example, in advanced placement courses, a deeper focus on key concepts and critical thinking skills, such as use of evidence to back a claim, logical reasoning, and clear communication, may prove more beneficial to students than covering in a more cursory way all of the possible content that might show up on the test.

All of these experiences are validated by the researcher and are likely not new to most educators. But hearing them directly from students during this potentially transformational moment for our educational system serves as an important opportunity for reflection. We encourage schools to invest time in these first few weeks of school to listen deeply to the students. Conduct a survey to find out what worked and did not work for them during remote learning. Then, embrace those learnings as you redesign and reimagine what you can offer students that best supports their journey to become balanced, healthy, and engaged learners — wherever that learning is happening.

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