

Towards a new ICT policy in higher education

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The present research aims at evaluating the existing ICT integration policy at the department of English in El- Oued university. Education policymakers are aware of the necessity of ICT integration into higher educational settings. Study was then conducted on third year students of English to explore further the reasons behind their unfamiliarity with using ICT facilities in learning. A direct observation as well as a semi- structured interview were used as the data gathering tools. Research findings reveal that most of the respondents use ICT for leisure purposes and for maintaining social relationships through the different social media forms rather than using them for educational purposes.

Keywords: ICT, Computer-Assisted Instruction, Educational Settings, Internet –Assisted Instruction

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تقييم سياسة إدماج تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات الحالية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الوادي. حيث يدرك أصحاب القرار في مجال التعليم ضرورة إدماج تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات في الأوساط التعليمية العليا. ومع ذلك، بعد تكليف طلاب السنة الثالثة بواجبات في شكل بحوث تقدم شفاهيا، لاحظ الباحثون أن الطلاب كانوا غير مرتاحين أثناء استخدام تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات في الصف. واستخدمت الملاحظة المباشرة والحوار المنظم كأدوات للبحث لجمع البيانات. كشفت نتائج البحث أن معظم المجيبين يستخدمون تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات لأغراض الترفيه والحفاظ على العلاقات الاجتماعية من خلال وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي المختلفة بدلا من استخدامها لأغراض تعليمية. ولذلك كان هناك اقتراح بإعادة النظر في سياسة إدماج تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات الحالية من خلال توفير التدريب المناسب للأساتذة لتدريس المواد التي تستخدم تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات بشكل مناسب في الفصول الدراسية، من خلال التدريس المرتكز على الحاسوب والتعليم المرتكز على الإنترنت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات، التعليم المرتكز على الحاسوب، التعليم المرتكز على الإنترنت، الأوساط التعليمية

ICT are so important in enhancing the quality of both teaching and learning processes. Being in the right side of the digital divide, Algerian policy makers are aware of the importance of the introduction of ICT in the domain of education. Government's budgetary allocation to education is immense in comparison with other neighboring African countries. There exists at least an internet room equipped with at least 20 computers in every school and in every faculty. A module of computing is compulsory in the middle school. In the English department, students have a compulsory module of computing for a duration of one hour and a half once a week. Besides the availability of computers which are considered an important ICT form, other facilities are widely available such as the data projectors, videoconferencing and language laboratories. As teachers of Civilization module, students were given assignments in the form of oral presentations during TD sessions in the first semester. The teachers also encouraged students to use different facilities provided by the administration to have better presentations. However, throughout presentations, the present researchers observed that most students were uncomfortable when using ICT. A study was then conducted on third year students of English to explore further the reasons behind their unfamiliarity with using ICT facilities in learning since most of them presented their assignments in a traditional way. The present study then aims at finding answers to the following questions: 1- What are the reasons behind students' unfamiliarity with ICT in the classroom? 2- What are the students' attitudes towards using ICT in educational settings ?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT)

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, ICT is defined as the abbreviation of information

and communication technology: a school subject in which students learn to use computers and other electronic equipment to store and send information. Pelgrum and Law (2003) state that near the end of the 1980s, the term ‘computers’ was replaced by ‘IT’ (information technology) signifying a shift of focus from computing technology to the capacity to store and retrieve information. This was followed by the introduction of the term ‘ICT’ (information and communication technology) around 1992, when e-mail started to become available to the general public (Pelgrum, W.J., Law, N., 2003).

1.2 FORMS OF ICT

According to UNESCO (2010), ICT is an all encompassing term that includes the full gamut of electronic tools by means of which we gather, record and store information, and by means of which we exchange and distribute information to others. ICT are composed of many different tools that enable capturing, interpreting, storing and transmitting information in a fast and easy way.

According to a United Nations report (1999), ICTs cover Internet service provision, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology equipment and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centers, commercial information providers, network-based information services, and other related information and communication activities. According to UNESCO (2002), information and communication technology (ICT) may be regarded as the combination of ‘Informatics technology’ with other related technology, specifically communication technology. The various kinds of ICT products available and having relevance to education, such as teleconferencing, email, audio conferencing, television lessons, radio broadcasts, interactive radio counseling, interactive voice response system, audiocassettes and CD ROMs etc have been used in

education for different purposes (Sharma, 2003; Sanyal, 2001; Bhattacharya and Sharma, 2007).

1.3 ADVANTAGES OF ICT IN EDUCATION

ICT –based instruction including Computer- Assisted instruction or Internet- Assisted Instruction improves the quality of learning for its contribution in enhancing the teaching –learning process. It helps to move towards students- centred learning since they will be more motivated; it also prepares them for lifelong education. Among the ICT advantages is the accessibility of education for disadvantageous students especially those living in distant places from educational institutions. ICT can also be of great impact on special needs students since it removes the burden of in- person presence in the educational settings.

2 DEFINITION OF CMC

CMC or Computer-Mediated Communication is defined as any communicative transaction that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices. The term traditionally referred to the communications that occur via computer-mediated formats such as e-mail, instant messaging and chat rooms. Now this term is used to refer to other forms of text-based interactions such as text messaging. December (1996) defines CMC as the asynchronous and synchronous creation and transmission of messages using digital techniques.

2.1 FORMS OF CMC

CMC is divided into synchronous and asynchronous modes. In synchronous communication, all participants are online simultaneously. In this type of communication, messages are exchanged during the same time interval e.g. web chat, IM (instant messaging) and IRC. Synchronous CMC allows written communication to be interactive written discourse (Ferrara, Brunner et al. 1991). Most synchronous CMC is text-only. However, there exist

clients for audio-and video chat. On the contrary, the asynchronous communication occurs with time constraints. In this type of communication, messages are exchanged during different time intervals e.g. e-mail and mobile text messaging (SMS). It is worth mentioning that e-mail is delayed, controlled and long in comparison with other forms.

CMC varies according to the technology on which it is based, and according to its contexts of use. Thus synchronous CMC differs systematically from asynchronous CMC in message length, complexity, formality, and interactivity- due, in part, to temporal constraints on message production and processing (Ko, 1996; Herring, 2002). Crystal (2001) identifies five broad text-based Internet using situations:

- Electronic mail (e-mail).
- Asynchronous discussion groups (bulletin boards).
- Synchronous real time chat groups.
- Virtual worlds.
- World Wide Web (WWW).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Third year students of English at the faculty of Letters and languages in El-Oued university during the academic year 2015/2016 opt for traditional ways in presenting their regular oral assignments of the module of Civilization, also named "Study of Historical Texts", during their TD sessions. Despite of the availability of ICT at the university, most of them prefer not to use them.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present research was mainly conducted to find answers to the following questions:

1- What are the reasons behind students' unfamiliarity with ICT in the classroom?

2-What are the students' attitudes towards using ICT in the educational settings?

3.3 PARTICIPANTS

The target population of this study are the students of third year English studying during the academic year 2015 – 2016 at the Department of English at Hamma Lakhdar University in El Oued . The total number of participants is one hundred and twenty (120). Each student was given an assignment in the form of an oral presentation about one of the greatest Britons chosen from the list provided by “100 Greatest Britons in the BBC poll, 2002”. The assignment is part of the TD session works designed for the first semester in the module of ‘Study of Historical Texts’. Time allotted for each presentation was thirty minutes. The teachers announced that ICT facilities such as: data show, computer, loud speakers are available at the secretary's office for students to be used for their presentations.

3.4 DATA GATHERING TOOLS

A direct observation as well as a semi-structured interview were used as the data gathering tools for the present research.

- 3.4.1 description of the direct observation process

Direct observation method is of a great value since it provides the present researchers with accurate information about the state of affairs of different elements under study. The choice of this technique is helpful as the present researchers are interested in trying to understand an ongoing behavior, the students' behavior with ICT, and the process of presenting the assignments by the

students. The following elements were taken into consideration while observing:

- **Date of Observation:** during the academic year 2015/2016 in TD sessions which are held once a week for a duration of one hour and a half for each group.

- **Place of Observation:** Room16 at the department of English in the faculty of Letters and Languages at Hamma Lakhdar University, El Oued.

- **Mode of Observation:** two modes of observation were used: on the spot observation as well as observation based on note taking strategies.

- **Number of Students Observed:** 120 students were observed. They were divided into four groups of 30 students each.

- **Elements Focus of Observation:** during the observation, focus of interest was on the Kinds of ICT used by the students while presenting their oral assignments as well as the number and the gender of users for each kind.

- 3.4.2 Description of the Interview

A semi-structured interview was designed to elicit more information about students' attitudes towards the use of ICT for the educational purposes. The interview comprises 07 questions. The questions used turn around the following broad lines:

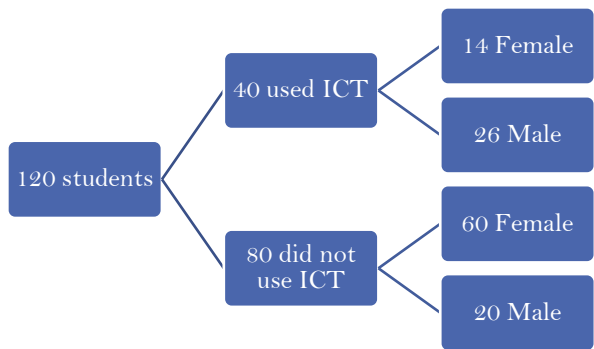
- Their familiarity with ICT.
- The use of ICT for other purposes.
- Reasons for not using ICT in class for educational purposes.

4- RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in figure 01, among a total number of 120 students only 40 students used ICT while presenting their oral assignments.

The other 80 opt for ordinary ways of presenting such as using notes written in a note book or writing important dates, names and the plan on the black board before the presentation. We can also notice that male students use ICT more than female students. Only 14 female students used ICT.

Figure01: Users and Non Users of ICT



Concerning the different types of ICT used by students while presenting, we have detected four types which are shown in table one below. The types used are: Data projector, audio loud speakers, tablets and mobile phones. The majority of ICT users opt for using the data projector; most of them are male students. What was also noticed is that some of them used it for the first time, others asked for the help of their colleagues or the teacher to give them instructions to use it. It is also noticed that only five female students used the data projector; they are much more familiar to use tablets. Mobile phones are used by male students to read some notes or to check for event dates and peoples’ names while presenting.

Table 01: Types of ICT Used in the Oral Presentation

<i>Types of ICT Used</i>	<i>Data Projector</i>	<i>Audio Loud Speakers</i>	<i>Tablets</i>	<i>Mobile Phones</i>
<i>Number of Students</i>	25	02	07	06
<i>Gender</i>	20 M+ 05F	F	F	M

While asking about their attitudes towards using ICT, the respondents said that they are accustomed to use ICT beyond educational settings to maintain social relationships through social media. They prefer using mobile phones and tablets to less extent rather than computers. ICT used for maintaining social relationships and for leisure purposes is achieved through the use of different forms of CMC: Synchronous CMC such as web chat, IM (instant messaging) and IRC or asynchronous communication such as e-mail and mobile text messaging (SMS).

When asked about their unfamiliarity with ICT in the class, they argue that they studied ICT module for many years: in the middle school, in the secondary school and at the university but they still feel uncomfortable with using that knowledge for real practical situations and in educational settings because knowledge was theoretical in nature. They add that even ICT module exam was a written one without any practical assignment. They also add that they are afraid from sudden unwelcoming disturbances caused by technology while presenting because they have not been given occasions to use ICT while doing assignments. This is why they prefer not to use ICT in educational settings.

CONCLUSION

Research findings reveal that most of the respondents use ICT for leisure purposes and for maintaining social relationships through the different social media options using different forms of

CMC: Synchronous CMC such as web chat, IM (instant messaging) and IRC or asynchronous communication such as e-mail and mobile text messaging (SMS) rather than using them for educational purposes . Results also reveal that male students are much more familiar with using ICT than female students in the educational settings. It is also concluded that in the educational settings, most students find difficulties in using ICT facilities. Many reasons are behind students' unfamiliarity with using ICT in the classroom. Most of the ICT module is taught on purely theoretical basis. Furthermore, teachers resort to traditional ways of teaching in which rare occasions are given to students to use ICT in class. This is why students feel anxious about sudden unwelcoming disturbances caused by technology while presenting.

5- PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results obtained from the study are of a great value; they are used to adjust the present ICT policy. Therefore, there had been a suggestion for revisiting the existing ICT integration policy through providing relevant training for teachers to teach subjects using ICT appropriately in the classroom, through Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) and Internet-Assisted Instruction (IAI), and allotting extra time for the ICT module as well as its integration in all years of the curriculum. It is also suggested that the ICT module should be taught in a more practical way. ICT exam should also be taken in its two different aspects: theory and practice. On the other hand, students should also be encouraged by teachers in the different modules to use ICT for their different types of educational activities.

The present research opens the opportunity to search for other methods for implementing ICT policies in the educational settings in general and in the university settings in particular for future perspectives that consider ICT an integral part in the learning process.

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