

INTEGRATION OF INTERNET FOR TEACHING PURPOSES: PERCEPTIONS OF ESL TEACHERS AS TESL POSTGRADUATES IN UPM, MALAYSIA

Uranus Saadat, Habsah Hussin

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract.

The main purpose of this study was to find the perceptions of ESL teachers as local TESL postgraduates in University Putra Malaysia (UPM) regarding the integration of Internet for instructional purposes. A simple random sampling was used to select 94 ESL teachers from this university. A mixed-method design has been implemented to seek this study through a questionnaire and an interview taken from 3 participants. The theory grounded in this study is based on Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovation* theory. The results demonstrate that most of them had high perceptions and positive attitude toward integrating the internet in teaching purposes; however, there were some barriers such as low quality of technical support or limited time of class hindered them to utilize the internet for teaching purposes.

Keywords: ESL teachers, Internet use, Perceptions, ESL teaching, TESL postgraduate

Introduction

Internet as a virtual library contains unlimited amount of information applicable and precious for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) (Allodi, Dokter and Kuiper 1998; Bell 1998; Felix 2001; Murry and McPherson 2004; Son 2007; Warschuar and Healey 1998; Son 2008). Many studies in this realm have been conducted during the last decade as a demonstration of the importance of internet in English language teaching and learning (Son 2007; Son 2008; Shomoosi and Moinzadeh 2007; Warschuare and Kern 2000; Mosquera 2001; Shin and Son 2007; Warschuare 2000). In Malaysia, Ministry of Education attempts to change the old system of education into technological one in which the internet serves as one of the necessary means for enhancing education in this country (Salman, 2010). By the time Information Technology appeared in educational sectors of Malaysia, a phase of innovation has been arrived in designing English language learning curriculum (Mohamed & Dzakiria, 2005).

Although different technologies such as internet fascinated governments and educational sectors; however, it will not be feasible in curriculum unless teachers and principals have sufficient attitude, knowledge and skills pertaining internet and technology use in education (Baylor and Ritchie 2002), because teachers are the pioneers of any changes in classroom, so the technology initially is required to be introduced to them in order to impact educational system (Albirini 2006). However, teachers are confronted with barriers that inhibit them to take advantage of technology in their classrooms or to develop materials to be delivered in their classes through ICT (Salehi and Salehi 2012).

In theory of *Diffusion of Innovation* by Rogers (1995), he postulated that the perceptions of technology adaptors are inseparable with the process of innovation-decision. Studies on the perceptions of pre-service teachers indicate that perception influences the intention and consequently influences behaviour (Ma, Anderson and Streith 2005; Lafford and Lafford 1997). So this study aims to explore the perceptions of ESL teachers as TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) postgraduates in University Putra Malaysia (UPM) in Malaysia regarding the integration of the internet for instructional purposes grounded by theory of *Diffusion of Innovation* by Rogers (1995).

Methodology

A descriptive study with the mixed-method procedure is implemented in this research. The sampling procedure is simple random sampling. According to the Morgan formula (Krejcie and Morgan 1970), the sample size from the population of ESL teachers (N= 125) in UPM is (n=94). In quantitative part, a questionnaire with five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was administered. Moreover, before applying this



questionnaire, its reliability and validity has been checked. In qualitative part, an interview with three questions was taken from three volunteers of the sample.

Results and findings

In quantitative part, the perceptions of ESL teachers toward the integration of the internet in teaching obtained from a questionnaire in which its statements and their percentages of responses are shown in table 1. The table indicates the percentages of “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” in one column and the percentages of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” in another column. The percentage of “Neutral” responses is not mentioned in this table.

Table 1 presents ESL teachers’ perceptions about the internet use for teaching purposes

Perceptions Statement	Percent (%)	
	Strongly Disagree and Disagree	Strongly Agree and Agree
1. Internet use enhances my social standing.	16.2	67.6
2. Internet use enhance my career performance.	8.1	58.1
3. Internet use enhance my access to data.	16.2	58.1
4. Understanding and using the internet is easy.	20.3	54.1
5. My career gives chances to learn about the internet.	23.0	60.8
6. My career gives chances to teach about the internet.	12.2	71.6
7. Majority of my colleagues apply the internet.	4.1	73.0
8. The internet can improve ESL teaching.	8.1	87.8
9. Teachers have to learn how to apply the internet in teaching.	6.8	75.7
10. Internet use helps to save time and energy.	2.7	81.1
11. The internet brings opportunities for innovative teaching methods.	14.9	62.2
12. Using the internet fits properly in my curriculum objectives.	4.1	48.6
13. Internet can facilitate English learning.	1.4	78.4
14. Using internet is not opposite with my social etiquettes and religion.	9.5	78.4
15. Internet has the potential to instruct speaking and pronunciation.	2.7	63.5
16. Internet has the potential to instruct grammar.	1.4	63.5
17. Internet has the potential to instruct reading and writing.	1.4	83.8
18. Time of the class is not adequate to use the internet.	16.2	51.4
19. My students can use the internet for their learning process	2.7	64.9
20. I am eager to learn about ESL teaching sources on the internet.	1.4	87.8
21. I can have cheaper access by means of the internet.	23.0	60.8
22. In future, I will integrate internet for my instructional purposes.	18.9	50.0
23. Teaching is more interesting by means of the internet.	17.6	63.5
24. Internet application for teaching purposes adjusted to my preferences	9.5	63.5
Overall Percentage	10.1%	67%

According to table 1, the overall percentages demonstrate that (67%) of the responses were positive (Agree) and only (10.1%) of the responses were negative (Disagree). Among the positive responses, “Using the internet fits properly in my curriculum objectives” (48.6 %), “In future, I will integrate internet for my instructional purposes.” (50.0%), and “Time of the class is not adequate to use the internet.” (51.4%) have the lowest percentages and “The internet can improve ESL teaching.” has the highest percentage (83.8%) among all responses’ percentages.

In qualitative part, the information obtained from 3 volunteers via a one-to-one interview offers more comprehensive and meaningful information about the teachers’ perceptions. Participants’ names were coded to A1, A2, and A3; their ages were 32, 28, and 33, their years of teaching experiences were 11, 4, and 8 years, and their genders were female, female, and male respectively. Their responses to the questions were briefly presented as follows:



1. ESL teachers' attitudes toward the integration of the internet in education.

The attitudes of all volunteers toward the internet application for educational means were positive. A2 stated, *"I absolutely admit it."* T3 said, *"Certainly, it is a must."*

2. ESL teachers' justifications for using the internet in ESL teaching.

Based on this statement, all 3 teachers suggested the use of the internet for instructional means. All of them admitted that the internet has the potential to save time and energy for receiving required materials for the class. A2 offered, *"In fact, the internet aided me to dispose of all loaded up students' papers and assignments in my office. Thus by doing assignments online, I can easily check and provide comments on them."* The other issue that A1 and A3 accepted internet as an essential means was its potential to improve learners' interests for ESL learning. For example, A1 said, *"Internet is a good noise for sleepy students to keep them awake."*

Another foundation was delivered by the A1 was that the internet forces learners to demonstrate their commitments during their tasks and activities. She added, *"Internet is such a forcing tool for students to lead them to do their assignments, in that just few students are willing to do their tasks in the class and rest of them are just day-dreaming or talking to each other."* A3 believed that his motive for using the internet for instruction was because students through the internet can interact more with their teachers and classmates. Moreover, they can establish extra communication with other learners in various environments and settings. T1 and T2s' opinions confluences in a reason that internet application, supports students to have interactions with English language natives, deprived of spending lots of money on travelling. For the reason that they consider that interaction with native speakers is a useful practice for the ESL learners to increase their language skills.

3. Factors restrain ESL teachers to integrate the internet for ESL teaching.

Based on this statement, volunteered teachers' perceptions regarding the factors that may restrict them to use internet for teaching is explained here. The three teachers admitted that the internet disconnections and low speed of the internet were the two factors confining them to integrate internet in their classes. A3 said that besides of mentioned restraining factors, computers were often not working properly in the lab or they faced many errors, so pupils could not apply them through the class hours. He argued, *"In our computer lab, there are brand new PCs, but many of them are out of order. Consequently, I should ask the students to bring along their laptops."*

A1 and A2 proposed that the poor condition of technical supports for technological facilities in computer labs or classrooms. T1 said, *"Class time is very valuable and important, thus when the internet often gets disconnected or the computers break down, an expert technician is vital to troubleshoot the problems very quickly; if not the class time will be wasted."*

Conclusion

The integration of internet in ESL teaching and learning is considered as a pedagogical means in which can support and facilitate teachers with better teaching methods. Teachers' positive attitudes and perceptions can help them to adopt the internet for educational purposes easier. However, internet as a teaching assistant is more problematic for the reason that teachers are faced with some barriers that prevent them to integrate the internet in the classroom or design supporting materials through the internet. This study concluded that the ESL teachers are familiar and have positive attitude toward the internet and internet usage; however, this does not essentially mean that they integrate the internet into the curriculum. Furthermore, insufficient technical supports and inadequate access to the internet inhibit ESL teachers to employ the internet in their classrooms. Dearth of class time and broken-down computers were reported as two other ominous factors for teachers to not use the internet into the curriculum.



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