

Prospects and Challenges Faced by Secondary Teachers while Integrating ICT in Nepalese ESL Classrooms

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Abstract

Teaching and learning in the 21st century has been embedded with technology. Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a crucial role in ameliorating knowledge acquisition in general and enhancing English Language mastering in particular. The government of Nepal has made provision of integrating ICTs in school education to enhance quality education and make both teachers and learners confident and competitive in the present global world. The teachers are the real implementers of the policy into practice. In this context, this research intends to investigate secondary level English teachers' skill and motivation in using ICTs while teaching the English language. This is a qualitative study that uses a phenomenological approach to obtain information according to Denzin (2019) in which the participants in the study included eight schools and 16 teachers at different schools in Nepal. They were selected purposefully since selecting the best participant ensures the intended information (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The telephonic interview was conducted and open-ended questions were administered electronically and all necessary directions were provided to them so that they could respond to those questions. The findings imply that teachers should be given opportunities for training on ICT use for building up their skill, motivation, knowledge and confidence.

Keywords: English language teaching and learning, ICT, school education, teachers' skill, motivation

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) involves teaching language with technology which liberates a class from chalk and talk by integrating different technological devices in the process of teaching and learning language. ICT plays crucial role for making teaching and learning activities more effective. It is one of the most effectual tool for advancing knowledge and skills (Dhital, 2018). English language learning and teaching methods have undergone many changes over the last four decades: moving from an old-style grammar-translation method to more student focused approaches such as Total Physical Response(TPR),

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) which are more popular among language teachers (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As the recent inventions, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) and E-learning have been progressively used in English language classroom (Holmes & Gardner, 2006). Technology has generated opportunities and challenges to the teachers and learners to a great extent since technology enables teachers to present themselves in an effective way. It also helps students learn with little burden. A recent surge in the use of ICT is having an impact on how English and other languages are taught and learned (White, 2003).

The use of ICT in developing countries has generated a significant amount of interest in recent years, in large part due to the One Laptop per Child program (Kozma & Vota, 2014). The revolution of ICT is a major challenge as well as opportunity for teachers' professional development. In case of English as Foreign Language EFL teachers, teaching and learning with ICT requires specific competencies (Hakkarainen et al., 2001). In an EFL context like that of Nepal, which is characterized to have a scarcity of teaching/learning materials, the use of technology seems to be even more relevant because technology ensures access to a large volume of resources related to language teaching and learning (Olaore, 2014). The Government of Nepal envisions the introduction of ICT as a means of transforming traditional pedagogies (Rana, Greenwood and Fox-Turnbull, 2018). The National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2005 for the first time included ICT to use as a tool for delivering information (MoES, 2005). Then, the reformed National Curriculum Framework, 2007 reiterated the plan and stressed the need for ICT to be implemented throughout the country (MoES 2007). Dawadi and Shakya (2016) assert that the expansion of internet infrastructures throughout Nepal is on the way and suggest that it should increase the possibility of e-learning and enable school teachers to access the latest online information and facilitate rural school students' education. However, Thapa and Saebo (2011) observe that a lack of high-quality internet, electricity, and supporting infrastructure are major challenges in Nepal's rural schools. Dawadi and Shakya (2016) report the lack of skilled workforce, unreliable and costly internet facility, low level of ICT literacy in rural communities, high hills and mountains, lack of hydropower in the countryside and low power solar energy, and lack of security for ICT infrastructures. Rana, Greenwood, Fox-Turnbull, and Wise (2018) reported a range of problems in the introduction of ICT in rural areas in Nepal and suggested that the strategies currently used to overcome them are inadequate and potentially unsustainable.

Teachers in different countries in the world may have different perceptions about ICT in English as Second Language ESL or EFL context. Those who have good ICT knowledge may favor online teaching while those who have less might dislike it. For example, an American study (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011) found that teachers appreciated incorporating

ICT in learning, improved their use, and expanded the knowledge of ICT and that they were able to comfortably use ICT in the teaching and learning process. A British study (Borwarnginn & Tate, 2014) with college lecturers reported that the incorporation of ICT in the classroom teaching increased students' engagement and collaboration in learning. Another British study (Spicer & Stratford, 2001) asserted that the strategy of virtual field trips (VFT) gradually reduced teachers' lectures and increased students' participation in the classroom. Similarly, In New Zealand, a study (Ham & Davey, 2005) found that students in the universities showed little interest in using email for their academic activities and the result demotivated the integration of ICT in teaching and learning activities. However, a study (Duncan, 2004) reported the effective practice of ICT in higher education than primary education. In Estonia, a study (Siibak & Vinter, 2010) found that the role of family was more crucial in the e-learning process than the teacher in the case of preschool children. A study (Prins, Sluijsmans, Kirschner, & Strijbos, 2005) in Belgium, Germany, Netherland, Poland, and Spain found that the quality of tutors' moderation skills was significant in motivating the students to participate in group discussion. A Turkish study (Aydin, 2005) with online mentors reported that the teachers enjoyed the role of moderators and facilitators in the online teaching environment and less burden for administrative roles. A study (Anja, Roger & Stella 2006) in European schools found that their students developed independent learning capacity in their learning styles.

In Pakistan, a study (Mahmood, Soomro, & Chandio, 2015) found that most of the teachers agreed that the use of ICT initiated the habit of self-learning that resulted in the better academic performance of the students. However, a study (Obaydullah & Rahim, 2019) in Bangladesh found that the school teachers were unable to integrate ICTs in their class due to a lack of infrastructure. Nevertheless, the previous study (Hossain, Salam, & Shilpi, 2016) in Bangladesh found that teachers needed extra time for the preparation of the class once they had to integrate ICT in higher education. In Nepal, a study (Rana, 2020a) revealed that due to a lack of proper training and infrastructure, teachers faced problems to integrate ICT in education, and argued that teacher educators were self-motivated to develop their digital competencies to make teaching and learning process effective.

The incorporation of advanced technology into ELT pedagogy in specific is thought to bring some considerable changes (Singh, 2019). Similarly, it is now a compulsion to incorporate ICT tools in school education (Ministry of Education, 2013). Likewise, Ministry of Education (MoE) is inspiring the use of integrated educational technologies and this is filtering into the English language classroom in most parts of Nepal (Acharya, 2014). Similarly, we can see that some of the well-facilitated government-aided and private schools are assimilating 'Midas e-Learning' in primary and lower secondary level which is one of the significant steps of bringing new technologies in instructing students in language learning activities. It is not new for teachers to integrate technology in their teaching at secondary schools in Nepal. There

is a long history of using old/traditional technology tools such as audio, video, projector, slides, tape-recorder, radio, TV, telephone and so on. The annexation of new innovative technology tools such as laptop, smart board (interactive whiteboard), LCD projector, smart phone, multimedia, the Internet and social networking sites (SNSs) in the educational settings (Salehi & Salehi, 2012) has transformed the mode of constructing knowledge. ICT has become a very significant fragment of the educational delivery and management processes (Acharya, 2014). It is becoming progressively significant in both our personal and professional lives. The Information and Communication Technologies are now an essential part of language teaching although there are evident disparities between different countries and different regions within the same countries. Though some studies like (Raman & Mohamed, 2013) ,(Lubis, 2018), (Salehi & Salehi, 2012) carried out on the prospects and challenges faced by secondary teachers while integrating ICT in Nepalese ESL Classrooms outside Nepal, there is very limited number in Nepal. Thus, this study adds to bridge up the existing gap.

The importance of ICT in developing countries is very important since the teachers and students there have many more problems in incorporating ICT. Some of such problems, for example, can be lack of infrastructure – not having the internet connectivity, frequent power cut or even not having the electricity, knowhow about ICT integration, negligence, lack of computer and other necessary devices, to name a few (Hanna, 2009). The Government of Nepal (2020) asserts that the emerging popularity of social media is a crucial driver for the internet adoption in Nepal as the country is the second top nation in using the social media in the South Asia, Bhutan being the first. In the meantime, the popularity of social media can be transferred to the teaching and learning process since during the time of pandemic, teaching and learning can be initiated through an online mode. In Nepal a very few studies have been conducted to investigate prospect and challenges of secondary school teachers about ICT integration and especially in the rural parts of the nation the use of ICT has not been explored at the secondary level so this study is an attempt to investigate on the same.

Materials and Methods

This is a qualitative phenomenological study which tried to explore prospects and challenges faced by Secondary Teachers while integrating ICT in Nepalese ESL Classrooms students' frame of references (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2010). As the purpose was to elicit in-depth information about teachers' strategies to deal with disruptive behaviour, it used semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions to elicit rich and in-depth information about teachers' strategies for dealing with classroom disruption (Denzin, 2019). The participants in the study included eight schools and 16 teachers at different schools in Nepal. They were selected purposefully since selecting the best participant ensures the intended information (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The telephonic interview was conducted and open-ended questions were administrated electronically and all necessary directions were provided to them so that they

could respond to those questions with flying colours. All the ethical considerations were maintained to collect data and complete anonymity has been maintained and after developing a proper rapport with those students and mentioning the purpose of the research, data was collected.

Results and Discussion

Most Frequently Used ICT Tools in Classroom

Throughout the world there is awareness of the fundamental role of new ICT tools in the field of education. The last few decades have seen a dramatic rise of technologies within the field of education, and it was known by terms such as teaching or/and instructional aids. Teaching and instructional aids include the use of slide projector, television, radio, audio and video cassettes, etc., in the teaching and learning situations (Al-Zaidiyeen, Mei, & Fook, 2010). Among the ubiquitous ICT tools, YouTube is the most frequently-accessed Internet-based video website worldwide that pre-service teachers have grown up with (Duffy, 2008) ; (Ashraf, 2009). Similarly, in the present study mobile was the most used technology for teaching. Likewise, projectors, laptop, smart boards are also found to be used by the majority of the teachers. For example, one of the teachers reported the following:

I have used laptop, smart board, and internet, multi-media tools to teach in my classroom which makes class interesting, amusing, informative and catchy (T-2).

Further, it has been found that the availability of internet had made teaching learning easier in school (T-5). Likewise, some teachers were found using YouTube, Facebook messenger, zoom, etc. (T-11). However; some teachers only used mobile phones as ICT tools for searching word meanings (T- 3).

Overall, the study found that the majority of teachers had excess to the ICT tools whereas some teachers did not have that opportunity. Likewise, most of the teachers used laptop, desktop, projector, mobile phones as the ICT tools.

Relevance of ICT Tools in ESL Classroom

A study (Yunus, Nordin, Salehi, Embi, & Salehi, 2013) found that the ICT is relevant in ESL classroom due to the benefits like attracting students' attention, assisting students' learning process, facilitating to improve learners' vocabulary and endorsing meaningful learning. Likewise, A study by Young (2003) exhibits that ESL learners were overawed by composing texts. However, after incorporating ICT in teaching, more precisely the Internet, students took a better interest and were covertly enthused which resulted in increase in performance too. In the present study, the majority of teachers reported that the ICT tools were relevant to the ESL classroom. For instance, one of the teachers reported the following:

Yes, ICT tools are very much relevant in ESL classrooms. As English is Second language to our students, they face difficulties in coping with multiple issues like vocabulary and grammatical correctness. Using ICT tools in ESL classroom work as visual aids to kids. This can help save our time as well as work as a boost for learning. An ICT tool makes it easier to achieve estimated outcomes as it motivates students (T-5).

Furthermore, the study also found that the ICT tools were relevant in ESL class as those tools assisted authentic teaching materials along with the native sound (T- 2). However, some teachers admitted that though ICT is relevant in ESL classroom, some teachers are not incorporating due to poor infrastructure (T- 7). But some teachers felt that the ICT tools helped to bring outsider world to the classroom (T- 9).

Overall, the study found that ICT is relevant in ESL classroom as it facilitates in making class interesting, interactive and effective and even motivate teachers. However, still some teachers had no opportunity to incorporate ICT tools though they knew that ICT tools were relevant in ESL classroom.

Academic Purpose for Using ICT Tool

According to Cui and Wang (2008), universities in United Kingdom (UK) have made the use of mobile phones to store and retrieve information such as e-books, instructional materials, and review students' marks thus making teaching and learning practices more effective. Yildirim (2007) found that teachers use ICT more frequently for the preparation of handouts and tests for the promote critical thinking. Similarly, Palak and Walls (2009) found that teachers mainly use technology to support their existing teaching approaches but rarely to foster student-centered learning. In the present study, most of the teachers were found using ICT tools to develop language skills. For instance, one of the teachers reported the following:

For getting my students to practice language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Generally, I utilize ICT tools to collect information, assists students various video files of native speakers, film with subtitle which are really good resources for learning English language (T-7).

The study further found that some teachers used ICT tools as instructional materials for learning facilitation that helps the learner autonomy (T-2). Whereas, some teachers were found using ICT tools for providing assignments (T-9). While other teachers were found using ICT tools summarize the teaching issues from contextualizing the scene to exemplifying.

Overall, the study found that the teachers were using ICT tools to for getting relevant updated ideas for effective teaching, developing language skills for teaching English i.e. communication skills and for making good understanding to the students.

Problems in Using ICT Tools

The challenges related to the accessibility of new technologies for teachers are widespread and differ from country to country. Empirica's (2006) European study found that lack of access is the largest barrier and that different challenges to using ICT in teaching were reported by teachers, for example a lack of computers and a lack of adequate material. Pelgrum (2001) explored practitioners' views from 26 countries on the main obstacles to ICT implementation in schools. He concluded that four of the top ten barriers were related to the accessibility of ICT. In Turkey, Toprakci (2006) found that the lack of technical support was one of two significant barriers to ICT integration in science education in schools and might be considered "serious". In the present study also most of the teachers reported the lack of proper infrastructure, digital literacy, power cut as the major challenges. For example, one of the teachers reported the following:

Yes, not all the time but sometimes I get distracted due to power cut. This causes problem in completing the estimated target course. We do not have internet access in every class therefore generally I teach via pre-planned audio visual materials. In that sense, not being able to use internet in the class also a problem (T-15).

Furthermore, the study found that lack of appropriate classroom was also the challenge to incorporate ICT in ESL classroom (T-13). Some teachers had the problem as students sometimes were unaware of surfing the net in correct ways. Other teachers as well as mostly parents felt that the students would misuse it so they didn't provide facilities (T-11). Some teachers have not realized specific problems while practicing these tools. But on the part of the learners, there were several difficulties such as lack of access, technological skills, and devices and so on (T-1).

Overall, the study found that there are numerous problems like literacy in ICT, internet instability, frequent power cut-off, expensive price of internet and so on due to which sometimes even the prepared materials and resources were difficult to be used in classroom.

Institutional Support of ICT

One of the major complex barriers that discourages effective and successful ICT integration into education is inadequate administrative support (Bitner & Bitner, 2002); (Sife, Lwoga, & Sanga, 2007). Administrative support is a decisive factor in the effective integration of instructional technologies (Van Melle, Cimellaro, & Shulha, 2003). According to Bower (2001), administrative support is a significant factor which is thought to have a big effect on professors' attitudes toward the use of computer technology for teaching purposes. Institutional support such as incentives for teachers is significant for the effective adoption of computer technologies into education. The present study found that though there was positive attitude of institution towards the incorporation of ICT in ESL classroom, still majority of teachers didn't get the proper support. For instance, one of the teachers reported the following:

Institutions support to set up smart board, internet and provide loan to buy laptop etc. However, internet is still poor and there is no adequate board in every classroom and students cannot enjoy internet facilities except few classes (T-5).

The study further found that some teachers were supported by institution as school administration was positive to integrate ICT in English language classroom so teachers were provided lab and a classroom with a projector (T-4). Likewise, some teachers were lucky to get internet support facilities, ICT training, other facilities like photocopy, printing, electricity etc. (T-15) as per the needs Whereas, other teachers didn't receive any support at all (T-3).

Overall, the study found that the only few teachers got the institutional support for incorporating ICT in ESL classroom but majority of teachers lacked the proper institutional support.

Conclusion

This study intended to figure out the skills and motivation of secondary level English teachers in using ICTs. The participants' views reveal that the teachers were using ICT tools to for getting relevant updated ideas for effective teaching and developing language skills .Likewise, the use of the internet, search engine, zoom, and Google doc. by some of the teachers implies their gradual shift and progress in skills of using ICT in English language teaching. Only the use of traditional ICT tools implies teachers' insufficiency to handle modern and effective education-based tools indicates that teachers need to be ensured in their efficiency, confidence and skill to integrate various ICT tools in their teaching. The study also found high motivation of teachers towards ICTs and their use in language teaching even though they do not have enough confidence, skills and knowledge as well as support in using different ICT tools and applications.

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