English Language Teachers' Experiences of Using ICT in Online Teaching

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Abstract

After COVID-19 pandemic, online learning has predominated over traditional face-to-face instruction. Education was one of the most affected areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims at investigating university level English language teachers 'experiences of using ICT in online teaching. The study intends to examine teachers' perceived benefits and challenges of using ICT tools in online mode of teaching. For this purpose, I selected 80 English language teachers from sixteen campuses of Rupandehi. I used quantitative survey research design for the study. I collected data through closed-ended questionnaire only. This investigation demonstrates the satisfactory experiences of English language teachers in using ICT in online teaching. Use of ICT can facilitate and make teaching easier maximizing the learner autonomy, transferring traditional mode of teaching in learning English. Lack of basic ICT knowledge and skills, the digital divide, and students' laziness were some of the challenges of using ICT. Moreover, ICT use in online teaching can contribute learners to work in their own pace; provide a new platform of learning by expanding the access of resources in learning system.

Keywords : COVID-19, digital divide, learner autonomy, online teaching

Introduction

Because of the fast spread of Corona Virus (COVID-19), education system throughout the world was badly affected and interrupted. The entire education system of the world had been facing serious challenges. In the modern era, due to the technological revolution, human beings no longer find classical education to be suitable for them. Because of constraints imposed by social distance, the effects were so severe that all educational institutions were forced to close. UNICEF (2021) stated that 1 in 7 children missed up to three-fourths of their in-person learning as a result of these lockdowns, which caused millions of children to be excluded from their places of education. From 24 March 2020

until 11 June 2020, the government of Nepal enacted a state-wide lockdown that forbade all non-essential services, closure of borders, and domestic and international travel (UNESCO, 2020). The academia in Nepal has implemented online learning as a substitute for traditional face-to-face instruction. Through the support of internet-based information and communication technology (ICT), this innovative educational approach has already achieved a notable height (Impey, 2020). In the beginning, schools, colleges and universities remained closed for few months. So, teaching, learning and examination systems in schools and universities were affected in Nepal too. Millions of students, teachers, educationists and parents found themselves in a helpless position. But after few months, educational institutions were forced to shift teaching modality to online teaching and learning. UNO (2020, August) report shows that The COVID-19 epidemic, which has affected approximately 1.6 billion students across more than 190 countries and all continents, has caused the biggest damage to educational systems. Ninety four percent of students worldwide have been affected by school, campus, and other learning space closures, with the percentage rising to up to 99% in low and lower-middle income nations.

The use of ICT in English language education and learning exposes students to a lot of language. Integration of ICT focuses on combining cultural, linguistic, and content knowledge making language teaching efficient and more comprehensive. ICT implications enable educators and learners to collaborate in engaging, interactive, and multimodal environments with virtually endless teaching and learning possibilities (Paudel, 2021). ICTs can significantly improve the quality of learning, the effectiveness of teaching, the accessibility of materials, and management practices, among other elements of education and learning (Haddad & Draxler, 2005). Similarly, in this respect, Jayanthi and Kumar (2015) asserted that the use of ICT in teaching and learning inspires students and teachers to provide high-quality instruction; modern pedagogy incorporated with the use of ICTs. This study aims to investigate university level English teachers' perceptions of applying ICT tools in online teaching. For this purpose, I formulated two research questions.

1. What are English teachers' experiences of using ICT tools in online teaching?
2. What problems do they encounter while using ICT tools for online instruction?

Review of literature

Online education gives learners freedom to contribute in the learning process and facilitates them to employ virtual teaching strategies to get more ideas of English language. Through Zoom, Google Meet, Team link as a medium of both way audio-visual communications in case of teaching learning. Presentation of slides is possible through screen sharing option in most of these platforms. In on line learning situation, teachers and students get an opportunity to be more active compared with traditional mode of learning environment. Proper planning of online teaching facilitates to promote quality in English language instruction and learning.

Moreover, use of ICT have the potential to be educational tools for both teaching and learning because they improve communication between learners and online and offline technologically based gadgets. ICT is used in language learning to facilitate learner autonomy, interaction, and reflection. Regarding this, Goertler (2019) contended that online teaching can boost autonomous learning and learner corpora providing authentic materials and making tasks communicative. It also provides the opportunities of self-learning, provides ample exposure and helpful mode to read during the pandemic situation, planned online learning and teaching enhances learning atmosphere. In a setting where teachers and students have very few physical resources, the use of ICT technologies in language classrooms places an emphasis on gathering, analyzing, and organizing information to expose learners to vast and authentic resources.

In the beginning, economically poor schools and campuses were unable to set up digital education as an alternative to traditional learning methods. But later on, most of urban institutions are able to run online education. However, digital divide is paving the way for inequality in educational opportunity to all the learners. Smart android device is not easily affordable for many learners. Due to social, economic, and geographic disparities, everyone does not have equal access to opportunities for online education (Shi & Yu, 2016). Majority of students hardly have had the access of lap tops or mobile phones at homes. The disparities between advantaged and underprivileged students have grown further as a result of the digital divide and unequal access to online learning and resources (Dawadi et al., 2020). As a result a large number of learners are forced to drop out schools and campuses.

The COVID-19 school closing had increased drop-out rates. For instance, there were 48 students in M.Ed. first semester in English language class in one constituent campus of TU in Rupandehi but in the second semester, there were only 30 students. In Nepal, many parents both domestically and abroad have lost their employment. During the COVID-19 school closures, children from low-income households suffer facing a double disadvantage: disruption to class time and economic instability (Tiruneh, 2020). Lack of high speed internet connectivity in every part of the country is another problem which has made digital education less effective to the learners.

Some remote villages are still outside the periphery of any network coverage. In this context, utilizing ICT in education is one of the strategies outlined in the ICT Master Plan (2013–17) for achieving Nepal's educational objectives (MOE, 2013). Similar to this, the most current SSDP (2017-2023) aspires to influence ICT as a significant tool to better educational governance and management, increase access to teaching and learning resources, and improve classroom delivery (MOE, 2016), the ICT master plan (2013-17) takes use of ICT in education as the strategy of reaching the goals of education in Nepal (MOE, 2013). Likewise, the recent SSDP (2017-2023) aims to use ICT as a significant tool to improve classroom delivery, maximizes access to teaching and learning materials, and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of educational governance and management

(MOE, 2016).Almost all schools and universities have minimal experience of teaching online in the context of Nepal.

Since teachers haven't been trained for the position and haven't previously taught online, the majority of them don't seem to have the necessary ICT abilities to administer online courses. Only 1% of teachers in community schools, according to Pandit (2020), are capable of teaching online. Only 56% of people, on average, are thought to have only limited access to the internet. Many parents, teachers, and children lack computer literacy. In reality, only 65.94% of the country is literate (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012), and the percentage of computer illiterates may be higher. The COVID-19 pandemic's expansion has caused a significant shift in the way that education is delivered in the world as online education is typically regarded as a new approach to formal education. In this context, Lorenzo (2008) asserted that in virtual learning settings, exchanges between teachers and students, student-to-student interactions, and class discussions give students the chance to support one another emotionally, which is crucial for their well-being while they deal with the epidemic or disaster's aftermath.

When teachers and students interact meaningfully, online teaching and learning becomes successful and productive. High-speed interaction between lecturers and pupils is necessary. In order to get desired results, a skilled language instructor always strikes a balance between ICT pace, learners' skills, and teaching strategies. ICT has also assisted in the conception and production of materials in a collaborative manner. In a similar spirit, Alharbi (2014) claimed that before the introduction of ICT, the creation of materials on a large scale and with originality was very challenging but now ICT eliminates such difficulties and turns into an essential teaching tool for language teachers. ICT improves learning quality by enabling access to the vast amount of knowledge and information that is available worldwide. The qualitative study by Lee (2017) on eight teachers and two administrators discovered that new courses must be carefully developed using the most recent academic findings as a result of the growth of online teaching as a sign of educational improvement. In addition, Lim's (2020) study examined faculty attitudes towards the urgent adoption of the online form of instruction, finding that 49.3% of them were in favor, 27% were neutral regarding the introduction of online courses, and 22.7% were opposed. However, many of the responders indicated their disapproval of the required course material and the unwillingness of students to stick with the online sessions.

Through the use of technology-based education, teachers are the key agents in transforming teacher-centered instruction into learner-centered instruction. According to Duraku and Hoxha (2020), the extent of technology integration in the classroom is confirmed to be influenced by instructors' perceptions on teaching methodologies. They are also anticipated to play a crucial role in the successful implementation of online learning, supporting the requirements and expectations of the students rather than simply imparting the knowledge. While Serhan (2020) discovered that students had a negative attitude toward the usage of Zoom. Hebebci et al. (2020) investigated that lecturers and

students had both positive and negative views toward distant education. All of these studies suggest that teachers' dedication, motivation, commitment, support, technological expertise, and knowledge are necessary for online teaching and learning to be successful (Paudel, 2021).

Since March 2020, the majority of Nepal's academic institutions shifted their educational activities to online utilizing a variety of different apps including Google-Meet, Google-Class, Zoom, Microsoft-Teams etc., for a year. Nevertheless, the foundation aspect was pitiable. Both the instructors and the pupils lacked the necessary preparation to deal with the novel situation and technological tools (Dill et al., 2020). In contrast, the majority of students were found to be complaining about either not having digital devices (laptops, desk tablets, and mobile phones) or about how poorly the advanced online apps worked with the devices they did have in general, Day et al's (2020) study found that teachers and students had to deal with issues related to economic and technological aspects, such as limited financial resources, difficulty navigating the hardware and software of the internet, and frequent power outages that cut off their access to the internet.

Universities are being pushed by the COVID-19 epidemic to deploy online learning throughout all of their faculties and departments. In order to avoid academic loss, Tribhuvan University had declared that online education would be implemented. It has also taught both instructors and students in utilizing MS Team as official software for teaching, learning, emailing, and performing any work related to the university. It has also created online teaching guidelines and gave it domain email accounts for the teachers and students (TU, 2020). Similarly, prior to the epidemic, Nepal Open University offered classes and coursework online. Since then, it has emphasized its technology skill and continued to run its regular programmes. As a preventive measure against COVID-19, other universities, including Kathmandu University, Pokhara University, Mid-Western University, Far-Western University, and nearly all colleges, have been using online teaching and learning to maintain and run educational activities and prevent possible academic loss created by the closure. The goal of the current study is to better understand how English language teachers feel about the advantages and drawbacks of using ICT for online instruction.

Methodology

I purposivelyselected80 university-level English teachers from Rupandehi's two constituent and fourteen affiliated campuses to serve as the study's sample. Online surveying under quantitative inquiry was used to accomplish the goals. Respondents perform an online survey of a closed-ended questionnaire on a certain topic by typically filling out a form (Bhat, 2019). The study used both primary and secondary sources. English language instructors from sixteen campuses of Rupandehi, Nepal, who had been participating in online education during the pandemic period, were asked to complete an online survey questionnaire to gather the primary data. Reference books and journals served as the secondary data. Through e-mail and a link shared through Facebook

Messenger, a survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions was sent to the selected respondents. The data were collected, put through a descriptive analysis, and then simple statistical methods and percentages were used to examine them. The results were then discussed and interpreted.

Results and discussions

The findings and analysis of the data gathered via survey questionnaire are covered in this section of the study. Three themes have been used to organize the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the findings. They are as follows.

Teachers' experiences of online teaching

On a five-point scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, respondents were asked to express their opinions on how they experienced the advantages of online teaching (OT)and learning situation is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Teachers' experiences of online teaching (OT)

Details	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
OT facilitates and makes teaching easier	60 (75%)	20 (25%)	0	0
OT increases personalized instruction	56 (70%)	20 (25%)	4 (5%)	0
OT provides huge educational resources and huge language exposure	50(62.5%)	20 (25%)	10 (12.5)	0
OT accesses to global knowledge base	52 (65%)	24 (30%)	4 (5%)	0
OT facilitates interaction with resources	40 (50%)	32 (40%)	8 (10%)	0
OT can improve teaching and learning processes	36 (45%)	40 (50%)	4 (5%)	0
OT enhances students' creativity and critical thinking skill	32 (40%)	40 (50%)	8 (10%)	0
OT increases students' participation	28 (35%)	48 (60%)	4 (5%)	0
OT enhances collaboration	36 (45%)	40 (50%)	4 (5%)	0
OT addresses multi-level learners	24(30%)	36 (45%)	20(25%)	0
OT provides updated and authentic information	36 (45%)	40 (50%)	4 (5%)	0
OT tends to increase students' motivation	36 (45%)	36 (45%)	8 (10%)	0
OT enhances students' language skills	32 (40%)	36 (45%)	12 (15%)	0
OT supports for teachers' professional development	30 (37.5%)	40 (50%)	10 (12.5)	0
OT provides new platform of learning by connecting people of global village	48 (60%)	28 (35%)	4 (5%)	0

OT maximizes learning by increasing autonomous learning	52 (65%)	24 (30%)	4 (5%)	0
OT provides to the real world skills	20 (25%)	50(62.5%)	10 (12.5)	0
OT promotes life-long learning	24 (30%)	44 (55%)	12 (15%)	0
OT helps work in their own pace	40 (50%)	36 (45%)	4 (5%)	0
OT helps transfer traditional mode of teaching	40 (50%)	40 (50%)	0	0

Table 1 presents teachers' positive experiences towards the benefits of online teaching. This demonstrates the value of online education that 60 (75%) teachers strongly agreed and 20 (25%) agreed that online teaching can facilitate and make teaching easier. Again, 56 (70%) teachers strongly agreed and 20 (25%) agreed that OT can provide huge educational resources and huge language exposure. Further, 52 (65%) teachers strongly agreed and 24(30%) agreed that OT can access to global knowledge base. 40 (50%) teachers strongly and agreed 32 (40%) agreed that OT can facilitate interaction with resources. Moreover, 36 (45%) teachers strongly agreed and 40 (50%) agreed that OT can improve teaching and learning processes. 36 (45%) teachers strongly agreed and 36 (45%) agreed that OT tends to increase students' motivation. 32 (40%) teachers strongly agreed and 36 (45%) agreed that OT can enhance students' language skills. 30 (37.5%) teachers strongly agreed and 40 (50%) agreed that OT can support for teachers' professional development. 48 (60%) teachers strongly agreed and 28 (35%) agreed that OT can provide new platform of learning by connecting people of global village. Like-wise, 52 (65%) teachers strongly agreed and 24 (30%) agreed that OT can maximize learning by increasing autonomous learning In the same way, 20 (25%) teachers strongly agreed and 50 (62.5%) agreed that OT can provide smart generations to the real world skills. Similarly, 24 (30%) teachers strongly agreed and 44 (55%) agreed that OT can promote life-long learning. Moreover, 40 (50%) teachers strongly agreed and 36 (45%) agreed that OT can help work in their own pace. Finally, 40 (50%) teachers strongly agreed and 40 (50%) agreed that OT can help transfer traditional mode of teaching. Very few respondents disagreed about the benefits of online teaching.

Thus, the results display that majority of the respondents (75%) strongly agreed that online teaching can facilitate and make teaching easier. 65%strongly agreed that online teaching accesses to global knowledge base. Like-wise, Most of the participants (62%) agreed that online teaching can provide smart generations to the real world skills. Similarly, only 25% respondents disagreed that online teaching can address multi-level learners. None of respondents (100%) strongly disagreed about the above benefits of online teaching. In this way, the study clearly indicates that most of the respondents had positive experiences on online teaching.

Challenges in the use of ICT on online teaching

The teachers who responded were asked to rate the difficulties in their teaching on a four-point Likert scale, which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This information was used to determine the problems in the use of ICT on online teaching.

Table 2: Challenges in the use of ICT on online teaching

Details	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Low access of ICT facilities and resources create problem	20(25%)	40(50%)	16(20%)	4 (5%)
Teachers have lack of time management skill for online courses	24 (30%)	32(40%)	12(15%)	12(15%)
Inability of using most of ICT tools and devices	40 (50%)	20(25%)	10 (12.5%)	10(12.5%)
Unreliable internet at home creates problem	32 (40%))	20 (25%	20 (25%)	8(10%)
Students' inability to afford ICT devices	16(20%)	24(30%)	30(37.5%)	10(12.5%)
Lack of adequate ICT knowledge and skills, hinder online classes	60 (75%)	20(25%)	0	0
Inadequate and inappropriate training to the teachers hinders the online classes	20 (25%)	40(50%)	10 (12.5%)	1012.5%)
Use of online classes increases digital divide	50(62.5%)	20(25%)	6 (7.5%)	4 (.5%)
Administrators do not provide the necessary technical support	20 (25%)	56(70%)	4 (5%)	0
There is limited and delayed feedback	32(40%)	32(40%)	16 (20%)	0
It creates habit of plagiarism in students	20(25%)	56(70%)	4(5%)	0
Online courses make students lazy	50(62.5%)	20(25%)	6 (7.5%)	4 (.5%)

Table 2 displays that half percentage of the participants 40 (50%) agreed and 25% strongly agreed that low access of ICT facilities and resources create problem in online education, Less than fifty percent teachers i.e. 40% agreed and 30% strongly agreed that they have lack of time-management skill for online courses and 50% agreed that inability of using most of ICT tools and devices consistent internet at home are the great problems that most of the participants (i.e.85.7%) practiced in online courses. Likewise, 40% teachers strongly agreed unreliable internet at home created them problem. In the same way, 30% teachers agreed inability to afford ICT devices as the barrier. 75% teachers strongly agreed that lack of adequate ICT knowledge and skills, hinder online classes. Accordingly, 50% students agreed inadequate and inappropriate training to the teachers hinders the online classes. In the same way, 62.5% teachers strongly agreed use of online

classes increases digital divide whereas 70% teachers agreed administrators do not provide the necessary technical support. Similarly, equal number of teachers40% strongly agreed and agreed there is limited and delayed feedback. 70%teachers agreed online education creates habit of plagiarism in students. 62.5% teachers strongly agreed online courses make students lazy.

Majority of the respondents realized that lack of adequate ICT knowledge and skills, digital divide and students' laziness were the major challenges in the use of ICT in online teaching and learning.

ICT tools used by teachers in online teaching

According to a four-point Likert scale with responses ranging from most, often, sometimes, and never, instructors were asked what ICT tools and in what proportion they employed in their instruction of the English language.

Table 3: ICT tools used by teachers in online teaching

ICT tools	Most	Often	Sometimes	Never
Radio and TV	0	0	4 (5%)	76(95%)
Tape- recorder	16 (20%)	24(30%)	36 (45%)	4 (5%)
Mobile phone	52 (65%)	20(25%)	8 (10%)	0
Multimedia projector	36 (45%)	40(50%)	4 (5%)	0
Computer and laptops	40 (50%)	32(40%)	8 (10%)	0
Interactive white board	0	0	4 (5%)	76(95%)
e-books	10 (12.5%)	40(50%)	30(37.5%)	0
Internet	40 (50%)	36(45%)	4 (5%)	0
e-mails	16 (20%)	28 (35%)	36 (45%)	0
IPods	0	0	4 (5%)	76(95%)
YouTube	52 (65%)	20(25%)	8 (10%)	0
Films	0	0	4 (5%))	76(95%)
Face book	36 (45%)	40(15%)	4 (5%)	0
Skype	4 (5%)	8 (10%)	16 (20%)	52 (65%)

Table 3 lists the ICT resources and how frequently English language teachers utilize them. The table shows the outcomes that mobile phone and YouTube (65%), were mostly used ICT tools they were followed by the use of computer and laptops (50%), multimedia projector and face book (45%). Accordingly, e-books and multi-media projector were often used (50%) and they were followed by Internet (45%), computer and laptops (40%). Similarly, tape-recorder and e-mails (45%) were sometimes used and they were followed by e-books (37.5%) and Skype (20%). Like-wise, radio, TV, iPod, interactive white board and films (95%) were never used ICT tools and they were followed by Skype (65%) by the majority of the English language teachers.

The results shows that mobile phone, e-books and multimedia projector were frequently used ICT tools, while tape recorder and e-mails were occasionally utilized. Radio, TV, iPod, interactive white board, and movies were never used ICT tools by the majority of the teachers while teaching and learning English language.

Conclusions and implications

This study investigated university level English teachers' experiences of using ICT in online teaching in terms of opportunities and challenges. The study reveals both positive and negative experiences of English teachers in using ICT in online teaching. The study also reveals how the teachers' usage of the internet, Facebook, mobile devices, Zoom, and Google suggests a gradual improvement in their ability to use ICT in English language instruction. Online teaching increases personalized instruction, and facilitates teachers to make teaching easier, maximize the learner autonomy and transfer traditional mode of teaching to modern mode of teaching English. Moreover, online learning helps learners work in their own pace and can provide new platform of learning by connecting people of global village expanding the access of resources. Use of ICT engages students in interaction while instructing on literary genres, language techniques, and aspects. Furthermore, the research shows the limited ICT infrastructures, lack of fundamental ICT knowledge and skills of teachers in using ICT, students' lethargy, and the digital divide as the barriers of online teaching. Due to a lack of resources and their confidence, they are unable to impart the knowledge they possess. The study indicates that mobile phone and YouTube were mostly used ICT tools, e-books and multi-media projectors were often used, tape-recorder and e-mails, were sometimes used, and radio, TV, iPod, interactive white board and films were never used ICT tools by the majority of the teachers while teaching English language.

For online teaching and learning, teachers need to receive adequate and pertinent ICT training. In order to properly use ICTs, they must also undertake a paradigm shift away from outdated traditional methods of instruction and toward more contemporary ones. Teachers need to have regular engagement with it for proper handling. Both teachers and students need to follow quality online teaching strategies and they need to reform in online teaching as to fulfill pedagogical goal of teaching English language. Without being competent on technological, pedagogical and content knowledge, they cannot run online classes effectively. The study has some limitations as the information was gathered via a closed-ended questionnaire only from 80 teachers of sixteen constituent and affiliated campuses of TU in Rupandehi. The study would be more reliable and valid if it represented the voices of students, parents, and administrators of public and private campuses. Therefore, the future researchers can take care of such issues in their studies and can also utilize additional research methods, such as focus group discussion, classroom observation, open-ended questionnaire and interviews to investigate a comprehensive picture of online education.

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