The Impact Of Information Communication Technology (Ict) On Students Integrated Skills At Bs Level: A Case Study Of Pashto L1 Speakers In District Dir Upper

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Abstract

Technology has become an essential aspect of life in the present era which is used in every field. Information Communication Technology is integrated in teaching-learning in many ways. This integration has both its positive and negative impacts. Same is the case with its impact on English language proficiency of the foreign students of English language. On one hand, its use causes the less realization of grammatical rules, negating punctuations, shortcuts in spellings and poor expressions; on the other hand, it equally contributes to students' English language proficiency in many ways. The present study involved a survey based on a questionnaire and English language proficiency test- exploring the impact of modern technology on students' proficiency at inter level in EFL context. Finding suggests that the use of ICT has more merits than its detrimental effects and is far more beneficial since it contributes a great deal to students' English language proficiency in many ways.

Keywords: Information communication technology, EFL, context

1. Introduction

Technology has undoubtedly become heavily integrated in almost every field. There is almost no escaping it. People rely on their cell phones and laptops for everything whether it be finding a recipe for dinner or researching the hottest stocks. Technology is used everywhere and in almost every part of the life. It affects how one shops, socializes, connects, plays, and most importantly learns.

Education has also been heavily influenced by the integration of technology as it is fast becoming the only way to reach students. In addition to the use and promotion of several LMS, there have been several other technological advancements that have forever changed the face of education.

With the emerging of modern technology and recent invention and its easy access, education is influenced both in terms of teaching and learning. The classrooms are more convenient for learning with the use of modern technology. Students are excited about being able to use technology and therefore, are more apt to learn. With the use of modern technology, Student can have access to digital textbooks that are constantly updated and often more vivid, helpful, creative, and a lot cheaper than those old heavy books. Now a days, students can have access a full library via a mobile app on any smart phone or iPod. It is used to enhance learning and helps a great deal the students in the field of research and collecting information on any topic. Just like the students, teachers are equally facilitated through the use of modern technology. Its use has made traditional passive learning broken. With modern technology in the classroom, the role of the teacher becomes that of the encourager, adviser, facilitator and coach.

2. Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Hocine (2012) defines information as the data that have been processed in a meaningful and purposeful shape. In the words of Potts, 'communication' refers to the process by which meaning is assigned and properly conveyed with the aim to develop shared understanding. According to Billowes (2001), the term communication refers to transfer of information from one person or party to another, not necessarily involving confidence, but at least it should be understandable enough to the receiver.

3. Technology

Etymologically, the term 'technology' came into use from the roots 'techno' which refers to the concepts of technique, skill or art, and 'logos' which means science. Thus, the derivative 'technology' can be defined as a scientific knowledge of some art or skill.

Information Communication Technology (ICT hereafter) is a construct that refers to different types of technology that are mainly used for communications. It stands much similar to Information Technology (IT). However, a fundamental difference is that ICT focuses more on those technologies that are used in one way or other in communication e.g., like cell-phones,

Internet and wireless networks, among other devices (Yang, S. C., & Chen, Y. J. (2007). ICT is that form(s) technology of that supports activities in any form and forum(s) concerning information. Activities related to ICT may include: accessing, collecting, processing, categorizing, saving and presenting data. These activities now also involve collaboration and communication with a rapid speed. Hence, this is widely and popularly known as ICT: information and communication technology.

ICT needs now a broader approach than before and deserves to be considered all its uses in the forms of digital technology that already exists and facilitates users in different fields and in different shapes. In this way, ICT broadly covers any product that stores, retrieves, manipulates, transmits or receives information electronically in a digital or soft form. Personal computers (PC), television, email, robots, smart-phone etc. are some of the popular examples in this regard.

The present study explores the role of ICT in English language proficiency of the students who are the native speakers of Pashto and learning English as a foreign language in their educational institute as a compulsory subject. Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (4th edition) defines 'language proficiency' as: "The degree of skill with which a person can use a language, such as how well a person can read, write, speak, or understand language".

4. Hypothesis

The use of modern digital devices such as mobile phone contributes to students' English language proficiency in many ways in EFL context. The study assumes that the use of this modern device is far more supportive and their positive effects are larger than their detrimental outcomes.

5. Objectives

The study at hand aims to achieve the following objectives:
1. To determine the impact of the use of ICT on students' English language proficiency in EFL context;
2. To explore the role played by ICT in students' learning of English as a foreign language;
3. To find out the degree of the influence of the use of ICT on students' English language proficiency in terms of enriching their vocabulary and their semantic relations, learning spellings and their expressions.

6. Area of the Study

The study mainly falls under Applied Linguistics, particularly Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). To a lesser extent, the study also overlaps with Sociolinguistics, particularly

Contact Linguistics, as it is concerned with the effect of English language on Pashto speakers and ICT as a source of language change.

7. Review of Literature

The present study surveys the relevant literature on the topic in an exploratory manner. It presents a brief background to the use of modern technology in general. The role of ICT is further analyzed in the field of education with emphasis on the renovations and conveniences both for teachers and students. The popular trend of using ICT in the field of language teaching and learning has also been discussed. The evolution of technology has dramatically changed the human life. People of this modern era all over the world use technology and get the benefits of it in every fields of the life. Technology plays significant role in almost every field of human life: in education, industry, medicine, communication, transportation and so on. Though modern technology is not without its drawbacks, but due to its excessive benefits the drawbacks are not realized and mostly overlooked.

8. ICT and Education

The present era, as marked by globalization and digitalization of social and economic life, the importance of ICT is undoubted. With the use of ICT, access to knowledge, skills and qualification opportunity and their acquisition has become easier, faster and more efficient. From students' or learners' point of view, the chief merits of ICT are realized in higher schools in the form of more motivating courses, rapid flow of information and easier contact with students and teachers (Alharbi,2014). The advent of educational Technologies is viewed as an important development in bringing improvement in the quality of education and enhancing the level of students' educational learning and performance. On the whole, ICT has demonstrated a significant positive effect in the field of education on student achievement and the teaching and learning processes (Bialo & Sivin-Kachala, 1995). Students studying in a technologically rich set up have been found to have achieved higher grades in all subject areas, developed a positive attitude towards learning, and generated new ideas, and gained self- confidence (Webster-Stratton et.al2004).

ICT has positively changed the whole system of education. Computer-based education has positive effects on students of higher level and has produce small but positive changes in student's attitudes toward instruction. It has also reduced the amount of time needed for instruction (Davis, 2006).

9. Using ICT in the Subject of English

The spread of English language at global level has resulted into the introduction of new models and methodologies of teaching foreign languages. One such recently introduced models is ICT based instructions i.e., using ICT tools in practical and innovative ways. The use of ICT in language classes is still often perceived as a novelty by scholars, and both teachers and students.

Yet, the promising aspect of ICT in enhancing English language proficiency and learning within English lessons appears still controversial. Using ICT in classrooms while teaching English as a foreign language across schools has become a topic for much discussion (Alharbi, 2014).

Zayli'e (2007) analyzes the effects of using computer program as a new means of instructions in teaching English grammar (verb and tenses) on students' English language proficiency at first secondary level in Jeddah. Students' comprehension and knowledge levels were measured as per Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive objectives. The researcher compared students' achievement with results obtained from traditional methods of instructions that are based on verbal presentation and use of whiteboard and colored markers. The sample size included 44 students divided into two groups: a control group and experimental group with 22 students in each studying the same contents. The study used the instrument of an achievement standard test, which was designed and tested for its validity and reliability prior to conduction. Results indicated a noticeable improvement in the case of experimental group in comprehension and knowledge in the post-test. These findings also confirm other studies that established the practical role of ICT in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The study of Kondo, Ishikawa, Smith, Sakamoto, Shimomura, and Wada (2012) attempted to determine the effects of using ICT in teaching composition and the writing performance of tenth grade students in Amman. The total 40 subjects in this study were also equally divided into two groups: an experimental group and control group. An achievement test was used as the study instrument. Findings indicated that ICT has positive impact on students' language performance in studying English composition. The experimental grouping the test outperformed the control group.

10. The Role of ICT in Language Learning

ICT can be used to support teachers in many ways. First, ICT can be used to improve the efficiency of preparing their classes (Mukma at al. 2008). Secondly, ICT can help teacher to customize his classes according to individual student's needs. It can be used to improve the collection of student's data through which teacher can easily manage students in administration of educational institutions. Finally, ICT can easily facilitate communication between teachers, students, parents and administration (Hsu, 2012). ICT has allowed all students and learners, outside or inside of the classroom to have access to learning materials, communicate with teachers and classmates and to connect every time and anywhere via internet. A successful language learner must have access and exposure to authentic and comprehensible text and materials in target language. However, for language learners, whether in class or self-study setting, access to authentic materials is often limited. Thus language learners search for authentic information and communication. ICT stands out as a source of solution to this problem (Sun, 2011). Digital technologies particularly have made access easier to language learning materials better than the ordinary libraries. With the help of digital ICT, learner can easily access to specific segment and take less time to locate them (Thorton & Dudley, 1996).

11. Methodology

Methodology of this study describes the nature of the study, population, sampling, research tools, collection and analysis of the data.

11.1.Procedure of the study

The study aimed to investigate the impact of ICT on English language proficiency of the students at BS level. Since this study is correlative in nature i.e., it explores the correlation of the use of ICT and its impact on students' English language proficiency, the attempt was made to approach the topic from two aspects. The students' tendency of using technology was examined by recording their responses through a questionnaire designed for this purpose and likewise, its impact on their proficiency was examined by conducting a test. The data were collected from BS level students at two colleges and two university campuses through a questionnaire and a test containing 16 questions of multiple choices.

11.2.Target Population

The population of study comprises 280 subjects. The participants were both male and female, aged between 20 to 25 years from two colleges and two universities in District Dir Upper KP. All the students were studying at BS level i.e., they had completed their intermediate education and thus, they had the minimum of twelve years of schooling. Further, they shared Pashto as their mother tongue or L1 and were from the same linguistic background. The data have been collected from 120 female students and 160 male students.

11.3.Sampling

The study included 280 subjects/students who were randomly selected from four different institutions at District Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtun-khwa Pakistan. These institutions were also randomly selected from the total fifteen institutions of District Upper Dir.

12. Research tools

12.1.The Questionnaire

After deep study about the topic and relevant literature, a questionnaire and test were prepared. The questionnaire was designed for collecting data from students of B.S level in District Dir Upper for the purpose of research. The questionnaire was distributed among 160 male students and 120 female students respectively. The volunteers were asked to participate by filling the questionnaire by choosing the appropriate options given against each question below.

Further help was taken from the discussion with experts in the field and consultation of supervisor. The questionnaire has ten multiple choice questions. Every multiple choice question has four, five and six option for the selection of respondents. Among the total number of 10 questions, one question (question number one), has six options. One question (question number two), has five options and eight questions, questions number three, four, five, six, seven, eight nine and question number ten have four options.

13. English Language Proficiency Test

The test designed for testing students' English language proficiency has six questions. The subject matter of the test was loosely based upon the terminologies taken from the applications, functions and overall use of the devices of ICT. The first question has eight items and every element has four options. This question was about choosing the correct synonyms. The second question has four items and every element has four options. This question was about selecting the correct antonyms. The third question has seven items. In this question students were asked to correct the spellings of the given misspelled words. The fourth question has six items- asking to make the different forms of the given words. The fifth question has paragraph in which to find out nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives. The sixth and last question has seven items in which students were asked to make the sentences of the given words.

13.1 Data Collection

All data were collected, personally by the researcher, by manipulating a questionnaire and test. For this purpose, researchers personally visited two colleges and two University compasses in District Upper Dir. Prior permission was taken from the heads of all the institutions. Introductory information about the study and the nature of the questionnaire and test were given to all subjects/respondents. One-hour time was given to students for attempting the test. All the respondents filled the questionnaire and test with full liberty and without anybody's assistance in halls.

13.2. Analysis of the data

After receiving responses from subjects, the data were organized, compiled and tabulated according to the objectives and key questions of the study. The questionnaire has ten questions and each question has four and five multiple choices so the findings of questionnaire were divided into ten tables and each table has four and five sections according to their multiple choices. Hundred marks were assigned to the test and the marks were equally distributed to each question. Further, the data were analyzed through the total users of each section and average marks of each section which they have got in their test. On the basis of the results of the calculations, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

14. The Detail of Devices, their Users and their Test Marks

It is worth-mentioning here that the following data, collected through questionnaire, came from the responses of the subjects group who are in touch with ICT. Naturally, subjects using simple devices e.g. ordinary mobile phone, calculator or other gadgets have been excluded from this category. Details of devices, their users and the test marks are represented in the below table and an XY graph.

Table .1. Details of Devices, their Users and their Test Marks

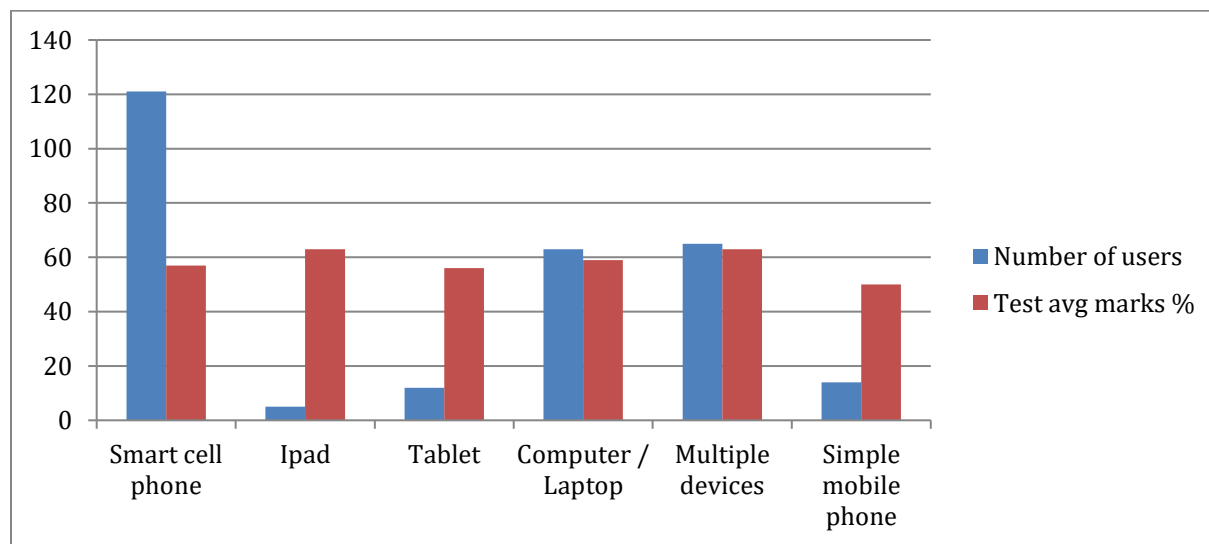| S.NO	Device	Number of users	Test Average% Marks
1	Smart Cell Phone	121	57
2	Ipad	5	63
3	Tablet	13	56
4	Computer/laptop	63	59
5	Multiple devices	64	63
6	Simple Mobile Phone	14	46

Figure. 1. Detail of Devices, their Users and their Test Marks

The table and figure above demonstrate the importance of the use of the modern gadgets. It substantiates the fact that the use of these gadgets are very common and popular among the subjects and every fifth person of the respondents was user of cell phone or any other gadget.

15. Comparison of Test Scores of Students' Use of ICT and Non-users

The central assumption of the present study was relating the use of ICT with the positive implications on students' English language proficiency. Having identified the devices of ICT in the previous section, the following results have been derived from the overall test scores of the two groups of subjects.

Table. 2: Comparison of Students Using Devices of ICT and Non-users

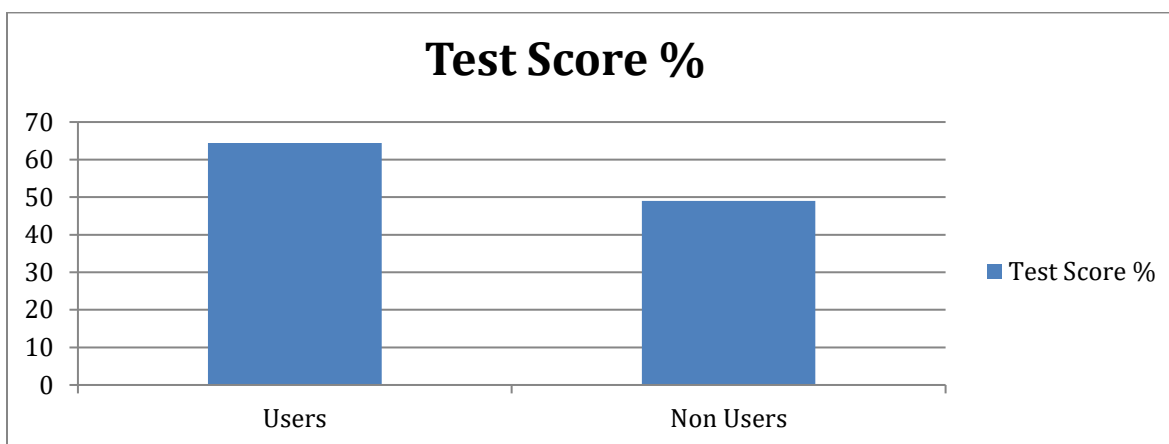| S. No	Users/Non-users	Test Score %
1	Users	64.40
2	Non-users	49

Figure. 2: Comparisons of Students Using Devices of ICT and Non-users

As shown in the above table and graph, students using any of the four devices or multiple devices scored with the average of 64.40% and stand with the difference of 15 % from the students who were not using any of the devices of ICT. The use of ICT is very much effective for students' proficiency of language. This analysis validates the original hypothesis of this study that the use of the devices of ICT has a positive impact upon students' English language proficiency.

Table 3: Communication Based Usage of ICT Device

S. NO	Communication	Number of users	Test Average % Marks
1	Only audio calls	50	50
2	Audio and messaging	101	53

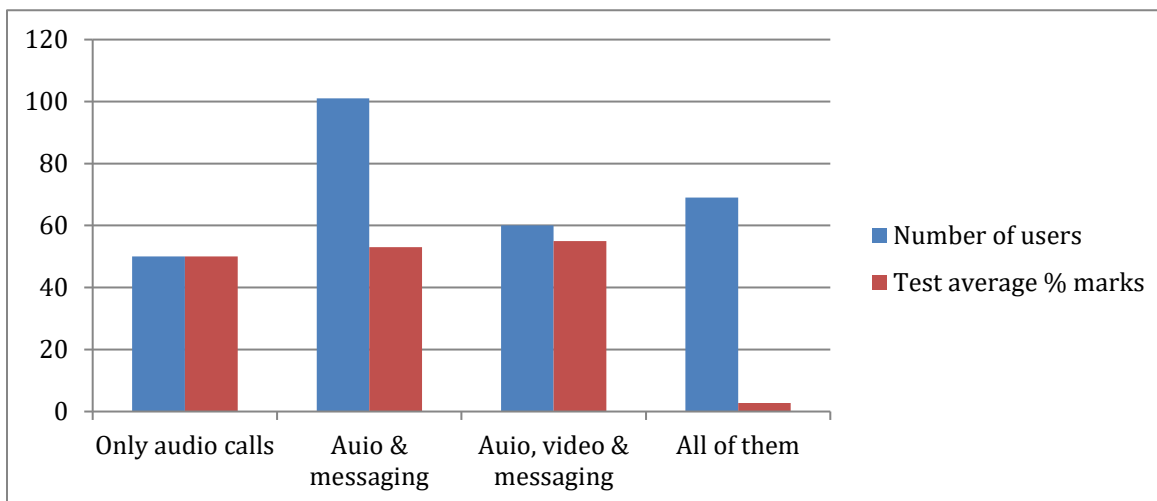| 3 | Audio, video and messaging | 60 | 55 |
| 4 | All of them | 69 | 56 |

Figure 3: Communication Based Usage of ICT Device

Table no 3. shows that the first group in sequence has 50 subjects which constitute 17% of the total respondents. They use ICT only for audio calls. This group has the lowest marks (50%) in their test. The second group in sequence in this table has 101 subjects which makes 36% of the total respondents. They use ICT for audio calls and messaging. The test score of this group is 53% which is better than the first group. The third group in sequence is the group which has 60 subjects which use ICT for audio and video calls and messaging. This group constitutes 21% of the total population. This group has 55% marks in their test. The fourth and last group in sequence has 69 subjects. These subjects use ICT for audio and video calls and messaging. This group has secured the highest 56% marks in test.

Table no 3. indicates that the first group in sequence in this table has 45 users. They use ICT only for audio calls and they have lower 50% marks in test. The second group in sequence has highest users and they have crossed the 1st group in their test. Moreover, the third group has slightly high marks (54%) in their test. The fourth group has 69 users and they have highest marks 56% in this table. On the basis of given data, it can be concluded that those who use ICT for multiple communicative means e.g., audio, video and messaging they have better marks in their test.

The reasons for the high achievements of the subjects in their test are; when students operate their device for communication they learn the terminologies which help them in language proficiency but when they use ICT for audio, video and messaging they get high command on language proficiency because operating all these three kinds of communication they learn a bunch of vocabulary and terminologies which help them in language proficiency.

In holding multiple nature of communication, students operate their devices of ICT and interact with different functions which are operated in English language.

16. Discussion

First and foremost, this study brings forth the fact that students interact with ICT independently in one or other way. Where various devices or tools that come in the category of ICT are used for different purposes and fulfill their daily life needs, they are equally helpful in learning English as a foreign language. The nature of use, model, design, functions and capacity of various modern devices related to ICT may vary, but they provide students enough exposure to the target language. Their English language proficiency can dramatically be deteriorated if this exposure and interaction with English language via these devices of ICT is curtailed.

Pertaining to the demerits of using ICT by EFL learners, its benefits are far greater than its demerits. Using these devices of ICT can possibly affect their academic performance, but the use of ICT is beneficial for enhancing their English language proficiency in one or other way. It can be assigned to the fact that students' evaluation procedure and method have particular requirements and students are restricted to a particular syllabus and fixed contents in the target language. The level of proficiency or degree of achievement as resulted by ICT devices may deviate students from better performance in exams. So, there may exist a big gap between their level of achievement and method of evaluation. The conventional method of evaluation in the form of test and examination papers suffer from the flaw of content validity. The test designed and conducted in this study was set to ensure content validity. The researcher made the fact sure that the test is based on the contents of English language that are related to the use of modern devices of ICT directly and indirectly.

Results of this study also indicate a considerable difference between the performance of students using ICT and non-users of ICT. As aforementioned, this better score of students using ICT is an indicator of their English language proficiency, not their academic achievement. Likewise, the low score of the students who don't use ICT suggests their weakness in English language proficiency, not in their subjects' competence. It is possible that they perform equally better like the first group or even supersede them in their conventional examination papers.

17. Conclusion

The present study investigated the impact of ICT on students' English language proficiency at BS level in an EFL context. It examined the role of various devices of ICT such as laptop/computer, cell phone, tablet and Ipad used by the subjects. The data regarding the nature of usage of ICT were obtained by a questionnaire for this purpose- containing ten questions. These data were examined in relation to students' English language proficiency, which was tested by conducting an English language proficiency test.

Pertaining to the research questions posed at the outset of this study, it is concluded that the impact of ICT on students' proficiency was found in many ways. The use of ICT is highly

beneficial and supportive in improving students' English language proficiency if it is used purely for educational purposes. Searching useful sites and consulting dictionaries particularly contribute significantly to students' English language proficiency. Internet connectivity through modern devices of ICT improves students' English language proficiency; the more the students access the internet through their devices of ICT, or the more the students give time to the use of ICT, the better is their English language proficiency.

18. Implication for Future Studies

This study is limited in its scope because it took into consideration the students at BS level only. Any study conducted of the same nature at different level may bring different results. To analyze the role of ICT in relation to English language proficiency of the students is the area open to further research. Moreover, the present study did not investigate all the aspects of English language proficiency of the students i.e., it is exclusive of the skills of listening and speaking. Examining the impact of the use of ICT upon the skills of listening and speaking are the subject to further research. Finally, the role played by the use of ICT can further be analyzed if study of the same nature is conducted in those areas in which there is greater tendency of using ICT by the students, as well as, the role of ICT is examined by taking into consideration the teachers in the subject of English at different levels.

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