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THE IMPLICATION OF USING ICT ON TEACHING EFL LEARNERS

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This article focuses on examining how the use of ICT devices impacts students' interest in learning foreign languages. It discusses the outcomes of applying modern teaching methods through ICT tools and highlights their role, significance, and the characteristics of current technologies in the learning process. The study tries to highlight on utilizing ICTs can improve fast and easily learners' four main skills such as writing, speaking, listening and reading, as well as to motivate and encourage students to learn the target language.

Introduction. The 21st century is characterized by rapid advancements in information, communication, globalization, and technology. The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has significantly transformed the process of teaching and learning foreign languages, making it more diverse, accessible, and efficient. ICT tools are now

widely utilized in educational settings across the globe, leading to substantial changes in teaching methods and instructional approaches. As a result, learning foreign languages—particularly English—has become an engaging and popular activity for many learners. English, often referred to as a “lingua franca,” holds a central position in global communication due to its dominant role in fields such as computing, business, education, science, and medicine. Currently, approximately half of the world’s population is able to communicate in English, and it serves as an official language in prominent international organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, and UNICEF. With the widespread use and global significance of English, it functions as a second language in many countries and as a first language for others. In today’s competitive job market, proficiency in ICT and the ability to speak two or more foreign languages are considered essential for securing high-paying and prestigious employment opportunities.

In contemporary society, the impact and benefits of technology are evident at every stage of life. The integration of technology into educational institutions has enabled students to learn more efficiently and effectively than in the past. English, in particular, has emerged as a fundamental necessity in the modern world. The advent of computer-based technologies and high-speed internet connectivity has opened up numerous opportunities for the advancement of educational technologies. English has gained worldwide prominence largely as a result of globalization, making it one of the most widely studied and utilized languages globally.

In line with national efforts to enhance foreign language education, the first President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Abduganiyevich Karimov, issued Decree No. 1875 on December 10, 2012, titled “On Measures for Further Improvement of the Foreign Language Learning System.” In this decree, it was emphasized that foreign language instruction—particularly English—should commence from the first grade in secondary schools through interactive and communicative methods such as game-based and speaking activities. From the second grade onward, formal instruction in the alphabet, reading, and grammar is introduced. Furthermore, the decree stipulates that specialized subjects, particularly those related to technical and international disciplines in higher education, should be taught in foreign languages. Moreover, the Presidential Decree No. UP-4732, dated June 12, 2015, “On Measures for Further Enhancement of the System of Retraining and Advanced Training of Leading and Pedagogical Personnel of Higher Educational Institutions,” emphasizes the importance of

strengthening the pedagogical capacity of educators. It advocates for the integration of all language skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, using modern pedagogical technologies and teaching methodologies. Building on these initiatives, the current President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, signed Presidential Decree No. 27/52 on February 7, 2017, "On the Strategy for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan." This strategic framework, considered a continuation of the "Uzbek model," was implemented during the period from 2017 to 2021. It includes numerous legislative acts and policy directives aimed at the development of various sectors, including education, which has undergone substantial reform and modernization. [1]

On February 16, 2017, Presidential Decree No. 49/58 titled "On Further Improvement of the Postgraduate Education System" was enacted. According to this decree, graduates of secondary schools are permitted to continue their studies for an additional two years, after which they may choose to pursue higher education at universities or institutes, or continue their education at colleges or lyceums. The duration of study at colleges is also set at two years.

Further reforms in the education sector were introduced through the decree "On Measures for the Further Development of the System of Higher Education," which was adopted on April 20, 2017. This decree aimed to modernize and enhance the quality and accessibility of higher education across the country.

Additionally, on July 27, 2017, Decree No. 51/21 was signed under the title "On Further Improvement of the Activities of the Fund of the President of Uzbekistan 'Istedod' in the Field of Advanced Training of Promising Young Pedagogical and Scientific Personnel." This initiative provides talented young individuals with opportunities to study abroad and obtain bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as to participate in summer programs and short-term training courses. All expenses related to tuition and living abroad are fully covered by the government.

On November 11, 2017, Decree No. 33/89 "On the Improvement of the Procedure for Conducting Entrance Examinations for Bachelor's Programs in the Republic of Uzbekistan" was issued. This decree introduced a more flexible and applicant-centered approach to university admissions. Prospective students are now allowed to apply to three higher education institutions simultaneously, and their admission is determined based on examination scores and merit.

Furthermore, on June 5, 2018, Decree No. 37/75 “On Additional Measures to Improve the Quality of Education in Higher Educational Institutions and Ensure Their Active Participation in the Ongoing Large-Scale Reforms in the Country” was adopted. This legislative act reinforces the role of universities in national development and educational reform.

As a result of these progressive policies, Uzbekistan currently hosts over 80 higher educational institutions, along with numerous international universities operating within the country. Notable examples include the Turin Polytechnic University (Italy), the University of Westminster (UK), Webster University (USA), as well as institutions from Singapore and Russia, such as branches of Moscow-based universities, which have established campuses in Tashkent and other regions. In the 21st century, success in both academic and professional domains increasingly demand a high level of knowledge, diverse skills, and technological competence. Proficiency in two or more foreign languages, along with strong computer literacy and the effective use of ICT tools, has become essential for individuals aiming to thrive in a competitive, globalized world.

Materials and methods

It is evident that in today's world, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play a crucial and indispensable role in nearly every aspect of human life, particularly in the field of education and, more specifically, in the teaching and learning of foreign languages (FL). Over the past decade, ICT has been increasingly integrated into schools and educational institutions, and in many countries, its use in education has become mandatory. The term Information and Communication Technology (ICT) encompasses a wide range of modern tools used to facilitate communication, as well as to collect, share, create, manage, and store information. These tools include, but are not limited to, television, radio, telephones, computers, internet services, and various network hardware and software. ICT broadly covers numerous technologies such as radio, television, computers, the internet, social media, and other forms of digital communication [2,9].

According to UNESCO, ICT refers to technologies employed to transmit, process, store, create, display, share, or exchange information through electronic means. ICT has applications across diverse sectors such as industry, law, medicine, science, and especially education. In educational settings, ICT functions as both a supportive tool and an organizational resource, aiding in the effective management of learning environments.

Historically, the 1980s saw the emergence of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), a significant innovation that enabled both teachers and students to enhance language proficiency using CD-ROMs and other digital media. This marked an important step in the integration of ICT into language education.

The impact of ICT in education is substantial. When used appropriately, ICT can support and enrich the teaching and learning process, foster interaction among teachers, students, and educational content, and provide enhanced access to, and management of, educational resources. It contributes to creating a dynamic and interactive learning environment.

The 21st century is widely regarded as the era of digital technologies, offering people the ability to work and study remotely, engage in distance learning, or even enroll in multiple institutions simultaneously. ICT significantly reduces geographical barriers, making services such as e-banking and e-government accessible from virtually anywhere with internet connectivity and a digital device.

In the context of language education, the internet and other ICT tools offer vast opportunities. They enable learners to communicate with people from different cultures using the target language they are studying. Tools such as digital projectors, video conferencing platforms like Skype, and other emerging software are frequently utilized in classrooms. As noted by Taiwanese scholar Young, international communication and cultural exchange are critical components of modern language teaching. The use of the internet has demonstrated a positive influence by facilitating connections among learners across countries. Moreover, Young highlights that one of the primary reasons for integrating the internet into education is its role in placing the English language within a globalized, international context [3,19]. The participants of this small-scale study were twenty-eight second-year students from the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages. The study involved two distinct groups: one group whose first foreign language (FFL) was Spanish, and the other group whose FFL was Italian. In both groups, English was taught as a second foreign language (SFL). The primary aim of the investigation was to explore the effectiveness of two vocabulary teaching methods—one utilizing ICT tools and the other employing traditional instructional techniques.

Materials and Procedure

Three types of instructional materials were selected for the study: word lists, vocabulary exercises, and ICT tools. The word lists were derived from the sixth edition of 504

Absolutely Essential Words by Murray Bromberg, Julius Liebb, and Arthur Traiger, a textbook published in the United States. Each list contained 12 vocabulary items, which were taught to both groups over the course of one week. The experimental group received instruction using ICT tools, whereas the control group was taught through conventional methods.

Following the instructional phase, all students were assessed using vocabulary tests composed of 40 questions. Each participant was given 30 minutes to complete the test, with each correct answer worth one point. The assessment included pre-tests, post-tests, multiple-choice questions, and gap-filling exercises.

Results

The experimental group, which utilized ICT-based instruction, demonstrated strong performance across all assessment types. Their average scores were as follows:

Pre-test: 9/10 (90%)

Post-test: 10/10 (100%)

Multiple-choice: 9/10 (90%)

Gap-filling: 8/10 (80%)

In comparison, the control group, which followed the traditional method of instruction, achieved the following results:

Pre-test: 7/10 (70%)

Post-test: 8/10 (80%)

Multiple-choice: 6/10 (60%)

Gap-filling: 4/10 (40%)

These results indicate that the use of ICT tools had a positive impact on students' vocabulary acquisition and retention, as the experimental group consistently outperformed the control group across all evaluation criteria.

A visual representation of the results is provided in the following diagram.

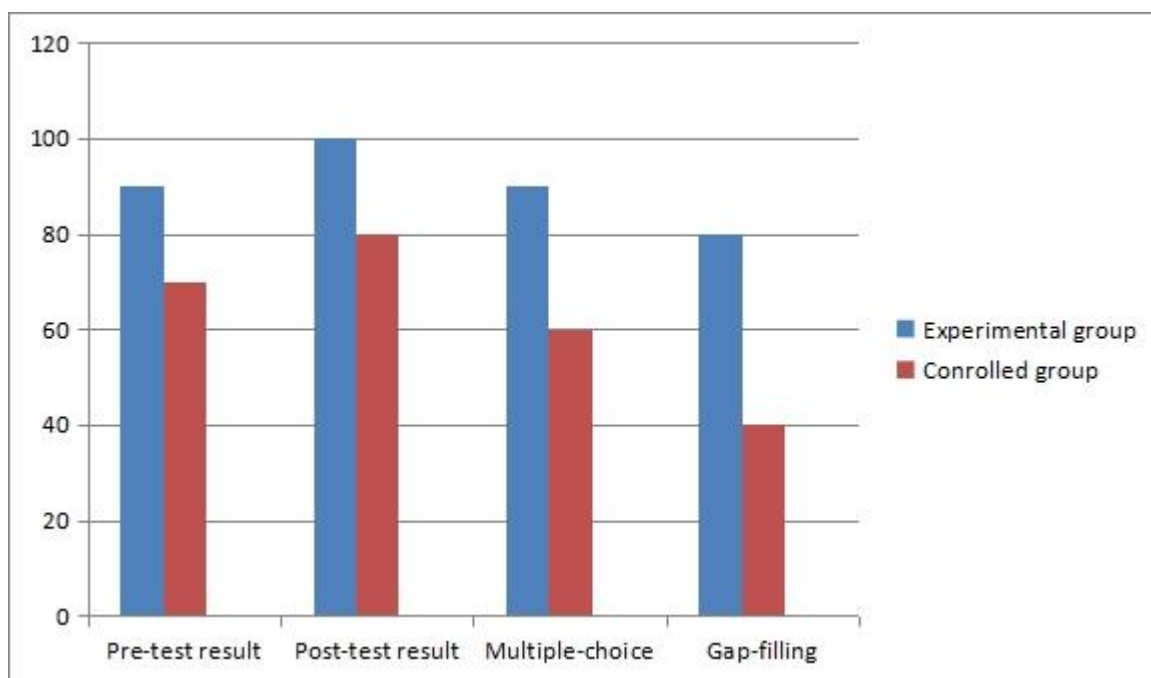


Diagram1. The results of both groups in learning new vocabularies.

The teacher employed various ICT tools during instruction, including an Overhead Projector (OHP), Interactive Whiteboard (IWB), television set, internet-connected computer, and CD-ROMs, to present new vocabulary with real-life examples. The integration of these digital tools proved to be both effective and engaging for the teacher and students alike. As demonstrated in the results diagram, the use of ICT-enhanced instruction contributed significantly to improved student performance. Moreover, feedback from the experimental group indicated a high level of satisfaction with the teaching approach and their corresponding outcomes.

These findings suggest that English language educators should actively incorporate modern technological tools into their teaching practices. The use of ICT not only enhances lesson engagement but also fosters greater motivation and interest among learners, including those with lower proficiency levels.

Results and discussion

Traditionally, teaching and learning were understood as primarily face-to-face interactions, with the teacher occupying a central role—particularly in the context of foreign language instruction. In the past, students relied heavily on the teacher's guidance to acquire a foreign language. Lessons were delivered using conventional methods, and students practiced

previously covered material and repeated new vocabulary under the teacher's supervision, ensuring accurate pronunciation of sounds and words.

However, with the advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the teacher's role in the classroom has undergone a significant transformation. In the 21st century, educators are increasingly viewed not as sole sources of knowledge, but as mentors, observers, and facilitators who guide learners in navigating information and developing skills independently. Fitzpatrick describes this modern role of teachers as "facilitators" of knowledge, emphasizing that educators must be knowledgeable about the various ways ICT can be integrated into teaching to enhance students' language learning outcomes [4, 20].

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become indispensable tools that significantly support educators in the delivery of lessons. These technologies enhance lesson design, enabling teachers to deliver content in an engaging manner, transforming both teaching and learning processes, and fostering student motivation for more effective learning outcomes. ICTs play a crucial role in enhancing critical thinking skills among students, particularly language learners. Moreover, ICT tools offer the opportunity for students to create drafts and plans, and, should errors occur, digital devices such as laptops—core components of ICT—allow for instant corrections or provide suggestions, thus improving learners' writing skills.

Modern technologies also offer structured opportunities for enhancing students' speaking and listening skills, which are essential in language acquisition. It is clear that ICTs facilitate the effective presentation and communication of ideas, providing students with a diverse set of tools for expressing their thoughts in various forms.

ICTs are increasingly seen as vital tools in the language learning process. They not only serve as instruments that teach new languages and facilitate learning but also act as assessors, testing students on previously learned material. Additionally, ICTs serve as valuable data sources, offering easy access to necessary information, and function as communication tools, enabling students to interact and communicate with others.

Moreover, ICTs are reshaping the roles of both teachers and students in the classroom. In the past, teachers were the central figures in the educational process, controlling all aspects of teaching and learning. They were primarily responsible for transmitting knowledge.

However, the integration of ICTs in education has brought about a shift in the teacher's role. Today, teachers assume roles such as facilitators, guides, collaborators, and knowledge navigators, empowering students to take on more responsibility for their own learning. This shift places students at the center of the learning process.

One of the most critical components of ICTs is the internet, which Moore (2005) argues is an essential research tool in educational settings. The internet enables students to independently gather information, enhancing their research skills and providing them with access to a vast range of resources necessary for their academic pursuits.

In conclusion, ICTs are pivotal in transforming the educational experience. They offer teachers and students a variety of tools that foster more interactive, student-centered learning environments. By promoting critical thinking, improving language skills, and providing greater autonomy for students, ICTs are crucial in modern education. The role of digital tools, especially the internet, will continue to expand, offering new opportunities for students to explore, create, and share knowledge [5,10].

The internet is a vast network of interconnected computers across the globe that enables individuals to exchange information and communicate with one another. In contemporary education, the internet plays a crucial role, with most schools leveraging it extensively for research, idea generation, and direct interaction with organizations through their websites. As a modern teaching tool, the internet offers numerous advantages for both educators and students. It serves as an expansive repository of information, providing quick and easy access to a variety of materials. The internet also enhances teaching and learning by offering engaging resources such as interactive activities, educational games, and real-time updates on news and information, which can be accessed instantly.

A computer, a programmable electronic device, performs mathematical calculations and logical operations. It is particularly valued for its ability to process, store, and retrieve large amounts of data quickly. Computers are indispensable tools in modern education, enabling teachers to create lesson plans, store e-books, and manage resources efficiently. The use of computers, notebooks, and laptops has significantly simplified teaching and learning processes, reducing the burden of carrying physical books and materials.

Television, a major form of ICT, has been in use for longer than other devices like the radio. Television offers a wide array of educational programs, especially for language learners.

Satellite and terrestrial television channels offer contemporary, authentic content, as well as culturally enriching programs. In Uzbekistan, for instance, there are approximately 15-20 television channels, with about 4 dedicated to language learning programs. These channels feature debates, language classes, nature documentaries, historical content, and educational cartoons in foreign languages to motivate children to learn.

Audio devices, including CDs, web-based platforms, and audiocassette recorders, are frequently employed in language classrooms to enhance students' listening skills. These audio tools are considered essential in modern language learning, providing students with valuable listening practice.

Video technology, such as DVDs, cassettes, and online platforms, offers an effective means for language learners to improve their skills. Videos, which include moving images and sound, provide learners with essential elements of communication, such as body language, gestures, facial expressions, posture, and intonation. Modern videos often feature dubbing in both the target language and the learner's native language, as well as subtitles to aid comprehension. These visual and auditory resources help enhance learners' speaking and listening abilities.

Although telephones were once considered less integral to language learning, advancements in mobile and smartphones have expanded their role. Today, smartphones are replacing computers and laptops due to their multifunctionality. Modern phones are not only used for voice communication but also allow users to access electronic dictionaries, read e-books, search the internet, store important information, take photos, and engage with audio and video content, including films and educational materials. This wide range of capabilities makes smartphones an invaluable tool in language education.

Lastly, "video conferencing (VC) enables individuals in different locations to communicate face-to-face via television screens. Video conferencing has the potential to improve student outcomes by meeting the diverse needs of students, facilitating clarification, negotiation, and thoughtful evaluation of teaching and learning processes" [6,13].

Video conferencing plays a crucial role in the educational process, especially when physical attendance at a conference is not possible. With the support of ICT, individuals can easily connect and participate in video conferences from any location, even from abroad. As noted by renowned linguists Panteli and Dawson (2001), video conferencing is a powerful tool

that educators can leverage to share and deliver instructional content. Additionally, it helps to overcome barriers such as travel safety concerns, costs, and time constraints, which can often hinder participation in interviews, site visits, and conferences designed for intellectual exchanges [7,88].

Conclusion

In recent years, significant changes have occurred across various aspects of life, particularly in education, where the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is highly visible. Several centuries ago, the blackboard, used with chalk, was the primary tool for teaching, followed by the introduction of whiteboards and colorful markers. Today, interactive whiteboards (IWBs), or electronic boards, have been developed, revolutionizing classroom dynamics by making it easier to capture students' attention and encourage active participation. IWBs are innovative and valuable tools that offer numerous opportunities, including access to a wide range of multimedia resources.

According to the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency, IWBs are defined as:

"An interactive whiteboard is a large, touch-sensitive display connected to a digital projector and a computer. The projector projects the image from the computer screen onto the board. The computer can be controlled either by touching the board directly or using a special pen. Potential applications include using web-based resources for whole-class teaching, displaying video clips to illustrate concepts, showcasing students' work to the class, creating digital flipcharts, manipulating text, practicing handwriting, and saving notes for future reference" [8,1].

Interactive whiteboards allow users to manipulate objects on a large, touch-sensitive electronic surface using either a special pen or their finger, enhancing the interactivity of the learning environment. The integration of ICTs in education undeniably fosters a more engaging, dynamic, and effective teaching and learning atmosphere. While there are numerous components of ICT, each with its own specific functions and advantages, these tools vary depending on their intended use.

In the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL), ICT is as essential as breathing. Computers, for instance, can seamlessly combine text with images, graphics, audio, and video, creating a multifaceted learning

experience. These tools are particularly beneficial for low-level learners, who will find them both interesting and motivating. By watching videos or movies with subtitles, students can learn new vocabulary in an engaging and enjoyable way. Moreover, seeing words in authentic contexts helps students retain them for the long term. In this way, ICTs serve as powerful tools for fostering creativity and variety in presenting new vocabulary to students.

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