Using Technology in English Language Classrooms in Bangladesh: Private University Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Technology integration in education can enhance learning and teaching, with widespread adoption worldwide due to its proliferation in recent decades. The integration of technology in education is believed to have the potential to improve learning and teaching. The pervasive impact of this phenomenon has extended to various domains of human existence, encompassing even the realm of English language instruction. The objective of this research endeavor is to explore how the language teachers view the potential effects of incorporating media technology within English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. This is a qualitative study where 11English language teachers from three Bangladeshi private universities took part. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviewand the findings from this study indicate that the teachers' opinions exhibited a combination of positive and negative aspects, which can be attributed to the various restrictions and limitations encountered during the research process.
Keywords: Technology, Bangladeshi Private Universities, English Teachers, Language Classroom, Websites.

Introduction

For the foreign and second language learners, technology can provide an infinite number of useful resources and today, many academicians and researchers view technology-based resources as a crucial component in delivering high-quality education. Rahman (2022) highlighted the increasing use of technology in English language teaching, with instructors' perception influencing its implementation and a surge in technological tools in classrooms. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) encompasses various tools developed to assist teachers and learners in foreign and second language education such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) (Rahman, 2022).

The Bangladeshi government has implemented the distribution of multimedia projectors and laptops to all government high schools in order to support the goal of achieving a "Digital Bangladesh" and enhance the provision of high-quality education (Mallick,

Maniruzzaman & Das, 2020, as cited in Serajuddin, 2023). Bangladeshi government has been prioritizing the digitalization of various sectors. As a result, numerous universities have implemented multimedia facilities for classroom instruction. Despite the integration of technology in English education at universities, there remain unresolved deficiencies that require attention (Karmaker & Paul, 2020). In Bangladesh, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education remains challenging due to the lack of necessary technical skills among students and language teachers. The country has three types of universities: public, private, and international. The Private Universities Act, 1992, which was later revised and re-enacted as the Private Universities Act, 2010, established several private universities in Bangladesh. These universities aim to incorporate technology in classrooms to enhance the educational experience for both teachers and students. However, challenges persist in technology-based learning, particularly in language classes, for both teachers

and students. With these in mind, the researcher has constructed two questions,

1. *How do the private university teachers perceive the integration of technology into their English language classes in terms of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills?*
2. *What are the primary impediments that teachers encounter when incorporating technology into their language programs, and how do they address these challenges?*

Literature Review

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), originating in the 1960s, has evolved significantly since its inauguration (Mili & Ahmad, 2020). Since then, CALL has expanded to include communicative methods and new technology. With the advent of affordable technology and mass storage media, computer labs have become essential in foreign language programs, making computers an integral part of language instruction. The widespread adoption of computers in schools and homes has made CALL a significant field in higher education.

Mahmuda (2016) conducted a study in higher educational institutes in Bangladesh and found that various ICT-based educational resources, such as multimedia projectors, mobile devices, and extensively used. The researcher suggests that these resources should be further utilized to enhance skill-oriented and interactive learning. Rahman & Ullah (2016) explored the impact of technology on undergraduate English language teaching in Bangladesh, finding that proper use can yield positive outcomes, while careless use can lead to negative consequences.

Karmaker & Paul's (2020) study discovered that technology is liked by the students, but teachers have varied opinions. Students also report spending more time on social media. Additionally, Serajuddin's (2023) study explores the impact of technology in English language classrooms, comparing it with traditional methods. The study involved 300 teachers and students from 80 Bangladeshi institutions. It found that technology integration significantly impacted student motivation and engagement, highlighting the complexities of this issue. The study provides recommendations to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Significance of the Present Study

The study explores how technology can enhance student motivation and participation in private education, focusing on teachers' experiences in real-life situations. It recommends cautiously integrating technology into language classrooms for more interesting and participatory learning.

Limitations

As a researcher, I have chosen only 11 English language teachers from three private universities in Dhaka. Time and distance constraints prevented me from including other private and public universities and more participants. I formulated a Google Form to collect all the data online, and some teachers who were interested in follow-up interviews were asked to participate. The interviews were conducted through the Zoom platform.

Methodology
Participants

This study included 11 English language teachers (7 females and 4 males) from the Department of English at three private universities in Dhaka. All participants were selected based on their role as language instructors in the English Department. Their teaching curriculum includes instruction in the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and

speaking. No incentives were offered to any of them. The participants' responses were also anonymized.

Instruments and Methods

The study employed a qualitative research methodology. The questionnaire was disseminated via a Google form and emailed to 11 participants. The questionnaire consisted of six open-ended questions. Participants were allocated sufficient time for completing and returning the forms to the researcher. Only five teachers participated in the researcher's follow-up interview conducted through the Zoom platform. However, they were not recorded. With the permission of the participants, all the responses to the interviews were documented by the researcher.

Findings and Discussion

To ensure ethical considerations and confidentiality, the identities of both the participants and the institutions involved in this study have been made anonymous. The individuals will be denoted as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, and T11 respectively.

Technology used in the Classroom

At first, in the open-ended questionnaire, the teachers were asked what kind of technological systems they are familiar with and use in their language classes. Most of them mentioned, PowerPoint slides, Google classroom, videos from TedTalk and YouTube and some ESL websites for listening classrooms. Different types of applications were used by these 11 participants. They even mentioned that now they are used to Zoom and Google meet because during the pandemic, teaching went online and they used these platforms, however, they still use these platforms in case of taking extra class due to any issues. Here is a comment from one respondent,

> *"I use google classroom to organize my lesson materials for students also if I need to take extra class and I cannot find any slot in the university, I ask my students to join me online, I use google meet and I conduct the class, of course I inform the authority before doing so. Apart from these, I usually use slides to teach writing and reading in class." – **T1***

Another participant said,

> *"I like Google classroom, everything can be sorted there. I teach listening and speaking to two batches and I use websites like Randall's ESL and BBC learning for listening. For speaking, I do not use any sites but I sometimes tell my students to use some apps on mobile to practice at home." – **T3***

Two teachers however, mentioned that they do not use slides in class, they deliver lecture and sometimes use videos from YouTube as supplementary. Like **T4** said,

> *"I don't use slides since I don't have time to prepare them and some students won't pay attention, but I do play videos on YouTube that complement my lecture."*

Overall View on Technology on in Language Class

The next topic is how teachers believe they can use technology to motivate students in the classroom. Some feedback received were affirmative, but teachers also showed their concerns. Teachers said technology makes language learning more interesting and has helped prepare lectures. They expressed that they gained new insights into teaching English through the Internet, adding a whole new dimension to their teaching process. Here are two comments,

"When I use different videos from YouTube, students seem interested, they listen, watch sometimes ask to play again, and after that some of them try to share their views too, which makes a class quite interactive. But I remember once I used slides and videos simultaneously, some of them were looking at me so vaguely, maybe they were not connecting to it!" – **T2**

"……I try to adapt materials from various websites, including worksheets and videos. However, selecting the right content can be time-consuming, as some videos may not be engaging or right for my students" – **T7**

Thirdly, teachers were asked about their views on the relationship between student motivation and technology in the classroom. Here, too, the teachers were divided. Some said, students enjoyed their teaching through slides but at the end of class they always asked for slides and even prepared for exams from teachers slides. Other teachers said, slides are not always useful for language learning, but videos and audios came in handy however, sometimes students preferred the teachers' lectures rather than multimedia. One teacher **(T6)** said,

"I used slides for a reading course, just to give the students some ideas about skimming, scanning, summarizing and paraphrasing, there I also used pictures and snippets to show them some samples, but when I gave them group task on what I taught they kept asking more questions and I had to start over. This took away most of the class time."

Teachers in listening classes and speaking sessions used audio clips and tasks to help students learn native speaker accents. Students were encouraged to practice pronunciation and even correct pronunciation after hearing native speakers. Speaking sessions focused on creating a topic, having students speak in front of the class, and giving slide presentations at the end of the semester to develop confidence in speaking and slide creation.

Using Technology in Class in Terms of Four Skills of Language

Teachers discussed theirexperiences using technology in teaching language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing**.** They primarily used course books for reading and writing classes, while websites and YouTube were used for listening classes. Some teachers used TedTalk for speaking classes, but did not mention other websites. They suggested using apps like ELSA Speak, Speeko, Hello Talk, and Duolingo for home practice. Some teachers used WhatsApp and Facebook as teaching tools, but they feared they might distract students. Videos were sometimes used in language classes, but they were carefully chosen to be culturally appropriate. Google Classroom was used for assignments, but some students still faced difficulties due to lack of technology savvy.

Two teachers who came for follow-up interview mentioned it in detail, an excerpt is given below,

"Every class has students that can't use technology like Google Classroom, but if you ask them to use Facebook or Instagram, they're pros. Teaching students how to write on Google Classroom, text me, or submit a task takes extra time for me. I share videos, but people may not view them, so I always present a demo." – **T9**

"I understand that using technology like slides, Zoom or G-class can be tough for students, especially those from rural regions. Some students didn't know how to make slides. They bought a new laptop and needed time to get used to it. I give a presentation on making slides for assessment. So, I provide helpful videos and

pair tech-savvy students with non tech-savvy ones before the presentation task." – T10

Challenges Faced

In response to the fifth question, the teachers mentioned some challenges they faced in a technology-assisted classroom while teaching language. They were also requested to provide information on how to cope with the issues.Several challenges faced by teachers were found in integrating technology into their teaching methods. These include power outages, internet problems, lack of teacher training, poor technological infrastructure, device issues, and ineffective pedagogical integration. Also, finding high-quality, culturally relevant online materials is challenging, and teachers must consider students' needs. Accessibility to these resources can be costly, and some teachers struggle to afford certain expenses. Additionally, plagiarism is a concern, as students often copy and paste content from the internet. Teachers often confront students who admit to cheating, and they teach them to avoid it. Some teachers have mentioned that even provide free plagiarism checkers to ensure originality before final submission.

Regarding the power outage and network issues, some teacherssaid that they had backup plans. Like one teacher **(T8)** said *"…I like using slides but I know power outage will happen so, I keep the printed copies with me and some printed task sheets as well."*

Some teachers also said that sometimes videos do not play in class,hence they upload it to their google classroom so that students can watch it on their own. One teacher also stated that for listening session she could not rely on the installed device in classroom, so she carried her own Bluetooth speaker to the class to avoid any disruption during listening practice.

Opportunities

Finally the teachers were asked to provide their opinions on the opportunities of technology-assisted classroom. Teachers shared their perspectives on how to make the best use of technology even within some limitations considering Bangladeshi context. One teacher **(T6)** mentioned that, *"…students who really want to take it to the next level can find technology quite helpful, because a variety of resources are there, some might be paid but others are free and students should use these free platforms for personalized learning. Apps, videos, and even song lyrics can help the students practice and level up their English skills."*

Teachers also mentioned that the use of google form for quizzes and running students' assignments for plagiarism helped them a lot. Some teachers mentioned that technology is helping them to become professionally more developed and skilled. Five teachers mentioned that to get to know more about technology integration in classroom, they once attended some webinars online which they found useful. Two teachers also said that they took free online courses to know more about latest language materials and syllabus design.

Recommendations

To improve English language learning, technology integration in higher education requires teachers to have necessary competencies and literacy skills. Collaboration between policymakers and educational institutions is crucial for infrastructure, devices, and internet connectivity. Additionally, technology training for teachers and promoting student autonomy through digital assets and applications is also essential.

Conclusion

Private universities in Dhaka face challenges in integrating technology into English language classrooms, despite having well-equipped classrooms. And it has been seen that technology-assisted language classrooms can havea good influence on the learners even within some shortcomings. Therefore, teachers should not exclude technology but integrate it into their teaching style to enhance student learning everywhere possible.

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