Perception of English teachers on the Use of Technology in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to study the perception of English teachers on the use of technology in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). In order to achieve this goal, three public schools, three private schools and three language institutes were selected. English teachers participated in a 2-hour workshop for using technology to teach English as a foreign language. After using the tools that were explained in the workshop, teachers had to take a survey to determine if they thought that technology had helped them to teach their students and if they thought it was important to organize more workshops to improve their knowledge. It was determined that 100% of teachers are willing to participate in professional development courses and they think it is important to do it but they do not attend those courses because of their work schedule. This research concluded that it is necessary to make some decisions to make the use of technology in class successful.

Keywords: Teaching and Learning process, Technology, Foreign Language, English, Knowledge, Skills.

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar la percepción de los profesores de inglés sobre el uso de la tecnología en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. Para lograr este objetivo, se seleccionaron tres escuelas públicas, tres escuelas privadas y tres institutos de idiomas. Los profesores de inglés participaron en un taller de 2 horas para usar la tecnología para enseñar inglés como idioma extranjero. Después de usar las herramientas

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que se explicaron en el taller, los maestros tuvieron que realizar una encuesta para determinar si pensaban que la tecnología les había ayudado a enseñar a sus estudiantes y sipensaban que era importante organizar más talleres para mejorar sus conocimientos. Se determinó que el 100% de los maestros están dispuestos a participar en cursos de desarrollo profesional y piensan que es importante hacerlo, pero no asisten a esos cursos debido a su horario de trabajo. Esta investigación concluyó que es necesario tomar algunas decisiones para hacer que el uso de la tecnología en clase sea exitoso.

Palabras clave: *proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje, tecnología, inglés como segunda lengua, conocimiento, habilidades.*

INTRODUCTION

Technology plays a very important role in people's lives, and sometimes people do not even notice how they depend on the use of it not only for work but also for regular activities such as communication and transport. Education is no exception; technology has been part of the learning process for a long period of time. Especially in foreign language Learning in which the use of cassettes, cd's, projectors became normal in the classrooms and were once seen as state of the art. Governments in different countries have realized how important the use of technology in education is and Panama is not the exception. That is why the federal education policy in Panama dictates that schools must promote the use of technology in class and that teachers should be trained in order to do that. (Ley Organica de Educación, 2004). But some teachers do not use technology to teach English, even though their schools offer different resources that might help them. Some of the reasons why they do not do it are that they do not know how to implement it, they think technology is not useful, they also think their students know more than they do and they do not like technology so they do not use it (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). However, it has been determined that technology is

useful to achieve learning goals. According to Stevenson and Liu (cited in Lin et al, 2016), students who have used Social networks sites in their classes have not only improved their vocabulary but also increased their confidence to use the L2. However, the responsibility of using information and communication technology (ICT) is not only on the government but on the teachers, who will be in charge of planning their classes. Therefore, it is important to determine whether teachers consider technology will help them achieve their goals or moreover if they will be able to use these tools successfully; If there were a teacher who is afraid of using technology in class, school administrators and the government could help them realize how technology should be used for them to achieve their goals.

This research tried to study the perception of English teachers on the use of technology in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. It also tried to determine how important technology is for teachers when planning and the aspects that should be taken into account to develop professional development programs (PDP) for teachers. It is highlighted that professional development may affect not only teachers' capabilities but also their abilities and the way they observe technology (Karimi, 2011). The questions that this research tried to answer were:

1.- What do teachers think about using technology for language teaching?

2.- Do teachers believe they can use technology successfully without any instruction?

3.- What aspects are important to take into account in order to design a successful technology training for English language teachers?

Hafner, Chik and Jones (2015) highlight the importance of digital tools and express that those tools represent improvement and transformation when it comes to strategies and frameworks. The authors also highlight that teachers need to receive some training for them to understand the benefits of using technology in class. On the other hand, Levin and Wadmany (2008) express that teachers need to realize how important technology is but when teachers finally do that, they also realize the incongruity that exists between teachers, resources and the objectives that programs.

METHODOLOGY

Initially, this study was going to be developed under the experimental approach since teachers had to complete a survey before the program starts, then they would receive a treatment (which is the workshop), subsequently, they would use the tools they learned in their classes and finally another survey was going to be conducted with the purpose of finding out how teachers perceived the use of technology and the training they had received. Nevertheless, due to the lack of time and activities that had been schedule by the institutes that were chosen, it was changed to mixed methods, so teachers attended the professional development, then they took a survey and after that, they were interviewed.

Teachers were invited to attend a two-hour workshop in which they received some training on how to use two specific technological tools (Kahoot and Playpossit) in their classes in order to practice the four skills (writing, reading, speaking and listening), increase vocabulary and assess students' performance. Afterward, they were asked to include the tools in their plans and use them with their students for two weeks (teachers were told that

they were able to call the researcher in case they have any drawback). Then, by the end of the period (two weeks), the survey was conducted and after that teachers were asked some questions in order to determine their perception after the use of technology in their classes.

RESULTS

When it comes to the age range, most of the participants (62.51%) were between 20 and 40 years old. Consequently, it was expected that they knew how to work with technology or at least that they felt motivated to do it. Most of the participants had more than 5 years of experience (6-10 years 28% / 11-20 years 44%) and they expressed they were interested in attending the workshop because they had realized students needed to be treated differently. So, teachers have realized that the reality at schools, regarding students' interests, are different from before. 90.63% had received a bachelor degree on education and most of them (68.75) had attended professional development courses. However, during the interview they expressed that those courses had not fulfilled most of their expectations since they turned to be repetitive. On the other hand, some participants (36.71%) believe that planning technologies based on technology is time consuming. Consequently, they try not to do it. Regarding planning, some teachers think they have little idea about planning with technology (34.72%) and others have some idea (46.44). Still, it is obvious teachers need counseling on planning with technology to learn how to use it successfully. 100% of participants expressed they would like to attend courses for learning how to use technology.

Nevertheless, the number of participants that attended the workshops that were delivered was less than 50%. Moreover, teachers from some schools expressed they could not attend the workshops because they were busy, or they had things to do at their schools. Regarding the support from school administrations, 60.71% of teachers said that schools support the use of technology and try to offer capacitation. Nonetheless, this is contradictory because when they were introduced, most of them said that children at their schools are not allowed to use cell-phones during class time. Furthermore, some of the schools expressed they could not participate in the workshops because they had to work on specific activities.

DISCUSSION

It is obvious that teachers believe they need to attend professional development programs. It is also obvious they are willing to do it but it is a different story when it comes to their "reality". It is necessary to raise awareness among teachers since most of them expressed they were willing to participate in the program, but they did not attend the workshop because of different causes. On the other hand, teachers expressed during the interviews they tried to use the tools that were given to them, but it was difficult due to the lack of time they had at the end of the term. It is very important to keep a journal of the process and teachers' opinions so reflections can bring ideas and changes for the success of the program.

It was determined that some teachers had some idea of the use of technology but during interviews they expressed they had realized they needed to improve the way they were doing using those tools with their students. Teachers also realized that students might have

gotten, in one way or another, too familiar with the strategies so it is also necessary to receive more information for teachers not only to adapt activities but to avoid boredom from students. It is important to highlight that time is a factor that is important because this process of implementation make teachers realize corrections that should be implemented, and they might need some counseling or help which in some opportunities was not given on time or given at all. And this is another aspect that is important to highlight because it was determined that the it is necessary to create a group in charge of helping those teachers who are trying to use technology in class. Sometimes teachers have doubts and they need people who have time enough to help them and answer the possible questions or doubts they might have that is why there must be a "group" of specialists in charge of helping teachers on technology and giving "on time" counseling. Planning a "technology professional development" program is a good and necessary idea but it requires time, money and people who work on the organization of the idea and supervise not only the progress of participants but the problems that might appear.

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