SHEIKHBAHAEE UNIVERSITY

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ESP TEACHERS' USE OF

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

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In His Name

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page ……..…I
Approval ……IV
Acknowledgments ……V
Table of Contents ……..…...VI
List of Tables ……..…..X
List of Figures ……...XI
Abstract ……XII

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION
Overview ……..……...1
1.1. Background and purpose of the study ……..…...2
1.2. Statement of the problem ……..…..3
1.3. Significance of the study ……..…...4
1.4. Research questions ……..…...5
1.5. Key terms ……..….6

CAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW
Overview ……..……..7
2.1. Attitude toward using ICT tools in teaching ……..……..……8
2.2. Teachers and ICT ……..….11
4.3. Barriers in use of ICT tools ……..…...13
4.3.1. Lack of technical support ……...…17
4.3.2. Lack of access ……..……18
4.3.3. Lack of knowledge and skill ……..…..19
4.3.4. Lack of time ……....…20
4.3.5. Lack of application (software) ……....…22
4.3.6. Lack of methodology ……23
4.3.7. Teacher personal lacks ……24

4.4. The impact of ICT on teaching and learning ESP ……..…25
4.5. Attitude of ICT in ESP 28
4.6. Summary 31

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview ……..…..33
3.1. Participants ……...…..…34
3.2. Materials ……..…34
3.2.1. Questionnaire ……..…..…35
3.2.1.1. Structure of the questionnaire ……...…36
3.2.1.2. Validity and reliability of the questionnaire ……..…37
3.2.2. Semi-structured interview ……..…36
3.2.3. Classroom observation ……..……37
3.3. Research method ……..…..…37
3.4: Procedure ……..…….38

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULT

Overview ……..……39
4.1: Questionnaire survey ……..…40
4.1.1. Descriptive Summary of ESP teachers' characteristics ……..40
4.1.2. ESP Teachers' age and ICT use ……..…45
4.1.3. ESP Teachers' IT competence and ICT use ……...…48
4.1.4. ESP Teachers' teaching experience and ICT use ……...….....49
4.1.5. Teaching method and ICT use ……....50
4.1.6. ESP Teachers' perceived barriers and needs when using ICT in teaching……..53
4.1.7. Summary of the questionnaire Results ……..……55
4.2: Interview ……..…57
4.2.1. Teachers' attitude toward ICT tools ……58
4.2.2. Usefulness of ICT in ESP classes ……..…….…….59

4.2.3. Barriers of using ICT tools ……..……...…60
4.2.3.1. Time ……..…....60
4.2.3.2. Accessibility ……..……60
4.2.3.3. Technical support ……....…61
4.2.3.4. IT training ……..…61
4.3. Classroom Observation ……..…...62
4.4. Summary of interview and classroom observation result ……64

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview …….....65
5.1. Discussing and answering the research questions ……..…..66
5.1.1. First research question ……..... 66
5.1.2. Second research question ……..... 67
5.1.2.1. ESP Teachers' age ……...…67
5.1.2.2. ESP Teachers' IT competence ……..…68
5.1.2.3. ESP Teachers' teaching experience ……..…..……69
5.1.2.4. ESP Teachers' teaching method ……..……..……69
5.1.3. Third research question …….…….....70
5.1.3.1. Barriers ……..…70
5.1.3.1.1. Lack of time ……70
5.1.3.1.2. Lack of accessibility ……71
5.1.3.1.3. Lack of ICT skills ……...72
5.1.3.1.4. Lack of ESP software ……..……72
5.1.3.2. Needs ……73
5.1.3.2.1. IT training ……...…73
5.2. Conclusion ……..…74
5.3. Implications of the study ……...…75
5.3.1. Provision of effective IT training ……..…..75
5.3.2. Provision of ICT resources ……....…76
5.3.3. Provision of ESP software …...……..….76

5.3.4. Provision of adequate time ……..…...…77
5.3.5. Provision of new ccurriculum …….……77
5.4. Limitations and suggestions for further research ……..…78
References ……80
Appendices ……..…..89
Appendix A ……..…..90

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: ESP teachers' University …….…… 40
Table 4.2: ESP teachers' gender …….……..... 40
Table 4.3: ESP teachers' age …….……..... 40

Table 4.4: ESP teachers' teaching experience ……..…….…. 41

Table 4.5: ESP teachers' IT training …….…….. 41

Table 4.6: ESP teachers' IT competence……...41

Table 4.7: Attitude toward ICT tools…….……...….42

Table 4.8: Frequency of software and hardware use……... 44

Table 4.9: Frequency of ICT use in teaching ESP …….…….…...…45

Table 4.10: Age and IT competence Cross-tabulation…….…..…. 46

Table 4.11: Correlations between age and IT competence…….…..…….. 46

Table 4.12: Age and frequency of ICT use Cross-tabulation…….…. 47

Table 4.13: Correlations between age and ICT use……... 47

Table 4.14:IT competence and frequency of ICT use Cross-tabulation……..…..…48

Table 4.15: correlation between IT competence and frequency of ICT use ……..…..48

Table 4.16:Experience and ICT use Cross-tabulation …….…..…...49

Table 4.17:Experience and ICT use Correlations ……..…..….50

Table 4.18:Teaching method and ICT use Cross-tabulation…….…...51

Table 4.19:ESP Teachers' perception of the usefulness of ICT for ESP classes ……..…..52

Table 4.20:ESP Teachers' perceived Barriers ……..…53

Table 4.21:ESP teachers' IT needs ……...……55

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Ertmer and Hew classification of ICT barriers…..…….…..….. 15

Figure 4.1: ICT made locating ESP easier . …….. . . ……..……..52

Figure 4.2: ICT made the class student-centred ……..……..…52

Figure 4.3: ICT made the ESP classes more interesting ……..……53

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, the rapid pace of information and communication technology (ICT) into education has changed the way teaching and learning is conducted in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes. However, this promising approach seems to be neglected in Iranian context. To introduce the use of ICT into Iranian ESP classes, one needs to understand ESP teachers' perspectives on the use of ICT tools. This study was based on the assumption that exploring ESP teachers' perception toward the use of ICT tools may open up venues to identifying needs and potential problems in this relate. To this end, sixty-two ESP teachers from three universities in Iran participated in this study. The data were collected through, a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The findings of the study indicated that Iranian ESP teachers held positive attitudes toward the use of ICT tools in ESP classes. It was also revealed that the participants perceived that the use of ICT made ESP and related resources convenient and interesting. It was also found that ICT use positively and significantly related to ESP teachers' IT competence and teaching methodology; while it was not related to teachers' years of ESP teaching experience. Moreover, ICT use was found to be correlated inversely with ESP teachers' age. The participants further reported several serious needs and barriers in integrating ICT tools in Iranian ESP classes. Based on the current study, suggestions were made on how ICT tools can be adopted and incorporated more effectively in Iranian ESP classes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter provides the background of the information technology and a discussion of the problems of ICT integration in teaching and learning, especially in ESP. This will be followed by research questions, justification of the present study, and the clarification of the key terms.

1.1. **Background and Purpose of the Study:**

New technology is changing continually and raising new questions on how to use it in an effective, interactive, engaging and integrated way in the classroom. Although education has been part of the new technology era for some years, the choice of using ICT tools appropriately to develop an effective teaching, and learning environment may be a difficult task for many educators. The relative contribution of ICT to teaching environments is still open to discussion, particularly in relation to higher education.

One year after the introduction of ICT, it was clearly noticeable that the uptake of the innovation was inconsistent. Some teachers were not very interested in using the new technology. These teachers made occasional use of ICT in their classrooms and generally appeared hesitant to integrate ICT in their teaching. Another group of teachers avoided using ICT in their lessons completely. These responses risked undermining the potential benefits of ICT in language learning and teaching and could adversely affect the delivery of quality ICT-enhanced ESP instruction, the very reason ICT was introduced to the study context.

The purpose of this study was to provide information concerning university ESP teachers' perceptions about the use of ICT tools in teaching ESP. Moreover, based on teachers' attitudes and perceptions of ICT tools, this research explored possible problems that hinder them to employ ICT tools for instructional purposes as well as factors that affect some instructors' decisions to use or not to use ICT tools in ESP classes. By identifying factors and barriers affecting the use of ICT tools in ESP classes, and the needs and problems of the teachers in integrating ICT, suggestions were made on how ICT can be adopted and integrated more effectively in the ESP classrooms. Also of particular interest is finding out issues which help develop effective IT training courses for ESP teachers.

1.2. **Statement of the Problem**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is permeating the educational arena and changing the way teachers teach and students learn. One of the most relevant issues in the classroom today might be the use and implementation of ICT tools into instruction. In universities, however, despite the greater access to ICT tools, a growing familiarity with new technologies by faculty members, and the frequent use of ICT for research and course preparation, "the pervasiveness of instructional technology does not necessarily correlate with classroom use" (Larner & Timberlake, 1995).

Numerous articles and books confirm how technology and ICT tools contribute to the promotion of students' motivation to learn (Johns & Torrez, 2001). Some authors also offer special class activities, software, and use of Email or the Internet for instruction (Macy, 2002; Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, 2000). However, little research has specifically focused on teachers at the college level regarding incorporation of technology into their teaching and the use of technological resources for instruction. Moreover, no evidence of any research in the area of ESP about the use of ICT tools in Iranian context has been reported, and little is known about ICT integration in ESP instruction in the Iranian context. This lack of research creates obstacles to the improvement of English curricula and teaching practices that employ the modern tools of instructional technology.

Based on these stances and observations carried out by the researcher prior to this study, it seems that many Iranian ESP teachers incorporate some technology into their teaching in the traditional classroom practices and encourage students to use ICT tools for research. However, many teachers are using ICT tools infrequently, despite possessing the necessary skills.

Hence, the overall direction of this study was towards investigating the factors which influence the use of ICT tools in ESP classes in Iranian universities.

ICT use is affected by many barriers; it seems reasonable to investigate the inhibitors which exist for the use of ICT tools in the process of integrating ICT tools in ESP classes. Moreover, in order to arrive at effective recommendations for successful integration of information technology in ESP teaching and learning, the study addresses the needs and problems of ESP teachers when they use ICT in their classrooms.

1.3. **Significance of the Study**

It is the ESP courses offered by universities that equip students with their specific language and career needs in the future. Incorporating modern educational technology like ICT tools into these specific language programs is essential for effective linguistic preparation for the future careers of the younger generation who will work in the modern technology environment.

It is clear that there are numerous benefits for students if ICT becomes an integral part of the teaching and learning process in ESP classes. For the young people to function effectively and efficiently in the 21st Century, they must be prepared with skills as communication skills, and collaborative skills, which are different from the predominant requirements and mode of the post pedagogical approaches. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers in ESP classes to meet the needs of the students in 21st century .Therefore, the process of using ICT tools in ESP, as well as factors inhibiting or facilitating the use of ICT tools must be better understood.

The present study helps to provide a more global perspective into the use of technology and the progress of the ICT adoption in the field of ESP. In addition, this study focuses on the overall use of ICT tools as a whole, not just in one area of study. Therefore, it provides more holistic view of the use of ICT tools in educational environment.

Because little research in previous literature and not any research in Iranian context have addressed ICT use by ESP teachers, part of the significance of this study is in its contribution to the better understanding of using new technologies like ICT tools in ESP classes. In addition to providing empirical data to fill in the gap in the literature, this study investigates the barriers and needs of ESP teachers in using ICT tools.

Moreover, Becta (2004b) suggests that further research must be "carried out into the barriers to ICT use which are specific to teachers" and "which exist for each of the subject areas" (p. 23). This kind of research was suggested because there is little evidence which looks at barriers in specific subject areas. The present study aims to explore the ICT barriers and needs which are specific to the teaching and learning in ESP in higher education in Iran. Moreover, it can shed light on barriers and needs to the actual use of ICT by Iranian ESP teachers and provides information that is helpful in providing IT training programs. Policy makers and university principals, among others, can benefit from empirically derived information of this study.

1.4. **Research Questions**

This research aimed to investigate Iranian ESP teachers' attitude and perception toward the use of ICT tools in ESP classes. The following research questions were proposed to guide this study:

1.3.1. *What is ESP teachers' general attitude about the use of ICT tools in ESP classes?*

1.3.2. *How do ESP teachers' demographic factors and ICT use correlate?*

1.3.3. *What are ESP teachers' perceptions about the barriers and needs of using ICT tools in ESP classes?*

1.5. **Definition of Key Terms**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

ICT is a range of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information (Tinio, 2003). The previously dominant generic term for interactive electronic media, *Information Technology* (or simply *IT*), is now increasingly being replaced by *Information and Communications Technologies* (*ICTs*) (Richards, 2000).

ESP (English for Specific Purposes)

ESP is a language teaching approach that is designed to meet the specific English needs of the learner in relation to the target context of use. It is designed to provide precise personal/professional language support for adult intermediate/advanced students. ESP is related to specific disciplines and is characterized by a different methodology from that of General English (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998).

CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning)

CALL is a kind of Language instruction with the assistance of technology and it is the most popular term that is used to indicate the overall application of technology in language teaching and learning (Braul, 2006).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature related to the roles played by various factors relevant to the use of ICT tools in ESP classes. The identified literature covered in this chapter begins with the most general through to the most specific. The significance of attitude toward using ICT tools and the role of teachers in that regard are presented. This is followed by an in depth discussion of the barriers that affect using ICT tools. Literature related to the barriers of using ICT is reviewed according to seven lacks model of ICT barriers which are very useful in representing the many barriers identified in other studies and is perfectly suited in the Iranian context. The final two sections of the literature review is to focus on the ESP classes; the impact of ICT tools in ESP classes itself, and the attitude of ESP teachers and students affecting the use of ICT tools.

2.1. **Attitude toward using ICT tools in teaching**

Most universities adopted new technologies like ICT tools in their educational policies in the past years, and university teachers are thus being compelled to include ICT tools in their everyday teaching practices. Several factors are important in this change: beliefs and attitudes often account for a large part of the teachers' willingness or reluctance to use technology in their classrooms. In fact, beliefs and attitudes toward ICT use play an important role in the adoption of instructional technology and likelihood of influencing students' learning in the classroom. Note that based on various factors such as environments (i.e. university, school, institute and other educational places) and individual preferences (i.e. reluctance and willingness) the issues in research about attitudes relative to ICT tools can contribute to different results.

Many researchers conducted studies on teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward technology and ICT tools (Dexter, Anderson, & Becker, 1999; Ertmer, Gopalakrishnan, & Ross, 2001; Ertmer, Ross, & Gopalakrishnan, 2000; Winnans & Brown, 1992). Others examined the preservice impact of the computer training programs or technology courses on teachers to consider their attitude changes (Drost & Abbott, 2000; Gurbuz et al. 2000; Wang, 2000). Islami (2006) in his book on the title of "world wide web, accessibility, usage, and attitude in high school students and teachers*"* indicated that the knowing how to use ICT tools increased the teachers' comfort level and help them gain confidence in their ability to integrate technology into the classroom (p. 160). The data from Gurbuz, Yildirim, and Ozden's (2000) study have shown that teacher developed positive attitudes and their confidence increased with computers following the participation in the ICT training course. As Gurbuz et.al. noted, the finding of this study supported the view that participation in ICT training courses affects teachers' attitudes toward computers and other ICT tools positively.