

**In the name of God**



**SHEIKHBAHAE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**EVALUATION OF THE USE OF ICT**  
**IN ENGLISH CLASSES IN ISFAHAN**  
**JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN  
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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JULY 2013

## 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.

**Dedicated to my parents,**

**in recognition of their worth**

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## **Acknowledgement**

A major research project like this is never the work of one person alone; the contributions of many different people make it possible.

First I want to express my most profound gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Tahririan, for his continuous energy and enthusiasm in research which has motivated all his advisees, including me. He was always accessible and willing to help which made my research life smooth and rewarding. I learned a lot from his insights.

I would also like to thank all the professors at Sheikhabaee University who like a supportive family provided an excellent atmosphere for doing research.

Last and surely for most, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents for their unflagging love and support throughout my life. They have always given me the strength to reach for the stars and chase my dreams. They have always taught me that life is not a race and have made each and every moment of my life enjoyable. This thesis would simply be impossible without them.

Finally I would like to express my great appreciation to my siblings for their support. They shouldered lots of my responsibilities while I was busy writing this thesis.

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## **Abstract**

Traditional teaching and learning paradigms have been shaken by the impact of the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into educational practices. Today, many schools in Iran have integrated ICT in their English classes with the aim of improving teaching and learning processes. This study attempted to investigate the efficiency of the use of ICT in English classes of Isfahan junior high schools as compared with conventional classes without ICT. The participants of this study were 100 students of junior high school in two conventional and ICT-based groups of 50 each. There were also 10 teachers of junior high school who taught English in conventional classes and 10 teachers who taught English in ICT-based classes. This study employed a mixed methods design and the data were collected through class observations, questionnaires, interviews and tests. The results revealed that employing ICT tools in English classes of Isfahan junior high schools did not create significant differences as compared with conventional classes. Based on the results, it can be concluded that for employing ICT in English classes, its basic requirements such as teachers ICT training, appropriate equipments, school administration support and teachers' and students' interest in modern technology should be fulfilled in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

## **1. Overview**

This chapter provides the theoretical background of the study. Then the problems which led the researcher to conduct this study are brought into, followed by the research questions investigated in the study. Next, the significance of the study is discussed and finally definitions for key terms are presented

### **1.1. Background**

The technological revolution has facilitated and augmented human communication such that everyday interactions now essentially include digital interfaces. In the field of education, with the rapidly increasing popularity of the technology in recent years, the diversity of learning programs continue to shift and change according to the demands of society.

Research into establishing the exact influence of Information Communication Technology (ICT from now on) on student's literacy seems to be rather inconclusive. However, this field has been and still remains the subject of great interest for scientists and pedagogues. Nobody can deny the importance of ICT in everyday life. Thus, the subject draws a great amount of attention and interest.

Most of the recent researchers, including Haywood and Hutchings (2004), agree that modern language learning environments should include ICT as a learning tool with great potential for both students and teachers. According to Barr (2004, p.29), the introduction of ICT in a class in order 'to facilitate behaviourist and constructivist forms of learning' started already in the early seventies: "Generic and specialized Computer-Assisted Learning (CALL)

software have been used to enhance the learning capabilities of students in many areas of study, including language learning [Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)].”

Today, ICT plays a particularly important role in education. New discoveries find their ways into education, regardless of their places of origin. Nevertheless, some teachers may find ICT to be a threat to the learning process. Until recently, the focus of ICT studies was mostly aimed to prove or disapprove new methods versus traditional approaches in terms of effectiveness. Opinions on the functionality of technologies in the learning process are often represented by extremes: technophobs or technophils, which does not explore all the aspects of the advantages and/or disadvantages of ICT as a learning tool.

The negative attitude towards ICT in a classroom may be partly caused by lack of experience. However, the picture does not seem to be complete with such an explanation. Snyder (2002, pp.154-157), in his critical theory of technology, anticipates failures in some attempts to use technologies for learning as well as ‘unforeseen consequences [of] good intentions and seemingly good projects.’ Some of the seemingly pro-ICT studies have revealed, for instance, that ICT does not seem to be of any assistance for oral language acquisition (Barr, 2004). Meanwhile, ICT and computer software in particular receive generous feedback from most of the researchers in the field. Barr (2004, p.30) finds that word-processing software encourages young learners to express themselves in writing and takes away the fear of misspells and their own illegible handwriting. Jones and Fortescue (1987, p.98), in their study, give a wide list of roles that a computer may assist with for language learning activities: ‘quizmaster, games manager, workhorse, information source, ‘intelligent’ cassette controller and medium for exploration’.



In this regard, the present study attempts to investigate the efficiency of employing ICT in English classes in Isfahan junior high schools as compared with conventional classes without ICT.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

English Language Teaching (ELT) is an area that has changed over the years, moving from very teacher centered approaches to learner-centered ones (Richards, 1985). ELT projects have been introduced throughout different parts of the world (Markee, 1997; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998) and innovations have brought changes in materials (supplementary, self-study, authentic, etc) and technology devices (language laboratories, tape recorders, video recorders, computers, etc). More recently, the use of technology as a tool to improve the language learning has received great attention (Dudenny, 2000; Chapelle, 2001; Young, 2003; Melor Md Yunus, 2007) so that ELT teachers are frequently exposed to new practices.

Technology in basic forms has been integrated in to language teaching for many years. Vinyl records, tape recordings, films and latterly CDs and DVDs have been in regular use in language-learning environments. Such resources provide an authentic, easily-managed encounter with the language. The advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has opened up exciting possibilities for teachers in their efforts to engage learners but at the same time poses problems for teachers due to the skills required in order to use them confidently.

Thus, teachers ICT awareness has become critical in that ICT is transforming how teachers teach and how students learn by making it possible for both to meet the demands of

schooling of today. Therefore, teachers and administrators define ICT as a content to be learned and as a skill to be mastered.

The integration of ICT in teaching and learning is not a method; rather it is a medium in which a variety of methods, approaches and pedagogical philosophies may be implemented (Garret, 2001). This statement shows that the effectiveness of ICT depends on how and why it is applied and integrated. In Iran in general and in Isfahan in particular the application of ICT and particularly computers in English language institutes have been of great interest and have claimed beneficial effects on language learning (Marzban, 2010). This interest has also entered in the realm of Ministry of Education of Iran, and in this regard many schools around the country have been equipped with ICT tools with the aim of improving teaching and learning processes. According to this policy many schools in Isfahan are now in their third year of employing ICT and particularly computers (CALL) in their English classes, however, it seems that this trend has not been of much efficiency (Tabatabaei, 2012) and has not benefited teachers and learners. The present study attempts to investigate the current situation of employing ICT in English classes in Isfahan junior high schools.

### **1.3. Research questions**

1. To what extent are computers used for instructional purposes during English lessons?
2. What ICT technologies are used to promote EFL learning at junior high schools?
3. To what extent are teachers trained to use ICT in English classes at junior high schools?
4. What ICT and computer skills do students have at junior high school level?
5. What are the students' attitudes toward using ICT in their English classes?
6. To What extent does using ICT affect student's language skills from teachers' perspective?

#### **1.4. Significance of the study**

In recent years, technological changes have brought inner connectivity to all aspects of life and everyday living, and accordingly, ICT has constituted an integral part of learning and teaching process and has a considerable impact on the characteristic and function of education in most countries as the use of technology promotes thinking skills and strategies, from basic recall to higher level skills such as classification and inference.

ICT both supports and integrates literacy skills. It enhances interactive teaching and learning styles and provides many opportunities for creativity and save our time and energy. By investigating the efficiency of using ICT in English classes we can give many helpful insights to the teachers in terms of using these tools in their classes and both teachers and schools administrators will have a better understanding of their weaknesses in employing ICT in English classes and consequently this will lead to a situation in which employing ICT in English classes becomes highly efficient.

## **1.5. Definition of key terms**

### **ICT**

ICTs (*information and communication technologies*) are defined as a “diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information” (en.wikibooks.org).

### **CALL**

Computer- Assisted language learning (CALL) involves applying principles of computer assisted learning to language learning context. It is the use of computer programs to enhance learning. According to Huizhong (1985), Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is when the computer is being used as an instructional tool to improve learning by helping students acquire a better understanding of the learning content.