CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY THE RESEARCH STUDENTS IN DIGITAL ENGLISH LABORATORY

[1]Dr. Priya J, [2]Dr S.Henry Pandian, [3]Dr Christy Paulina, [4] Dr Harshitha Y S, [5]K.Preetham,

[1]Assistant Professor,Department of Professional Studies, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore – 560029

[2]Associate Professor, P.G.Department and Research Centre in Economics, Pope's College,Thoothukudi District, Tamilnadu-628 251 (Affiliated to Manonmaniam SundaranarUniversity, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India- 627012)

[3]Assistant Professor of English, Bishop Caldwell Collee, Maravanmadam, Thoothukudi, (Affiliated to Manonmaniam SundaranarUniversity, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India- 627012)

[4] Dr Harshitha Y S Assistant Professor of Business and Management CHRIST (Deemed-to-be University), Yeshwanthpura Bengaluru

[5]Assistant Professor of English, CMS, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University) Bengaluru

Abstract

Both good and negative criticism from the students' English Language lecturers has been received regarding the installation and upgrading of the Digital English Laboratory from the analog language laboratories to improve the students' experience learning the English language. This study investigates the difficulties experienced by English language lecturers while using DEL and incorporating it into their English teaching. The difficulties are divided into three groups: difficulties caused by the lab equipment, difficulties caused by the methods of instruction, and difficulties caused by the students themselves. The goal of this study was to pinpoint the difficulties that lecturers encountered during DEL sessions that prevented students from developing their language skills.

Keywords: Digital Lab. Students, Teachers, Language proficiency

English is essential because it is the universal or "world language," which is utilized in many different situations across the world as the language of teaching and communication. In this spirit, the British Council and The University of Oxford claim in a recent joint report that "there is a fast-moving worldwide transition from English being taught as a foreign language (EFL) to English being the medium of teaching for academic courses" (Dearden 2). English is typically regarded as the second language of teaching in Jordan, after Arabic, the official language. From the first grade, when children begin studying English, to the last secondary education level, it is a foreign language that must be taught in both public and private schools in Jordan. Despite this official English instruction, the level of proficiency among students when they begin university studies is relatively low. This is a result of the predominance of Arabic in daily discourse and a lack of sufficient exposure to English use and speaking at this point. In a research looking at the common challenges Arab students in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt encounter Suleiman (1983) argues that the widespread dissatisfaction with the overall performance of Arab students in English-language subjects was caused by, among other

things, inadequate fundamental principles in curriculum conception and design, a lack of in-classroom strategies, and the students' communication skills' gradual improvement (Intakhab Alam Khan71). In the fields of science and technology, English is also the language of education (medicine, engineering, pharmacy, health sciences and nursing, computer science and information technology, biology, physics, chemistry, etc.). Because the learning process is entirely based on U.S. and British textbooks, students who enroll in higher education institutions to specialize in one of these areas are required to utilize English freely and extensively. Health science education is regarded as one of the most demanding and arduous fields of study because of these expectations and demands. Throughout their undergraduate studies, health science students face a variety of linguistic difficulties. One of the difficulties for nursing and health science NHS students is the use of English as a foreign language for education. For NHS students, mastering medical English as a tool for learning presents additional hurdle and is essentially a second language in and of itself. The fact that NHS students must learn, study, engage in debate, participate, and react to exams in English while attending college is typically a problem for them.

As noted by Bo-Kristensen (2006), while language education must embrace these technological opportunities, it must also reflect on the complexity of institutional and educational contexts that serve to consolidate and integrate technology in language teaching. Several challenges have been identified through the integration of the Digital English Language Lab with English language lecturers' teaching practice. The expensive expense of constructing, modernizing, operating, and maintaining a DEL is one of the difficulties. Many polytechnic professors questioned the value of the funds allocated to DEL. Then there are many who questioned if research was done when selecting the laboratory system before installing it and whether any standards were followed when doing so. The same concerns have been raised by Davies et al. (2005), who asserted that a number of factors need to be carefully taken into account before converting an analog lab to a digital one. These concerns include the price of setting up, supporting, and upgrading equipment, the time required for staff training, the choice and creation of resources, as well as the management of resources for storage space, resource lifespan, and the requirement for routine upgrading.

The idea that computers should make people's lives better and easier is one that computer users are frequently reminded of, however the fact that operating systems and software are continually evolving substantially limits the ability of computers to enhance human capabilities. In addition, there are many who continue to be apprehensive and fearful of the growing use of computers and the Internet, earning them the label "technophobe." According to Dudeney and Hockly (2007), those who grew up using technology and are accustomed to using it are known as "digital natives." These digital natives are members of the current generation, in contrast to their parents, who are typically classified as "digital immigrants" because they entered the world of technology relatively late, if at all. In the educational setting, kids who are digitally savvy are typically digital natives, whereas teachers are typically digital immigrants. This results in the students' propensity for technology and the teachers' reluctance to utilize it. Accordingly, the majority of polytechnic students nowadays are recognized as digital natives, while certain instructors may lean more toward the digital immigrant group. However, some of the students who are digital immigrants, particularly those who came to PSP with no IT experience regardless of whether they are from urban or rural

regions, might potentially be a limitation. It is anticipated that polytechnic students who are digital natives will favor DEL integration in teaching, as these students are better able to comprehend integrated lessons, relate them to real-world situations, and maximize the impact of their learning thanks to a higher understanding of technology than students who are digital immigrants.

IT has a wide range of effects on teachers, including how they approach their subject matter, what they believe about it, how they manage their teams, who they are as people, and how they teach. Teaching is a subjective activity, and every instructor has highly unique opinions and presumptions about what makes for good instruction. Therefore, if a teacher has bad opinions about using technology in the classroom, they will never be motivated to include it into their lessons. According to Ornstein and Levine (2000), educators were concerned that the early computer revolution would harm students' emotional and affective emotional components because substituting a machine for a human teacher would leave the student with too little one-on-one interaction and no real guidance. Towndrow and Vallance (2004) reaffirm educators' worries about the decline in higher education institutions' capacity to foster the rational mind and the hypothetical, deductive thinking that generates ideas and theories. This is further hampered by the teacher who may spend more time teaching "about" technology than "with" technology. These are a few of the unfavorable opinions on the usage of digital English language labs and computer-assisted language learning.

Any higher education institution can provide its professors a state-of-the-art multimedia language lab or other cutting-edge teaching facilities, but how many of them are really used to their fullest potential by the lecturers themselves? Do the lecturers possess the knowledge necessary to completely incorporate the facilities into their methods of instruction? Are the lecturers fully trained in DEL educational technology after only receiving a one-day briefing from the DEL program engineer or software developer who can only explain the technology's functions but neglects to cover how to fully integrate the technological marvel with the lecturers' own teaching practice? Any educational technology tools are difficult to utilize, especially for people who are just learning how to do so. This is because technology does not always make things simpler or faster. The lecturers' degree of IT proficiency, understanding, and training of the technology to be deeply tied to any given curriculum determines how well DEL is used in language classrooms. Koehler and Mishra (2008) raised similar issues, claiming that instructors are frequently given insufficient preparation for the task of integrating technology with their teaching practice. According to NWP, Devoss, Eidman-Aadahl, and Hicks (2010), from the perspective of the teacher, it is more important to identify the most effective uses of technology to achieve learning objectives for particular students in order to create a digital environment and experiences that will allow teachers to extend their most successful practices into even more effective learning opportunities for students. Therefore, time management and additional preparation are the main causes of the difficulties the respondents had in incorporating the DEL into their teaching practice. In addition to having a strong command of the target language, lecturers must be at least computer literate and have a working understanding of the Digital Language Lab system, administration program, and supporting multimedia software tools for the teaching processes in order to properly utilize the lab. The majority of the interviewees said they are not interested in using DEL and integrating it into their classes because they are unsure how to handle the always evolving technology and

worry that they are not making the most of it. In a manner, there is a grain of truth to the statement since, according to Koehler and Mishra (2008), many instructors received their degrees while educational technology was still in its infancy and this influences how they see the technology they are unfamiliar with. Last but not least, there is the issue of classroom administration in the DEL context. Several respondents stated that it is challenging to maintain control and student supervision in this new setting. This is especially concerning when the emphasis of the teaching and learning process is changed to continual observation of the pupils who can disengage from the class by hiding behind the monitor. The entire goal of using DEL in language courses to maximize learning processes may be compromised in such circumstances.

Thus, it can be stated that even if there are a number of issues that must be resolved, the benefits of integrating educational technology facilities like DEL into the teaching and learning process should not be overlooked. The importance of their position must be made clear to the polytechnic's English language instructors, and they must aim toward successful DEL classroom management that mixes using multimedia tools with regular, traditional teaching assignments. The incorporation of DEL by educators should not be done merely for the sake of joining the trend; rather, they should understand the benefits of using such resources and advance their computer literacy, particularly in the areas of multimedia and IT, in addition to being aware of how to fully optimize the DEL and conduct its troubleshooting. In order to meet the needs of their students and raise their level of knowledge of the material being taught, educators must also be aware of when to deploy technology, such as DEL, in a way that benefits both students who are technophiles and those who are not. In order to prepare the next generation of students for a hard future, it is crucial for educators to update their teaching techniques and strategies in accordance with the current demands, as was previously indicated by John Dewey.

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