

The Effect of the Use of Technology on the nature of Teacher's Profession

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Abstract ;

Educational programmes have recognized the growing need to use computers in the classes as it presents unprecedented challenges that help the students to acquire an inquiring, critical and creative mind to capitalize on the opportunities driven by the growth of information, knowledge and technology. The computer knowledge has begun influencing student's learning experience for more than 25 years ago, but it was in a moderate manner (Cuban, 2001). However, the past decade has witnessed major trend toward integrating computer technology in all the language classes. The integration has increased because the computer technology represents an accessible and instant information, enormous potential for interactivity and media-rich communication, as well as educational tools which engage the students in the classroom (Mouza, 2002). Undoubtedly the recent advancement in information technology and computer usage in the classroom is rapidly transforming the environment of the classroom. The teachers cannot ignore the reality the today's classroom must provide technology-supported learning (Angers & Machtmes, 2005). Being prepared to integrate the technology in the classroom has become a paramount skill in every teacher's professional repertoires. The traditional role of the teacher as the center of the schooling is changing recently with all the introduction of the new technologies in the classroom. One of the effects of the new technologies is the decentralization of teachers in the learning environment (Damrian, 1998). This introduces a very valid point of how the teaching profession will change in the era of digital technologies. What is the role of the teacher in a classroom where he/she is no longer the only source of knowledge? How can he/ she teach effectively in a class, where every student has his/her computer and can Google any piece of information? The following study will investigate the effect of the implementation of the technology in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classes on the nature of the teachers' profession.

Keywords: Digital immigrants, digital natives, integration, new technologies Technology-enhanced environment, Professionalism,

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Introduction

Teaching English for Speakers of other languages (TESOL) has always struggled to construct a professional identity. English teaching has historically been seen as “a natural gift or a talent” (Nunan, 1999b, para.4) rather than a discipline or acknowledged profession. To address and mitigate these concerns, professional organizations, which are concerned with teacher’s professional development, strongly advise those who want to join the English as a foreign language profession to work hard on achieving high standards of practice as well as certification. Yet despite marked progress toward professional recognition, TESOL is still strongly associated with a public perception of language teaching as “nonprofessional.” Untrained teachers who move abroad to teach foreign language often reinforce the idea of teaching English as means to an end: to finance travel adventures, practice a foreign language, or put off finding a “real job” (Lorimer & Schutle, 2011).

The origins of professionalism are traced in law, medicine and clergy (Freidson, 1971). These three occupations framed the key traits of a professional occupation that distinguish them from all the others (Whitty, 2008). However, as Whitty (2008) specifically points out, “more recent sociological perspectives on professionalism have rejected such normative notions of what it means to be a professional” (p. 32). Furthermore, regarding teachers’ professionalism, Hargreaves (2000) identifies such a development through four broad historical phases. a) The pre-professional age, in which teaching was seen “as managerially demanding but technically simple, and its principles and parameters were treated as unquestioned commonsense. “One learned to be a teacher through practical apprenticeship, and one improved as a teacher by individual trial-and-error” (p. 156). b) The age of autonomous professional, which was marked by “a challenge to the singularity of teaching and the unquestioned traditions on which it is based” (p. 161). c) In the age of the collegial professional, there are increasing efforts “to build strong professional cultures of collaboration” (pp. 165-166). Finally, the post-professional age or postmodern “is driven by two major developments in economics and the electronic and digital revolution in communications” (p. 167). These phases can be identified in various countries all over the world but not in the same order.

Moreover, Hargreaves (2000) states that “teaching in many parts of the world is in the midst or on the edge of a great transformation” (p. 151). Indeed, until now, schools and consequently teachers face a broad spectrum of changes and reforms, which raise standards and demands and have impact on their roles and responsibilities. These, in turn, become increasingly extended including current and emerged issues such as new forms of families, parental involvement, multicultural society, new technologies and greater policy control (Hargreaves, 2000; 2001). Teachers’ work becomes more demanding and restricted and teachers are forced to work, in ways they had never been taught. This changing nature of teaching affects teachers’ work and therefore the notion of their professionalism.

This brings us to the background to the proposed study that originated from the increasing demand of implementing more information communication technology in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classes in one of the universities in the Middle East. The continuous push of integrating more technology in the EFL classes aims not only at preparing the students for the

future, but also at making teaching and learning more engaging by enabling the students to construct their own knowledge and explore topics of interest, which is congruent with what we know about how people learn (Cuban, 2001). Traditional approaches to language teaching and learning have been challenged by new and innovative approaches based on the latest advances in computer and Internet technology. The vast resources and opportunities that computers and Internet provide have brought about new tools, approaches, and strategies in language teaching and learning. The success of any initiatives to implement technology in an educational programme depends strongly upon the support and attitudes of teachers involved. It has been suggested that if teachers believed or perceived computers not to be fulfilling their own or their students' needs, they are likely to resist any attempts to introduce technology into their teaching and learning (Askar & Umay, 2001).

Having said that, the availability of the technology does not necessarily mean that the technology has been properly and successfully integrated in EFL classes. Hence, the term of "new technology" has to be defined clearly, by the "new technology"; The researcher means computers, laptops, digital workbooks, digital boards, YouTube, and Internet connection for all devices. It is very important to differentiate between the new technology, or digital technology from the old technology such as, blackboards, whiteboards, or textbooks (Cuban, 2001). The integration of the Integration of Communication Technology (ICT) in the foreign language teaching and learning process is still an issue that has not been fully studied. Therefore, it is essential to establish a relationship between what the EFL teachers think about the implementation of the technology activities and how they really use such activities in their classes so teacher's education can be always enriched for the benefit of the EFL learners. Prensky (2005) All teachers know that digital technology is becoming an essential part in the students' education. But just how to use it in everyday class is not yet completely clear, and most educators are at the same stage of figuring out how to use technology meaningfully for teaching and epically EFL classes and continue to develop and establish themselves as successful teaching professional.

The theoretical background

EFL teachers encounter now demands of integrating new technologies into foreign language classes. They also look for better ways of providing students with linguistic skills, meaningful communication and culture. In the technology-enhanced environment, EFL teachers are being consistently asked to change their roles in the classrooms that have become more learner-centered. The learners in today's classroom are able to make their own decisions and become responsible for their work more independently, the EFL teacher, on the other hand, became a "facilitator", a resource person and a counselor rather than the authority and decision maker. Amongst all these changes, the role of the EFL teacher as a professional has become ambiguous. EFL teachers have to realize that their roles in the new era of technology have changed tremendously. It is not only to transmit new knowledge, but to give students tools to acquire knowledge and recognize value of what they see in books and software as well as the internet. In addition, Jeong (2006) emphasizes that the role of the EFL teachers in EFL settings is more crucial than ever because teachers are able to motivate students and try to create language learning environments which are nonthreatening, meaningful and effectively supportive by using web technology. If EFL teachers have variety of positive teaching and learning experiences in using computers, they are likely to be more confident

and skillful teachers, which consequently make them good representative of the teaching profession (Mollaei & Riasati, 2013).

Undoubtedly the recent advancement in information technology and computer usage in the classroom is rapidly transforming the environment of the classroom. The teachers cannot ignore the reality the today's classroom must provide technology-supported learning (Angers & Machtmes, 2005). Being prepared to integrate the technology in the classroom has become a paramount skill in every teacher's professional repertoires (Kumar, et al, 2008).

With the improvements in technology and its use in EFL classroom, the roles of the teachers are also consistently changing. Within this change, the knowledge of the technology use has become a must for most of the foreign learners "The use of technology in teaching becomes more important in present times, because teachers also have to be able to keep up with the technological knowledge of their students" (Richards, 2014, p.2) In order to meet the expectations of the today's 'digital natives', who are quite component, and very dependent to computers and other online instruments. Prensky (2001) advocates that EFL teachers started to use the technology because it submits an altered manner of demonstration and offers a kind of enthusiasm for their students. EFL teachers are fully aware that today's learners, especially young freshman university students, have learned to focus on what interest them and on the things, that treat them as individuals rather than a group or class. In an increasingly populated world, choice, differentiation, personalization, and individualism have become extremely important necessity for the younger generation. EFL teachers need to realize that there is a huge difference between how younger EFL students think and how teachers think (Prensky 2001).

There are many studies that report the advantages of technology –based instruction for language learners (Wiburg & Butler – Pascoe, 2002), many EFL programs still lack the appropriate integration of technology into their curricula. EFL teachers are not receiving adequate instruction in the integration of technology into their courses (Kavanaugh- Brown, 1998). Consequently, teachers are faced with the challenge of integrating the technology without proper training.

There are increasingly number of technologies that are changing the professional role of the teachers in the language classes, for an example digital workbooks and digital texts. These technologies provide illustrative examples rather than a complete taxonomy various pedagogical functions in the 21st century. In the near future, teachers will employ the two technologies in the class according to the needs of the individual students and the learning goal of the unit (Dede & Richards, 2012).

The first and the easiest instructional technology are the digital workbooks, which have been adapted into computer-based workbook systems (Auzene, Giroire, & Le Calvez, 2009). They have several advantages over paper. First, they are easier to collect and grade. The teachers have access to enormous automated workbooks that the students can use to develop and master the learnt skill. Second, digital workbooks are dynamic and non-linear. Finally, they can track student's performance over time. Each student has a digital record that track their progress over time on a range of skills and knowledge.

The second instructional technology is the digital texts, for instance, books, films, artwork, and recently 'you tube'. In literate society, things such as books and movies provide mediated experiences; settings where we experience the events and emotions not directly but through a particular medium (Jenkins, 2006). However, students' understanding of these experiences will be shaped by conversations with peers and with the teacher through additional learning activities set around the media source used in the class (Gee, 2007).

To start with, it is very important to discuss what being "Professional" means. It is often synonymous with "successful", or it is always associated with a certain behavior that is expected of individuals in specific occupation (Tichenor, 2005). The definition of "professional teacher" refers to the status of a person who is able to teach, it can also refer to the teacher who presents the best in the profession and sets the highest standard for best practice (Wise, 1989). The definition itself describes the teacher who has a firm grasp of the subjects he/she teaches. He /she is able to analyze the needs of the students of whom he /she is responsible. The term "Professional teacher" "also implies that the teacher knows that he/she is accountable for meeting the needs of his/her students. All the above illustrates that teaching at a professional level is a very advanced and complex process. In other words, the word "professional" is a trained or qualified specialist who displays a high standard of competent conduct in his/her practice, however, professionalism is used in a constitutive sense to refer to "practitioner's' knowledge, skills, and conduct.

The nature of the profession of English as a foreign language and how EFL teachers regard themselves as professional will be affected heavily by the continuous integration of the information Technology, since EFL teachers have to develop new skills to integrate these new tools in their teaching and learning process effectively. It is a bit challenging to EFL teachers because the integration of the technology is one of these situations in which teachers, although familiarized with the tools, are new comers to the scene and have extremely different perspectives from those of their students about their use. Although the EFL teachers know that they have to use technology, their perceptions affect their use in the classroom.

The introduction of more technology in EFL classes is forcing a change in the model of teaching, from teacher- focused approach based on instruction to a student-focused model based on collaboration (Tapscott, 1998). This change is inevitable because the nature of nowadays students have changed radically, they are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach (Prensky 2001).

Prensky (2001) advocates that the gap between the digital native students and the digital immigrant teachers is considered one of the biggest problems in the educational system. He continued that the preference of the digital native students is incompatible with the practices of their teacher

Therefore, the traditional role of the teacher as the center of the schooling is changing recently with all the introduction of new technologies in the classroom. One of the effects of the new technologies is the decentralization of teachers in the learning environment (Damrian, 1998). This introduces a very valid point of how the teaching profession will change in the era of digital

technologies. What is the role of the teacher in a classroom where he/she is no longer the only source of knowledge? How can he/ she teach effectively in a class, where every student has his/her computer and can Google any piece of information?

The research questions

- 1- Has the role of the EFL teacher changed after incorporating more information communication technology in today's classroom?
- 2- Do the EFL teachers feel the need to include all these new technologies that are being introduced every day?

Research Approach

The study will adopt an interpretive paradigm, which emerged in contradiction to positivism in attempts to understand and explain human and social reality (Crotty, 1989). It is developed from the methods used in sociology and social science research. Interpretivism is primarily concerned with human understanding, interpretation, inter-subjectivity, and lived truth. Any research that adopts the interpretive paradigm looks for culturally derived interpretation of the social life-world. I choose the interpretive paradigm because it captures the uniqueness and the individuality of the particular participants, circumstance and their social context (Ernest, 1994).

The research methodology

The study will be exploratory study with the aim to explore the views of the ESL teachers and how they look upon their teaching profession in the light of the introduction of more technology in the classroom. The research in the interpretive paradigm builds up rich 'thick' descriptions of the participants under study, since the study is concerned about the teachers and their inter-relationships and contexts. These rich descriptions allow the reader to understand the study through identification, empathy, or a sense of entry into the lived reality of the study (Ernest, 1994). By adopting the interpretive paradigm, I, the researcher, begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretation of the social context under study. Theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations; and it should precede research but follow it. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, as cited in Cohen and el, 2007). I, the researcher, will work directly with the participants in an attempt to understand their views on the study and generate a theory based on their interpretation of the social context under study (Cohen & el, p. 18).

The Methods

The exploratory study will implement a semi structure interview. Vale (1996:88, as cited in Cohen and el, 2007) During the process of the interview, I followed the seven stages that should be put in consideration when conducting an interview based research: thematizing: designing: interviewing: transcribing: analyzing: verifying: and reporting. Prior to conducting the semi-structure interview, I had to pilot it first in case I need to adjust or change some of the questions.

The validity

The study is informed in the light of the qualitative research. The researcher, had to abide by the principles of the qualitative research: the natural setting is the principle source of data: data are socially situated, and socially and culturally saturated. I, the researcher, am part of the researched

world. There is a concern of the process rather than the outcome. I have to see and report the situation from the participants' point of view. Maxell (1992) argues that there are five kinds of validity in the qualitative research to explore the 'understanding' of human experience. To start with, some of the validities are descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, and generalizability.

Credibility

Credibility is another word for trustworthiness, which is a major characteristic of all the qualitative research. Credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. It considers the breadth and depth of information gathered and how well the researcher appears to have analyzed the data. Credibility is very essential in the qualitative research as it represents one of the four for judging qualitative research. It involves trustworthiness from the perspective of the participants (Creswell 2009).

Data collection and Analysis

The data analysis in qualitative research will proceed hand in hand with other parts of developing the interpretive study, the data collection and writing up the findings. The text was very dense, not all the information can be used in the qualitative research. During analyzing the data, I had to "winnow" the data (Guest, Macqueen, & Namely, as cited in Creswell, 2009). During my data collection, I wrote up my analytical memos in which I reflected on the data, searching for themes and evolving ideas (Creswell, 2009). At the end of the data collection, based on the themes identified in the memos, I labeled and organized my data in password protected device.

The participants

The participants are six EFL teachers who work in one of the leading western university in the Middle East. They teach in the intensive English Language program. They are also required to use the digital textbooks and the digital texts in their ESL language classes. The teachers who volunteered in the study have more than 10 years of teaching experience. They are two American teachers, one Irish, one Jordanian, and two Lebanese teachers. All the participants were given pseud names to maintain the confidentiality of the data provided by participants.

The ethical consent

The researcher, sent the pre – thesis ethics application form to my professor for approval before he/she started the study or collect any. The researcher made sure to give a consent form with fair explanation of the procedures to be followed and their purpose to every participant

The limitation of the study

The findings of this study should not be generalized to all ESL teachers in the Middle East, as the respondents involved were ESL teachers in particular university in the Middle East. This population was selected because of the ease accessibility. The findings rely heavily on the honesty of the participants. Some respondents might have different attitude participating in this study.

Results and Discussion

The study implemented an interpretive approach in an attempt to explore the teachers' views on the use of the new technologies in the ESL classes and to what extent it affects the nature of their profession. The data from the semi – structured interviews were read thoroughly to present them in themes that relate to the research questions, rather than reporting everything the interviewees said. The data were analyzed through several techniques in order to present them accurately. Some of the used techniques are analysis of words (word repetitions and key-words in contexts) and a careful reading of larger blocks of texts. The analysis of the data lead to two major themes that were very obvious in all the interviewees' transcription; first, teachers' resistance to change their roles in EFL classrooms, and second, teachers' reluctance to embrace technology because it wastes the time of the class. The two major themes will be interpreted to create explanatory accounts.

Teachers' resistance to share roles with the students

Whenever teachers are asked to describe their role in the classroom, the first thing that comes to their mind is a facilitator. They continue to describe how they facilitate the process of education and encourage teacher-centered classroom. However, all these clichés change the minute you ask them about the way they manage their classrooms. The teachers strive to have the upper hand in deciding what to be taught or discussed in their classrooms. The researcher believes it is part of their nature to have full control on the classroom. This was very obvious when he/she interviewed the participants. All the teachers were reluctant to welcome the use of technology in the classroom, because they made them question their function/role in the classroom.

When the teachers were asked to define their role as teachers and whether this role changes when they use technologies in class, they admitted that the use of technologies make them less in control of their classrooms, or in other words not needed in the classroom. Maria stated, *"It makes me not needed in the classroom "*. Salma also added *"Why do I have to be in class, if they are working on computers?"* Susan also added *"When the students are on the computers, I feel that the class went out of control, because I am not sure if they are working on the tasks or surfing the web"*.

Noha added *"To be honest I feel that I am useless. I am rooming around without any use when the students are on the computers. I keep moving around watching them working on their computers. I don't know my exact role. I never use the e-books or the activities online during my class time. I always assign them as homework"*. She also added *"I don't feel I am a teacher I feel I am supervisor with no real job."*

I like to deliver my class myself because I feel that the students interact more with me, they understand more it is human base thing". Jenny also highlighted *" I can't leave the students for long on the computers because they keep doing other stuff and I can't monitor their progress. I get annoyed when my students keep asking me to use the computer in class"*. She adds that *"I sometimes use the computer assisted activities at the very end of the class when I feel that the students are tired."*

John added another point *"Students have been learning English for very long time without Technology. I have been teaching for over 30 years and I feel Technology is not a plus."*

This brings us to a very important point of the relationship between EFL teachers and their classes. The teacher resistance to new methods is common in the literature as it describes how it is always associated when you introduce new technology to the teacher; they first resist it because they do not know how to use it (Dawes, 1999 as cited in Mumtaz, 2000). Burner (1996) claims that all teachers have preconceived theories of how their students learn, which inform their approach to teaching. Burner continues to introduce four models of pedagogies: the acquisition of “know how”, where the learners are imitative learners, the acquisition of propositional knowledge, where students learn from didactic exposure, the development of intersubjective interchange, where the students are thinkers; and the management of “objective knowledge” where students are knowledgeable. If you have a look at these pedagogies, it is impossible to see the use of computer or new technologies in them. Until the teachers are trained well enough to integrate the technologies properly, they will not exert any effort to use them. According to Alkins and Vasu (2000), teachers attitudes and concerns have a significant influence on the use of computers in the EFL classroom. Kim (2002) points out that the crucial factors affecting the successful integration of technology into the classroom are strongly associated with teachers themselves, such as teachers’ perceptions and attitudes. She also adds that teachers’ perceptions and attitudes toward technology can be seen as a facilitating or inhibiting, giving them more confidence or a major barrier of technology use.

Teachers’ reluctance to embrace new technologies to avoid wasting time

To start with, the study has adopted the term “new technologies” to refer to the computer-based software, as well as “you type”. When the teachers were interviewed, the researcher identified that these are the types of technologies that are specified in the interview questions.

The teachers who volunteered in the study have more than 10 years teaching experience. They have started their teaching profession long before the domination of the technology over the ESL classes. Maria, who has over 10 years of teaching experience stated, “*I prefer my classroom without computers*”. Silvia said “*The generation these days are really interested in computers and technologies, but the thing when you have a big classroom, you can’t make sure that all of them are accessing the program, so it kind of makes it harder for the teacher to control the classroom*”, because the students know their way around the computers, they might go and do something else”. Salma explained her view of technology in classroom, “*The use of technology can be beneficial and it can be useless*”. Paula also added “*I do not like having the computers in class because it is a waste of time*”. Noha added a valid point “*If you run a class on the computer and you are doing interactive class like blogging giving some discussions and all students interact and give their comments and you give your comments then it is something different because we to let them get into technology because now it is the century so they are going on Facebook and it is easier than before, but having extra activities online is boring in class.*”

Jenny added “*I feel it hinders the learning because when you have a big class, you can’t make sure that all the students are accessing the program. As you know our students are very good when it comes to using the computer and they might end up doing something else*”.

John added “*I don't like all this issue of the use of computers because it is all about pleasing our young students' . Today's generations are used of getting everything easily and they think that if they log on the computers they will learn faster*”. To summarize, it is very important to highlight the gap between today's generation, who are referred to as “Net Generation “(Tapscott, 1998) and our EFL teachers, who are digital immigrants to technology, although born before the net generation, they continue to make use of technologies. The data collected from the interviews showed that the EFL teachers did not use the technologies fully, or as their students expected them to use them. The data showed that the ESL teachers limited their use of the technologies in using only digital book, which mainly require the students to make the same type of fill in the blanks and correct the verbs exercises, but online instead of writing them down in their workbooks. The data collected from the interviews showed that the EFL teachers approached the new technologies in the same way they would approach the printed workbook, which clearly explains why they all said that their ESL students do not enjoy finishing the exercises online. Having said the above, a couple of the fresh graduate teachers admitted that they sometimes use “you tube “in their classes and they find it really engaging. This proves the point that in order to use the technologies effectively in the EFL classes, EFL teachers need to understand the difference between the two generations and how they process the information.

One of the major drawbacks in the teachers' use of technologies, is that they do not know when or how to integrate the technologies in their classes. One of the teachers said that she prefers to assign it as homework, whereas, another teacher said that she assigns them at the very end of the class.

Conclusion

Technology can have great potential in EFL classes, but this potential may be underused and undervalued simply because the teachers are reluctant to use them. The teachers are aware that the technology is here to stay, and there will be more and more technology in the future classes. The major problem is that teachers are resistant to equip themselves with more training to enable them to use it affectively in class. The teachers resist the idea that they need to learn the new technology in order to engage themselves more, or may be the teachers do not like the idea that when it comes to Technology, the students know more than them in the classroom.

The issue of integrating technologies will continue to raise so many questions, because it involves so many parties, for an example, the individual differences in using the technologies, the effective ways of using them, their effect as well as suitability on the process of learning the new language. As a final note, the integration of technologies is not a purpose in itself; on the contrary, it is only one of the tools of learning a new language.

EFL teachers need to be prepared as their role as the central role of authority will soon be changed into a guide as every student will take more responsibility for learning. A full understanding of this process will be beneficial for future generations.

Recommendations for further study research

This study aimed to explore the teachers' view on how technology affects the nature of their profession. This study should be complemented by another study to explore the views of the

students on the role of the teacher in a technology-rich classroom. I presume such study will give both sides of the coin, as the ESL classes are composed of teachers and students, and both parties should have their say on the effective ways of integrating the technologies in the ESL classes

About the Author :

Sally Kondos is an English Language Instructor at the American University in Dubai (AUD). She has over 15-year teaching experience in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language. She lived and worked in four different countries, including Egypt, England, KSA and UAE. She has MA in Applied Linguistics & Language Teaching from the University of Nottingham in the UK. The passion for Teaching English language has urged Sally to pursue her studies in Doctorate of Education at Exeter. Being a native Arabic speaker, Sally knows how it is extremely difficult to learn a new language. Her research interests are in the field of Phraseology and Second Language Acquisition.

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