The impact of ICT in teaching EFL at the university level

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Abstract
The current study highlights the significance of the use of information and communication technologies in the teaching-learning process of English as an FL at the university level. A system of tasks is proposed with the use of technologies in the teaching-learning process of the English language in the Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology department at the Duhok Polytechnic University. The application of these tasks contributes to the development of informational search skills, faster assimilation of the new vocabulary and morpho-syntactic elements brings students closer to real communication situations, and raises interest in learning the language. Finally, the use of such strategies will improve learners' four language skills and thus their language achievement.

Keywords: information and communication technologies, teaching, foreign languages.

Introduction
In today's world, which is characterized by having no borders for the expansion of knowledge, the mastery of FLs regains more and more importance and boom. It's fundamental for professionals from different spheres of activity to know how to communicate in other languages to have greater access to information and establish contacts with their counterparts in other countries. Precisely because of its importance, the teaching-learning process of FLs undergoes constant modifications and transformations. The growth of the variety of methods and ways to teach and learn FLs is, lately, directly related to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). When speaking of ICT, not only technological resources and information systems are taken into account. Informational exchange as support for the pedagogical process also refers to the use of new ICT as a system of communication methods aimed at the development of students' communicative skills.

The problem of the study
The surveys and interviews applied at the Duhok Polytechnic University to students and teachers, as well as visits to classes, have shown insufficient use of ICT for the teaching and learning of FLs, so it is determined as a scientific problem: insufficient use of technological resources in the teaching and learning process of FLs.

The aims of the study
This study aims to develop a system of tasks with the use of communication technologies, information, and communications in the teaching-learning process of the English language in the department in question.

Advantages of ICT in FL teaching and learning
There is no longer any question that ICT use improves FL teaching and learning, and there is a wealth of literature on the subject. However, the effectiveness of ICT depends greatly on how it is utilized, the teachers' motivation, and or their "savoir-faire." Technological tools and connectivity alone cannot increase teaching and learning; for ICT to be regarded as an effective tool, a teacher must use it and work on a clearly defined pedagogical project.

When utilizing ICT to help the teaching of FLs, the following effects seem to be the most noticeable ones (Houcine, 2011):
• The ease with which the educational materials can be modified to suit the needs, responses, and circumstances of the learners;
• Quick feedback is made possible;
• Possibility to combine/use alternately (basic) skills (text and images, audio and video clip...);
• Lectures become more interesting and less mundane, which increases learners' engagement;
• ICT enables us to focus on one specific aspect of the lesson (pronunciation, vocabulary...).

There is substantial evidence of the advantages and benefits that the usage of ICT can have on students, notwithstanding any disparities that may exist in the educational environment (Alzeebaree& Zebari, 2021). The following are some ways that successful ICT use affects students and various parts of the learning process:

• ICT boosts students' motivation, which improves commitment and involvement on a personal level;
• ICT enhances self-directed learning;
• Collaboration and communication among students are more crucial;
• The outcomes and attainment of learners are enhanced.

Because the effectiveness of ICT use determines its consequences, the important question still stands: how can ICT be utilized to support FL teaching and learning and increase learning in FL?

Developing

The importance of ICT in the teaching-learning process

It is impossible in the 21st century to train young people without the necessary presence of this ICT process. The use of these tools in the teaching-learning process isconsidered as essential as the very presence of the teacher. The teacher plans, guides, and controls. However, technologies make this process more attractive and motivating and they serve as didactic instruments for their development.

The use of ICT in the educational system is a very popular topic not only among specialists dedicated to the development of these technologies but also among teachers, both in general education and higher education. In the current era, which is alsoknownas the digital age, it is necessary to define well the potentialities and limits of ICT, as well as determine exactly the benefits that they offer for the improvement of the production process.

According to Valarezo, Carrión, and Ordoñez (2017), most research is carried out around the characteristics, advantages, and risks of ICT in the educational context and considers that they are the set of technologies that allow the access, production, treatment, and communication of information presented in different codes (text, image, sound, etc.). They refer to the need for improvement and training of teachers for the implementation of these means in universities and schools. Cabero (2015), in turn, states that these technologies are of great value to institutions for their commitment to the management and organization of teaching processes, learning, promotion of changes in conceptions concerning education, and its impact on society.

ICTs are the result of possibilities that human being himself has achieved and provided for humanity to digitize data, products, processes, and services, which can also be transported safely and conveniently over long distances and in aconsiderably short time. These technologies group together the means and mechanisms used to process and transmit information. ICTs are present in everyone's life and have changed and benefited a lot.

It is considered that the use of ICT is fundamental for the achievement of significant learning for students. The arrival of these technologies, and above all the internet, has contributed considerably to the increase in teaching materials and other resources to support theteaching-learning process. In the past, traditional books, pictures, cards, games, and videos were didactic. Now digital materials such as multimedia and Internet websites are added, along with electronic books and dictionaries, scientific journals, and other digital resources.With the arrival of ICT, the roles traditionally assumed by teachers andstudents have changed. The teacher is no longer the main source of knowledge, and the student is no longer a passive entity that receives the information. The use of ICT fosters the introduction of new methods and procedures and allows the teacher to carry out a greater contextualization of the topics and a more personalized treatment of their students,allowing better attention to individual differences by enabling a greater diversityof tasksand didactic activities. On the other hand, these technologies allow the participation of students in the teaching-learning process, and contribute to the greaterautonomy of students, turning them into self-regulators of their learning (Valarezo, et al., 2017).

It is necessary to emphasize that ICTs contribute to the development of work skills independently with different sources of information, stimulating the search, strengthening investigative skills, and the use of technologies. In addition, the cognitive-communicative skills of students are strengthened when they issue criteria, exchange opinions, argue ideas, describe realities, and reach agreements. The latter contributes to the consolidation of habits of working in groups.

Many researchers (Cardona, Fandiño and Galindo, 2014; Robaina and Alea, 2017; Salazar, Benavides, Nunez, Guaraca, Martinez and Andrade, 2019; Valarezo, et al. al., 2017) consider prior preparation of teachers is necessary, aimed at the development of habits andskills in the use of ICT, for the successful implication of technologies in their practice pedagogical.According to the authors above, a little use given to ICT by some teachers is directly related to their lack of knowledge about the management of technologies.

According to Left, Villegas, Aquino-Zuñiga, Sandoval-Caraveo, and Garcia-Martinez (2017), some teachers do not use ICT and prefer traditional teaching methods,precisely because they do not have the necessary

preparation to work with the technological resources. The mentioned authors propose to develop the methodological recommendations, aimed at teachers, to help them harmonically introduce ICT in the process of teaching-learning.

Currently, the use of ICT in professional education in Kurdistan is considered essential,as it guarantees the introduction of the topics at a higher level, it makes the classes more dynamic and interesting. The use of virtual teaching-learningin the process of training professionals is a very effective program and this should be arranged by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Kurdistan Region Government - Iraq, to all the universities of the region, as part of the transformations so that continue to be scientific, technological and humanistic universities aimed at preserving, develop and promote culture.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan Region of Iraqmust have a systematic plan to guarantee the use of ICT in all universities. Such a plan must include social networks, the internet, email, chats andforums, digital platforms, books, and electronic dictionaries. Nowadays, analytical programs and methodological guidelines for classes are available to all students through the*Moodle* platform. Currently, all learners have access to these resources. Also, some universities have installed WIFI points, especially in libraries, for the development of independent work related to searching and doing investigations. Mobile phones are used to a lesser extent as this communication resource is relatively expensive and not affordable for everyone, so its use is limited.Mobile phones are mainly used for the connection of teachers with their students, and the last ones are used to store information related to teaching (schedules, methodological guides, teaching materials, andothers).

However, not all teachers use ICT in their classes. It is a problem that needs to be solved in all Kurdistan region universities. Interestingly, there is a strategy for the use of technologies in the teaching-educational process and its fulfillment is controlled by the teaching authorities.

The use of ICT in the teaching-learning of EFL

FL is one of the fertile fields for the use of ICT in the teaching of FL. These technologies play an important role in motivating students to study communicative activities and positively influence the development of their oral expression and ability to maintain a conversation in another language (Lizasoain, Ortiz de Zárate and Becchi, 2018).

Mastery of FLs is not only an indicator of general culture but also a necessary tool for self-education and communication with colleagues from other countries. For workers in certain areas, knowledge of FLs guarantees the performance of their immediate duties. For example, for students taking thespecialty of IT, the knowledge of FLs does not only mean thegrowth of their scientific and cultural level, for them knowing other languages means a better performance of its functions, (Dugareva, 2019).

That is why special attention is paid in the study plan of the Bachelor's degree in IT of the Duhok PolytechnicUniversity to the teaching of FL. Four years of teaching classes are available to students and teachers for the formation of communicative competence for future workers in the IT sector of the region.

Unfortunately, for the English language, only 5 hours per week and only one year are allocated for the whole four-year IT teaching program. Nowadays it is very difficult tofindprofessionals fluent in the English language among the students of IT departments around the Kurdistan region. The Kurdish languageis the official language that is used by all schools all over the region.

The foregoing leads to a problem: in a very short time, we must improve students' communication skills in FL. The teacher's task is to ensure that students have a minimum knowledge of language proficiency during the first year of teaching FL.

Among the theoretical and practical didactic resources available to the teacher for the development of the teaching-learning process is the teaching task itself which stands out for its value. Numerous authors, among them Davídov (1987) and Labrada (2002) consider the task one of the most valuable teaching resources to guide and promote student learning.

According to Labrada (2002), teaching tasks are those activities that are oriented so that the student performs them in class or outside, they imply the search and acquisition of knowledge, the development of abilities, and the integral formation of the personality. Tasks of learning are designed by the teacher and "promote in the students an actionaimed at building, autonomously and consciously, a cognitive-instrumental repertoire that allows them to perform efficiently in certain contexts" (Labrada, 2002, p. 7).

Other scholars such as Sattarov & Jaidarova (2015) and Nazarova & Mojova, (2016) stress the importance of new technologies and consider them the means of indisputable utility for the process of teaching-learning because they allow setting the intention and raising students' motivation. In addition, they allow intensifying learning by using the intellectual potential of the students. Skillful use of ICT for students' independent work can serve for more effective mastery of the language and shorten the time necessary for the appropriation of the

contents.

The use of ICT is associated with the development of science, technology, and the conditions of life in modern society. It is impossible to motivate students with ways and methods ofteaching of the last century, the teacher is simply obliged to use the latest technologies for the process of language teaching. The teacher's task is to ensure a sustainable motivation for learning, drawing on the achievements of modern science in the process of teaching.

The use of ICT is directly aimed at improving professional motivation, allowing the student to present themselves as a learning center, bringing the learning process as close as possible to learning in real communication situations, and activating other previous knowledgetoachieve the planned results in mastering an FL. At the same time,**the role of the teacher is changing**: if before he was a source of knowledge, now he is the organizer, guide, and controller of the cognitive process.

ICT use should be planned for independent work during **extracurricular** hours. In this way, the teacher can save class hours to work with the phonetic and grammatical materials and ensure the proper introduction of newvocabulary.

Combining the usefulness of **teaching tasks** and the importance of the use of **new technologies** to promote the development of an efficient and intensive teaching-learning process ofFL, a system of tasks is developed for the classes of the subject English Language which is taught in the first year of the Bachelor's degree in IT at the Duhok Polytechnic University.

ICTs are widely used in the development of tasks that contribute to communication dialogue and the construction of texts. These activities can be based on role-plays with the use of email, social networks where the texts constructed by the students are published, forums and chats with the publication of photos, accompanied by comments or promotional texts, and where you can, in addition, publish information about the life of the university and the country.In the proposed task system, two large groups can be visualized: intercommunication through dialogue and the construction of texts. Here are examples of intercom tasks:

1. Task: contact an organization or company via mail and apply for an announced job.

The group of students is divided into applicants and the organization or company manager, working in pairs. All the messages are sent with a copy for the teacher to guarantee the necessary control.

2. Task: contact the company by mail and book an appointment.

The group of students is divided into representatives of the company office and applicants, who work in pairs.

3. Task: establish contact with the reception of the company by mail and book a meeting with the manager of the company.

The group of students is divided into applicants and managers.

4. Task: Contact the company manager by mail to askabout the daily tasks of the company.

The group of students is divided into applicants and the company manager.

Text construction tasks:

1. Upload to a social network page a photo and promotional text about one of the Software companies.
2. Write a short text, communicating about the development of a cultural activity or scientist at the faculty and publish it on a social networkpage.
3. Upload a photo of the family to a social network page and comment onit.
4. Upload to a social network page a photo of the typical Kurdish dish, accompanied by a text promotional.
5. Upload to a social network page a photo of the typical Kurdish drink and comment onit.
6. Upload a photo of the city to a social network page and describe theplace.
7. Upload a photo of the faculty to a social network page and comment onit.
8. Uploadtoasocialnetworkpageaphotooftheuniversity,accompaniedbyatext promotional.

All these tasks require individual work with the electronic dictionary, they contribute to the development of information search skills. Students are attracted by the use of computers for the development of tasks. In addition, for the development of the tasks, the students feel the need to use the knowledge acquired in other subjects.

Conclusions

For the development of a teaching-learning process for FLs that is by current times, it is essential to promote activities with the use of ICT.

The use of ICT in the proposed exercises guarantees the intensive assimilation of the new vocabulary and morpho-syntactic elements of the language, bringing students closer to real communication situations and raising interest in learning the language. The tasks are carried out during extracurricular hours, so class time is saved for carrying out other activities and the hours of independent work are increased to consolidate the content received.

The students feel motivated to carry out these tasks, firstly, because they approach the communicative situations that often arise in the professional practice of these young people and because the use of ICT motivates them to carry out the proposed exercises.

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