INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS): A USAGE IN ENGLISH TEACHING TO BENIN EFL BEGINNER CLASSES

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Résumé : Les technologies de l'information et de la communication (TICs) sont devenues un important moyen de communication utilisé dans tous les domaines, notamment celui de l'éducation. En cours de langue, les TICs contribuent à créer une atmosphère dynamique, interactive et amusante. Les élèves apprennent facilement et réussissent mieux. Cette étude vise souligner l'importance de l'utilisation des TICs dans les classes débutantes de la langue anglaise dans les collèges d'enseignements secondaires béninois. A cet effet, 100 élèves des classes de 6ème et 5ème et 08 professeurs d'anglais ont été sélectionnés dans le Collège d'Enseignement General (CEG) de Manigri, dans le département de la Donga au Nord du Bénin. Les questionnaires adressés à la fois aux apprenants et aux enseignants, les discussions de groupe et les observations de classe ont constitué les principales techniques de collecte de données. Le logiciel SPSS a été utilisé pour l'analyse des données. Les résultats révèlent que tous les apprenants sont motivés pour l'apprentissage de l'anglais, car il s'agit d'une nouvelle matière pour eux. Ils trouvent l'utilisation des TICs intéressante en classe car elles rendent les activités en classe participatives. Cependant, les enseignants d'anglais vivent tous dans des zones rurales où ils manquent d'installations substantielles telles que l'électricité et le matériel informatique. Les bandes radio et les téléphones sont les TICs les plus utilisées pour enseigner la compréhension orale, l'expression orale et le vocabulaire. Cette étude appelle la responsabilité des gouvernants à fournir aux écoles du matériel adapté pour faciliter le processus d'apprentissage et d'enseignement de l'anglais.

Mots clés : Anglais Langue Etrangère, apprentissage, enseignement, débutants TICs,

TECHNOLOGIES DE L'INFORMATION ET DE LA COMMUNICATION (TICS) : UN USAGE DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT DE L'ANGLAIS AUX CLASSES DÉBUTANTES EFL DU BÉNIN

Abstract: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become an important means of communication used in every domain, namely in education. In language classes ICTs help create a dynamic, interactive and funny atmosphere. Students learn easily and become more successful. This study aims to point out the importance of the use of ICT in EFL beginner classes in Benin secondary schools. To that respect, 100 EFL students of 6ème et 5ème classes and 08 EFL teachers have been selected from Manigri secondary school, in Donga District in Northern of Benin

Questionnaires meant for learners and teachers, group discussions and class observations have constituted the major techniques for data collection. SPSS software was used for data analysis. The findings reveal that all the students are motivated in EFL learning, since it is a new subject to them. They find ICTs use interesting in classes because it makes classroom activities participatory. However, the EFL teachers live all in rural areas where they lack substantial facilities such as electricity and materials. Radio tapes and telephones are the most used ICTs to teach listening, speaking and vocabulary. This study calls for the government's responsibility to provide schools with suitable ICTs materials to facilitate the English language teaching and learning process.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, ICTs, beginner students, teaching, learning

Introduction

English is the most widely used and influential language globally. Its importance cannot be denied Nishanthi (2018). Because of its great use in international exchange. To reach development goals, countries find it necessary to set a good policy in for learning English. It is established that the ability to speak good English can open wider opportunities to students globally Sari et al. (2020).

In Benin, secondary schools are institutions where students often have their first contact with the English language. Unfortunately, the educational system in these West African countries as in other developing countries is confronted with many difficulties of various kinds. Among them is the significant lack of modern educational tools (ICTs) that suit the modern generations and help them improve their English acquisition abilities. Sometimes the existing ICTs are threatened of bad management within secondary schools.

However, in the present educational system, there is a strong bond between ICTs and EFL teaching because of their effectiveness in facilitating the teaching- learning process. As a matter of fact, they are updated, interesting and attractive tools for students and for teachers. It is an effective learning tool in Dary and al. (2010). According to Dary and *al*. (2010), ICTs foster thinking development skills, promote new ways to develop reading, as strategic thinking. They are motivating and innovative.

The present study intends to reveal how profitable are ICTs tools in EFL teaching-learning process to beginner EFL learners from 6ème to 5ème classes.

1. **Problem statement**

ICTs stands for information and communication technologies. They are an essential means of communication world-widely used today. They are similar to information

technology (IT) but primarily focused on communication technologies. They concern the Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and other communication media (Shokeen and al. (2022). Thus, in the present educational system, there are more opportunities using ICTs to teach effectively in classroom, particularly in language classes. Moreover, ICTs offer teachers to create pleasant classroom where students learn and practice easily new language.

In EFL teaching and learning process, four skills are taught: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Beyond, some sub skills go along such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, spelling and others. To succeed in teaching those skills, namely the oral communication ones, teachers need to make use of ICTs. Thus, use of ICTs has become essential in every day classroom teaching and learning; because it gives a chance to teachers as well as students to increase the quality of education and meet the requirements set by the coeval knowledge society Ammanni and Aparanjani (2016).

However, in Benin, EFL teachers are not well aware of ICTs locus standi in language learning. As a consequence, they do not use appropriate ICTs materials in teaching oral skills which seem more difficult to them. This leads to students' demotivation toward English and thus contributing to EFL class failure.

2. Purpose of the Study

Nowadays, throughout their attractiveness, their efficiency, rapidity and easiness in solving problems, ICTs have an unimaginable impact on young learners. This shows that EFL learners' attitudes during the learning process within classrooms can be positively impacted thanks to the involvement of ICTs in the teaching and learning process. That is the reason why it has become more and more necessary for Benin EFL teachers to make use of ICTs in teaching language a priority hence forward.

Then the main objective of this research work is to show how indispensable can ICTs be in teaching Benin EFL classes, especially, it aims to:

- showing the different types of ICTs that are being used in Benin EFL classes.
- revealing the impacts of using ICTs on learners in EFL classes.
- pointing out the social and professional teaching conditions that influence negatively the use of ICTs in teaching English

2.1. Research questions
- To achieve the above set objectives set, the following research questions have been asked.
- Do Benin EFL teachers have access to ICTs?
- Do Benin EFL teachers often include ICTs in their teaching-learning process?
- Which kind of ICTs do they use?

- What are difficulties EFL teachers are faced with while using ICTs during classes?
- What are the impacts of ICTs on the ability of students acquiring English language?

2.2. Research hypotheses

By answering these questions, some hypotheses were set as follows:
- H1: Using ICTs can increase learners' interests in English language learning;
- H2: ICTs in all their forms are motivational instruments for beginners ;
- H3: Some EFL teachers are unqualified;
- H4: EFL teachers do not teach all the aspects of the language;
- H5: EFL teachers do not have access to ICTs;

3. Methodology

To conduct this research work, an appropriate methodological approach has been used and consisted ~~in~~ of different steps.

3.1. Framework

The general secondary school of Manigri, located in Bassila municipality, has served as framework for the study. This locality is spotted in west center of Benin republic, in Donga district. It is situated between 8° 58′ 41″ of longitude North and 1° 42′ 33″ of latitude East INSAE (2016).

3.2. Target population and sample

The target population for the study is composed of both EFL learners and teachers of 6ème and 5ème classes of Manigri secondary school. Then, a sample of 100 learners (50 males and 50 females) and 08 teachers were randomly basing on their willing to join in.

3.3. Data collection

For data collection, some tools and techniques were employed.

3.3.1. Tools

The major tools used to collect data are questionnaires. This instrument turned out to be the most efficient means for our data collection because it enabled to obtain informative data and permitted to get contact with the respondents without any difficulty. It helped to get useful and appropriate pieces of information.

Two kinds of questionnaires were designed and handed out to the informants depending on their categories; either they are students or learners. The one meant for the EFL students aimed at collecting their motivation toward English language and

their feeling about ICTs use during class. The one for EFL teachers aimed to collect their teaching method and the different ICT tools used to conduct classes.

3.3.2. Techniques

3.3.2.1. Interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews have been conducted with EFL teachers in order to straightforwardly get the information needed. The semi-structured interviews are based on a pre-set questions which helped lead and guide the teachers to what is expected from them.

This technique has yielded fruit. The reason is that teachers were told beforehand that their identities would be kept confidentially.

3.3.2.2. Focus group discussion

As second technique, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) has been conducted with students and aimed to cross-check the responses. A total of 10 groups made up of 10 learners for each. Each group discussion lasted 15 minutes.

3.3.2.3. Classroom observation

This technique aimed to collect behavioral responses of both EFL teachers and learners. It also helps have the classroom atmosphere while using ICT tools and the available materials as well. Thus, three classroom observations were conducted (one at each level, i.e. 6ème and 5ème) after the teachers' agreements.

3.3.2.4. Data processing

The data processing procedure consisted of descriptive statistics calculation and contents analysis Hounnou Azoua (2020). Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software 16 version was used as statistical tool Shousha (2018).

4. Findings presentation

4.1. Data from EFL learners

The findings showed that most of the learners (96%) like English language, since it is a new subject for the learners of 6è and 5è. The learners are enthusiastic to learn English language. Also 64% of the beginners find English learning easier. Only 04% of the beginners are not interested in learning English.

To the question ''Does your English teacher include ICTs in the teaching you English language?'', 70% of the learners direct to their English teachers for not having included ICTs in their teaching/learning process. Besides, 30% of the learners said the contrary.

Dealing with the ICT tools used, 25 students recognize that they are exposed to the use of computers, while 28 of them testify that their EFL teachers use telephones during classes. Very few students, where 8%, said that their teachers used one time television devices and radio tapes to help them acquire English language.

To really comprehend the learners' feelings on using ICTs, 29% of the respondents like the ICTs often used by their English teachers during classroom situations while 71% do not find them pleasant.

For as far as the skills are concerned, the majority of the learners, that is 90% have said that they are taught ''speaking and listening'' using ICTs whereas much emphasis is not put on ''reading and writing'' according respectively 33% and 28%. As for the sub skills, more than 70% of the questioned learners have answered that they are trained to learn grammatical structures and to increase vocabulary.

To apprehend the language skills of learners, 'Can you use English language inside the class or outside the class?'', only 37% of the students are able to communicate in English language during classes. Besides, 86% of the learners cannot exchange in English outside the classroom.

4.2. *Data from EFL teachers*

The data from teachers reveal that all of them. That means that 100% live in rural area where it is often difficult and even impossible to have access to many kind of ICTs.

Talking about the training for the use of ICT materials for language teaching, it was noticed that 75% of EFL teachers questioned have never been trained before taking service and even only about 50% of them have once received an in-service training on them.

In addition to the above, all the respondent EFL teachers (100%) deliver courses to the beginners of 6è and 5è classes.

About the integration of ICT in the teaching procedures, it becomes important to understand whether EFL teachers have habit to include ICTs in their teaching-learning process and also the types of ICTs they often use.

The data collected displayed that 12.5 % of EFL teachers exploit television devices during their English classes. Only 25% and 37.5 % of these teachers brought one time respectively projector device and radio tapes in their English Classes. Most of the teachers (90%) expose learners only to the use of telephones and computers sometimes.

Talking about the issue of availability of materials, it generates question like: 'Is there any digital hall within your school?'

80% of them said that there is no digital hall within secondary school where they teach. While in some classes, they use classical radio tape to listen and repeat after a speaker in the audio and consequently they tend to acquire new vocabularies but all of them (100%) neglect reading, writing and grammar. Talking of the impact that ICTs have on learners' motivation, they unanimously confirmed that ICTs raise the learners' interest in EFL class.

5. Discussion

In all, the study revealed that 96% of the learners of 6ème and 5ème classes like English language. To them, it is a new subject and they are intended to learn it. More, they are much more young and their brain are still flexible to new knowledge. This is a good asset to be ruled in by teachers so as to catch their attention.

The learners are enthusiastic in EFL classes. Also 64% of the learners find its learning easy. This result corroborates Hasselgreen (2000) and Drew (2008) who find out some good characteristics of young language learners. These include their enthusiasm for and openness to the learning of new languages. Nevertheless, they need special classroom methods and well trained teachers Hasselgreen (2000) and Drew (2008).

However, 04% of them are not interested in learning English. This may be due to some reasons such as the non-official position of English language in Benin country, the difficulty met in EFL learning, the inadequacy of the teaching materials deployed by teachers or the teaching method used. Similar findings are made by Alsalihi (2020) who showed that the role of society in discouraging English language learning, the learners' shyness, the lack of motivation, the influence of class size and crowdedness can hinder students eager to the EFL learning.

About ICTs use in classroom activities, 70% of the learners have said that teachers do not include ICTs in their teaching practice against 30% who said the contrary. Only 25 students recognize that they are exposed to the use of computers, while 28 of them testify that their EFL teachers use telephones during classes.

Very few students, meaning 8% said that their teachers used one time television devices and radio tapes to help them acquire English language. This clearly signifies the that EFL teachers are faced with the unavailability of ICTs material in teaching process as observed by Utami et *al*. (2021) who raised the lack of media.

To analyze the learners' perception on using ICTs, 29% of the respondents like the ICTs often used by their English teachers during classroom situations while 71% do not find them pleasant.

In fact, this situation demonstrates that the ICTs materials available did not meet the 'needs' and the 'necessities' of the learners in order to meet their requirements in terms of 'wants' and 'lacks' for modernity of their learning.

Also the majority, that is 90% of the learners attested that they are taught ''speaking and listening'' using ICTs whereas much emphasis is not put on ''reading and writing'' according respectively 33% and 28%. As for the sub skills, more than 70% of the questioned learners have answered that they are trained to learn grammatical structures and to increase vocabulary.

Also, only 37% of the students are able to communicate in English language during classes. Besides, 86% of the learners cannot exchange in English outside the classroom. This confirms the fact that classroom is the only occasion when learners speak English.

These results prove that students meet more difficulty in learning oral communication skills Alzamil (2021). Indeed, learners who speak English as a Foreign Language (EFL) need to develop their listening skills if they want to communicate appropriately Darti & Asmawati (2017). But, because listening demands concentration, and English pronunciation is not consistent, listening is often considered to be the most challenging language skill to learn Abdalhamid, (2012); Darti & Asmawati (2017); Sa'diyah (2016).

Data related to EFL teachers reveals that all of the surveyed EFL teachers lives in rural areas where energy and ICTs infrastructures are not always available. This observation raised the problem of facilities to EFL teachers in rural area Endriyati et al. (2019). Those facilities include laboratories, rooms, computers, LCD, TV, etc.).

Looking for the obstacles to the appropriate use of ICTs materials.

At any other side of the phenomenon, some teachers are confronted to training programs, that means that language teachers' development. In general, some of them have never been trained on the usage of ICTs in language education programs before assigning classes.

Only 50% have once received an in-service training on ICTs. Therefore, one can conclude that teachers are not familiar to the ICTs and this may contribute to their failure in using them appropriately.

Moreover, the findings showed that, those teachers only teach in beginner EFL classes, that means 6ème and 5ème. So they perhaps correspond to the unqualified ones with no access to ICTs.

Also, 12.5 % of respondent EFL teachers exploit television devices during classes. Only 25% and 37.5 % brought one time respectively projector device and radio tapes. The majority of the teachers, that means that 90% expose learners only to the use of telephones and computers sometimes. The main reason for this situation is the lack of ICTs Endriyati et al. (2019). They all assert that there is no ICTs hall in their school.

Dealing with language skills or sub skills taught with ICTs in classroom, 80% of the teachers said that they use those tools to teach listening, speaking and sometimes vocabulary. No one teaches reading, writing and grammar. This is normal because listening and speaking seem to be the most difficult skills to learn Erzad (2020); Alzamil (2021).

In fact, learners are faced with several problems in listening comprehension. The listening problems encountered by the EFL students are the pronunciation (accents), speedy delivery and length of the listening, physical conditions, unfamiliar vocabularies and terminologies, and limited facility for listening Erzad (2020).

As for the impact of ICTs use on teaching learning process, they all confirmed that ICTs raise the learners' interest and make the classroom joyful, interactive and dynamic. Indeed, with the usage of ICT, students can learn any subject especially English with ease (Ammanni and Aparanjani (2016).

Conclusion

The present study has pointed out the usefulness of ICT in beginner EFL classes in Benin secondary schools. The findings showed that ICTs materials use is a powerful way for teaching listening, speaking and vocabulary in 6ème and 5ème classes. The reason is that they help teachers to better handle with pronunciation matter and to create an enthusiastic classroom atmosphere. Students learn easily and participate in to classroom activities. Nevertheless, the results showed that EFL teachers have very limited access to ICTs because their schools lack adequate facilities. The most used ICTs used remain radio tapes and telephones. This study calls upon school authorities and the central government to provide schools with ICTs infrastructures and train teachers in using them.

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