The role of faculty members in integrating technology into the teaching of English: the case at the department of English language and literature at Damascus University

Dr. Hala Delbani*

Abstract

Worldwide, Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have gained a vital importance in satisfying the requirements of both the new Education System and the revised Curriculum for English Language Teaching (ELT). The experience of introducing different ICTs into the classroom and other educational settings worldwide suggests that teachers' effective integration of technology into their curricula largely depends on their perceptions and attitudes to the value of these tools to achieving their instructional purposes. This research seeks to evaluate the readiness to integrate ICTs into the current teaching practices of the faculty at the department of English Language and Literature at Damascus University. In a context of large classes where resources are minimal and staff members are in short supply, using technology assisted learning at Damascus University may help enhance education by giving learners more flexibility and helping them evolve into more autonomous learners. Investigating the current faculty's reading of the value of technology as a means of overcoming some of the restrictions imposed by their context will uncover potential limitations on the use of ICTs in the existing context and suggest workable solutions.

This study was based on a theoretical framework that evaluated the readiness of the professors at the department of English language and literature at Damascus University to supplement their teaching with ICTs.

* Department of English- Faculty of Arts and Humanities - Damascus University*

The research instruments: a questionnaire and an interview survey were the principal methods of data collection used to determine the level of the faculty's technological, psychological and pedagogical preparedness. Results revealed that Damascus University professors are aware of the value of ICTs to the process of teaching and learning and are positive towards its integration into their curricula, but are in need of more professional development in order to make the move towards its use. They are also in need to recognize how pedagogical practices change in technology supported learning environments. Findings also point to the fact that to achieve this, ICT training of both teachers and learners and technical and administrative support are crucial.

1. Introduction:
a. Definition of ICTs

ICTs stand for *information and communication technologies* and are defined by UNESCO's World Communication and Information Report 1999 which was written by Prof C. Blurton as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information" (p.1). According to Tinio (2003), Information and communication technologies (ICTs) include broadcasting technologies (radio and television) as well as newer digital technologies such as computers and the Internet which have the reputation of being potentially powerful for enabling educational change and reform. When used appropriately, they are said to help "expand access to education, strengthen the relevance of education to the increasingly digital workplace, and raise educational quality by, among others, helping make teaching and learning into an engaging, active process connected to real life" (Tinio, 2003:3).

b. Technology and English language teaching (ELT)

With the advent of networked computers and Internet technology, computer-based instruction became widely used in language classrooms in many parts of the world. Computer technologies have not only changed the way people gather information, conduct research and communicate with others worldwide, they have also had their impact on approaches to teaching. Technological developments have been exerting an increasing pressure on education to the extent that they have become an "integral part of teaching today" (Lam; 2000: 390). These changes, however, are accompanied by new challenges.

As far back as 1975, Fraley and Vargas stated that learners, just like other individuals in the modern world, face many technological developments. Nonetheless, responding to these developments is accompanied by challenges and to meet these challenges "today's instruction must be equally technological and sophisticated" (Fraley and Vargas 1975:2). More recently, Yaratan and Kural (2010: 161) asserted

that education has represented a prominent field affected by the 'appealing' technological developments and "educational settings have been significant environments for technology to fit in". To keep pace with the rapid changes in the contemporary educational systems and their targets, making use of educational technology became inevitable. The field of education quickly familiarized itself with technology, and the outcomes have been outstanding simply because instructional technology offered education 'quick' and 'effective' solutions to its educational objectives "which in effect has lead administrators and educationalists worldwide to attach more importance to technology in the design of their curricula" (Yaratan and Kural 2010:161).

Similarly, Moore, Morales & Carel (1998: 110) maintain that "with the ever expanding use of networked computers that provide access to the World Wide Web (WWW), teachers have opportunities (and challenges) for creating better instructional material to teach language and culture and making more effective use of those materials than was previously possible. One of the alluring aspects of technological resources is the ease with which recent and relevant information can be brought to students". Finnemann (1996:6) too stated that "…the Web promises to be an important resource for language teachers." Gale, 1989; Saint-Léon 1988 also believe that through the use of videodiscs, computer animated objects and figures, and voice activators that produce native-like utterances, students will be virtually surrounded by sights and sounds of native speakers in the target settings.

Dudeney and Hockly (2007), point out several reasons that make the use of technology in learning English today increasingly important, foremost of which comes Internet accessibility which has made possible exposure to authentic tasks and materials as well as accessibility to a wealth of ready-made ELT (English language teaching) materials. It has also provided learners with excellent opportunities for collaboration and communication even when they are geographically dispersed. Technology has also introduced novel ways for practising language and developing language skills and assessing performance. Besides, learners today are growing up with technology and thus it has become a natural and an integrated part of their lives. Technology has also become

increasingly mobile and can be used not only in the classroom, lecture hall, computer room or self-access centre; it can also be used at home, on the way to university, in Internet cafés etc…

If information technology has the capacity to enhance and enrich teaching and scholarship, then this entails introducing major changes to educational systems. When computers and networks are used to deliver educational services to learners anytime anywhere, education becomes more flexible and learners will no more be confined to campuses or academic schedules. Technology will create an open learning environment in which the student evolves into an active learner. However to achieve this both learners and teachers need to take on new roles and learn new skills. This study shall concern itself with investigating the role that teachers' attitudes and readiness to use ICTs plays when integrating technology in educational contexts, more specifically in the context of the department of English language and literature at Damascus University.

2. Review of related Literature

Technology and teachers' attitudes

Findings from studies that investigated the reasons why teachers find it hard to integrate ICTs into their curricula are varied. Some of these reasons are intrinsic and lie within the teachers themselves or their pedagogies and others are extrinsic and lie outside the teachers. Dudeney and Hockly (2007), for example, believe that the negative attitudes that teachers have towards technology use are caused by both, intrinsic and extrinsic factors. A major intrinsic factor is the teacher's lack of confidence in the use of technology. But sometimes, the reason may lie outside the teacher, for example, teachers may want to use technology in their teaching, but the educational institute may not have the facilities, or they may lack training and feel unprepared. This according to Dudeney and Hockly (2007) will result in teachers' inability to see the value of technology to their learners. Indeed other studies like that of Hennessy, Harrison & Wamakote (2010) indicate that it is teachers' attitudes,

expertise, lack of autonomy and lack of knowledge to evaluate the use and role of ICTs in teaching (or technophobia in teachers) that are the prominent factors that hinder teachers' readiness and confidence in using ICTs. Extrinsic reasons stated by Hennessy *et al.* (2010) include the inadequacy of learning resources, course curricula and other learning materials that incorporate ICT use (Hennessy *et al.*, 2010).

Other scholars have pointed out more reasons that deter teachers' from technology use. Major intrinsic reasons include the fact that teachers are normally comfortable with the practices they have used successfully in the past, and often resist change because they believe that it will alter the nature of their well-established ways of teaching. In 1998, Gratton expressed his view on teachers' conservatism and resistance to change by saying that while teachers are often among society's most liberal members, are also, as keepers and carriers of tradition, conservative and slow to change and while the growth of technology has been rapid, teachers have been slow in adopting this technology, and even slower in making productive use of it. Graves (1999) believes that the reasons why teachers resist the use of technology are often the result of their philosophy that a teacher's role is to motivate and facilitate common interests and purposes among incongruent learners, and technology does exactly the opposite of that; it detracts from this process. Teachers who hold this philosophy are usually uncomfortable with the notion that students can work and interact independently with a computer or with online peers. Some teachers resist the use of technology because they find it difficult to translate their own classroom role to a virtual learning environment. Other intrinsic factors affecting the level of technology use by teachers is their lack of confidence in their technology skills which may put at risk their feeling of competence in front of their students (Zammit, 1992; Winnans & Sardo Brown, 1992; George & Camarata, 1996).

Marcinkiewicz (1993) in a questionnaire survey administered to school teachers in the USA, found a relationship between specific personality traits, such as innovativeness and self-confidence, and the teachers' use of computers. Other researchers like Clerc (1985) and Mohammed (1994) found that factors like age and years of teaching

experience were positively related to teachers' acceptance of computers. However, other studies found no relationship between age and teachers' interest in learning about computers (Stenzel, 1982) or between years of teaching experience and positive attitudes towards computers (Burke, 1986). Moore *et al.* (1998), looking into the relationship between teachers' background and level of technology use, found that the amount of teaching experience and level of education were positively correlated with use of computers among USA foreign language teachers. Pickard, Chan, & Tibbetts (1994) and Dunkel (1987) observe that integrating technology into teaching requires a major adjustment to ones own teaching methods, which some teachers are reluctant to make. Other studies revealed that some teachers doubt the effectiveness of the technology even while making use of it (Dunkel, 1987; Harvey, 1987; Hopwood, 1989).

Some teachers resist the implementation of the innovation for reasons that normally originate outside the lecture hall. The main extrinsic obstacles to the use of technology cited by teachers often have little to do with its pedagogical purpose. These include lack of time to find and check new materials (Librero, 1981; Zammit, 1992; Mohammed, 1994), lack of professional development to prepare them for the integration of technology into their course materials (Akins, 1992; Zammit, 1992; Winnans & Sardo Brown, 1992), and lack of access to multimedia facilities and materials (Akins, 1992; Moore, Morales & Carel, 1998). Some teachers oppose the innovation simply because it is imposed on them by a higher authority (Terrell, Dringus, & Rendulic, 1995).

Lack of national policy on the use of computers and lack of time available in class or in teachers' planning schedules were the biggest barriers to the use of computers cited by teachers participating in the 1998-1999 survey assessing the World Links schools programme (Kozma *et al.* 2004: 376). Infrastructure problems, such as lack of computers, unreliable electricity or lack of access to the Internet, were relatively less reported by teachers although these varied by country.

In less technologically advanced countries, findings of a research carried out in 1999-2000 revealed that the major barriers to ICT classroom use was the lack of computer hardware, software and reliable Internet connections, particularly in African countries. Although lack of access to technology is inevitably a major barrier to its use, but availability does not necessarily translate into use. In a study of Nigerian secondary school teachers, Tella *et al.* (2007) showed that a lack of technical support in the schools, and teachers' lack of expertise in using ICT, were the prominent factors hindering teachers' readiness and confidence in using ICT. This points to the need for appropriate and sustained teacher development. Hennessy *et al.* (2010) also believe that the lack of incentives and support for teachers are other factors hindering their use of ICT. Besides, "Too often the curriculum in developing countries is rigid and overloaded, leaving little time for innovative classroom practices**.**" (Hennessy *et al.*, 2010:43)

Findings on teachers' computer knowledge and positive attitudes to the use of technology were also contradictory. Some studies cited a positive correlation between the amount of teachers' computer knowledge, whether from personal computer use or from training, and positive attitudes towards its use (Bradford, 1984; Burke, 1986; Clerc, 1985; Kellenberger, 1994, 1997; Taylor, 1986). However, Sofranova (1993) found that despite a positive attitude among teachers towards the use of computers (68%), less than 8% of the teachers in the three Russian schools she studied used them regularly. Al-Juhani (1991) found a correlation between in-service training on computer-assisted language instruction and greater positive attitudes among 60 English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Leh (1995) did not find a significant change in attitudes among American second language teachers despite a two-week workshop, although they did gain more confidence in their knowledge about technology.

Research also points to cultural issues as external deterrents that may discourage teachers from the successful implementation of ICTs into their curricula. In a study carried out in 2006, Albirini explored the cultural perceptions of Syrian high school EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers towards the use of ICTs. His findings revealed the presence of a notable conservatism in the participants' perception of ICT in education and society at large. The teachers in the survey were mainly

concerned about the morally damaging effect of ICT (particularly the Internet) and its inattentiveness to their cultural and language needs, and its growing primacy at the expense of other societal needs.

In sum, these studies have shown that the use of technology by teachers is determined by a wide range of factors, ranging from extrinsic factors such as access to appropriate materials and professional development opportunities to intrinsic factors such as awareness of the benefits of technology and personal attitudes towards technological innovations.

3. Context and rationale for the study

As a developing country aiming to have better cooperation and more effective communication with the rest of the world, Syria has recently put more emphasis on the teaching of English at all levels of education. Consequently there has been a growing need for teachers of English. The department of English language and literature has become one of the most popular departments in the entire faculty of Humanities at Damascus University. Its graduates stand better employability chances especially in the field of teaching English. This has resulted in one of the biggest departments in all 6 Syrian state universities (see Table 1). In 2009, the number of students at the department of English language and literature at Damascus University was around 13,000 with approximately 30 staff members and very limited resources. The teacher-centred educational system dominants and quality education is rather difficult to achieve under the circumstances. In such a context, the use of technology has a key role to play. Integrating ICTs into teaching practices may hold a lot of answers to this specific educational context. Using technology according to Tella *et al.* (2007) has the potential of providing students with easy access to educational tools and content. Besides, it will help to facilitate the recall of previous learning, provide new stimuli, activate the learner's response, and provide systematic and steady feedback. It may also help sequencing learning appropriately and providing access to rich sources of information (Tella *et al.*, 2007). Cox, Preston & Cox (1999) also believe that the ongoing use of ICTs by teachers may help make lessons more interesting, more enjoyable, more diverse, more motivating, and supportive of productive learning. Technology use may also help reform the prevalent traditional teaching methodologies through

encouraging teachers to try out new ways of developing content and delivering it to satisfy students' needs and in turn encourage students' active participation in delivering and acquiring knowledge. It can also enhance quality learning by offering equitable access to learning materials that take students' individual needs into consideration. The use of ICTs in education may also promote a positive attitude towards information technology as an essential part of a lifelong interest in learning (Tella *et al.*, 2007). However, using ICTs in learning does not in itself guarantee quality education as there are other important factors that need to be taken into consideration.

Year	University	Total
2003	Damascus	10287
	Aleppo	4621
	Tishreen	4301
	Al-Baath	3994
	Al-Furat	307
2005	Damascus	11708
	Aleppo	5750
	Tishreen	5158
	Al-Baath	4630
	Al-Furat	664
2007	Damascus	14099
	Aleppo	8109
	Tishreen	6078
	Al-Baath	5002
	Al-Furat	1016
2009	Damascus	12791
	Aleppo	7914
	Tishreen	5567
	Al-Baath	4803
	Al-Furat	1499

Table 1. Number of students in each of the departments of English in all Syrian universities between 2003 and 2009. (Statistics from the Planning Department at the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education)

The European Commission (2003:6) states that "Experience has shown that the key factor for success in learning supported by ICT is the guidance and support offered by the teacher, trainer or tutor." In an example from Venezuela, Mayora (2006) stresses that multimedia technology used in English language classes results in motivating and productive lessons. However, to move into a more learner-centred approach and to enhance quality education, both students and teachers need to be capable of using the technology more efficiently. Similarly, Wills and Alexander (2000) affirm that using ICT in education had "mistakenly been based on the assumption that good Internet connectivity and high quality equipment would be enough for teachers to move towards innovative e-learning practices. But teachers' e-learning readiness also plays an (if not the most) important role in shaping e-learning integration. Research confirms that only when teachers are comfortable with using ICTs will they be able to incorporate them successfully into their own teaching." Tella *et al.* (2007) prove, with the use of empirical evidence, that when teachers perceive the usefulness of computer use, they will use it. Hennessy *et al.* (2010:40) maintain that there is significant evidence that, "in the right hands and used appropriately for specific purposes in specific contexts, ICT can be an effective tool in supporting teaching and learning". However, its introduction into education does not by itself improve the quality of teaching or learning. "Encouragingly, there is growing and widespread awareness that the pedagogical and technical expertise of the teacher is absolutely critical here". Hence, teachers' e-learning readiness plays an important role in shaping the integration of ICTs into the learning context (Hadjiathanasiou, 2009).

It can be concluded then that access to technology on its own does not motivate teachers to apply it in their teaching. To initiate the change towards technologically supported learning, Sorenson & Reiner (2003) emphasize the importance of assessing the readiness of teachers. According to the European Commission's report of 2003, the emphasis now is on teachers' e-learning readiness and, more importantly, on how this can be evaluated in order to provide key information for developing teachers' skills and competencies for innovative e-learning pedagogical practices. Thus, to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency of

student learning, it is not enough to have the technological resources available for use; teachers must also know how to harness the educational potential of the technology (Thrush and Thrush, 1984).

The key point raised by this research is that before educational institutes start integrating ICTs into their educational systems, they need to ensure that teachers are ready to support this innovation otherwise the benefits from such practices will be rather limited. Based on the premises that teachers' preparedness to integrate ICT into their teaching is crucial to its actual implementation, this study shall explore the Damascus University professors' awareness to the value of technology as a tool that complements teaching materials and curricula. This shall be carried out through investigating the faculty's technological, psychological and pedagogical readiness to use ICTs in their teaching.

This study is carried out with the objective that the department of English at Damascus University can use technology in order to address its contextual constraints of large number of students and minimal resources. It can also use technology to address the transformational challenges with regard to the new ELT pedagogic theories, the new roles that universities are playing in education nowadays and more specifically, the way by which technology is shaping education today.

The present study is significant because it seeks to shed light on the current faculty's reading to the use of technology in support of teaching and learning and consequently enhancing quality education. It aims to uncover potential limitations on the use of ICT in the existing context. The study wishes to alert teachers at the department of English at Damascus University to the benefits of such developments in enhancing their students' learning. If both faculty and university administration become more aware of the reasons standing in the way of using technology, then they can both address the issue and find solutions. This study is also significant since it tackles an issue expressed by Demiray (2010: lii) who states that many Western and East Asian nations have embraced ICTs in education both within their classrooms and in distance education, however this move has been much slower in some East Europe, North African, Middle Eastern, and Arab countries. Hence, the

value of this inquiry which seeks to highlight the factors that have been constraining the introduction of such developments into the Syrian context.

4. Research method

The survey was conducted in February 2010 at the end of the first term and before the beginning of the second term. It is the time of the year when professors are usually more relaxed as there is no teaching. The research study used two principal methods of data collection: a questionnaire that was followed immediately by an interview. The questionnaire included four sections. The first elicited personal information of the faculty members at the department of English at Damascus University. The second elicited information on the technological competence of the faculty. The third constituted 13 questions that elicited basic data on the current level of the faculty's psychological readiness to integrate ICTs into their teaching practices and the last section constituted 10 questions that elicited basic data on the current level of the faculty's pedagogical readiness to implement ICTs into their teaching. A 5-point Likert response scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) was used for sections 3 and 4 of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from a study that was carried out by Hadjiathanasiou in 2009 on Cypriot school teachers but for the purpose of investigating how well teachers were adjusting to the use of ICT after its introduction into their schools. In this study, the questionnaire is investigating Damascus University professors' readiness to integrate ICTs before its actual introduction into this specific educational context. Interviews took place with each professor (who agreed to take part in the study) to add depth and understanding to the contextual factors and the issues that influenced their psychological and pedagogical readiness to use ICTs. Interviews were designed to illicit in-depth feedback in a semi-natural, non-threatening setting relating to the lecturers' own decision-making processes, thereby highlighting not only their current knowledge of ICT use but also their perception of the facts which help or prevent them from its use.

23 lecturers out of the 26 faculty members took part in the survey giving a response rate of 88%. Specifically 74% of the respondents were females and 26% were males. Besides, 26% of respondents were exposed to using ICT in teaching as they were teaching at the Syrian Virtual University. Specifically, 56% of the respondents were in the age group 46-55 and 26% were between the age of 36-45. Only 9% were under 36, another 9% were over 56 years and none were 25 years or under (see figure 1). Dudeney and Hockly (2007) state that with the increasing presence of the Internet and computers, the term 'technophobe' has appeared to refer to those people who are afraid of the new technology and who might be distrustful of these new developments. More recently, the term 'digital native' has also been coined to refer to someone who grows up using technology, and who thus feels comfortable and confident using it. Findings on the age range of professors at the department of English at Damascus University reveal that there are few 'digital natives' since most of the faculty members fall in the age range between 46-55 years (see figure 1). This means that the present aging teacher population graduated before computer and Internet-based technology existed. Thus the majority of staff at the department of English at Damascus University are what has come to be referred to in the literature as 'digital immigrants', meaning that they have come late to the world of technology. According to Dudeney and Hockly (2007), you find that in the majority of cases today the teachers are the 'digital immigrants' and their students are the 'digital natives'. However, Dudeney and Hockly (2007) add by saying that having learners in the class who know more about technology than the teacher is not a bad thing because when starting to use technology in the classroom, teachers can then rely on these more technologically knowledgeable learners for help and support. Learners are usually delighted to be called upon to help out, and to get a chance to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in the area in front of their colleagues (Dudeney and Hockly, 2007).

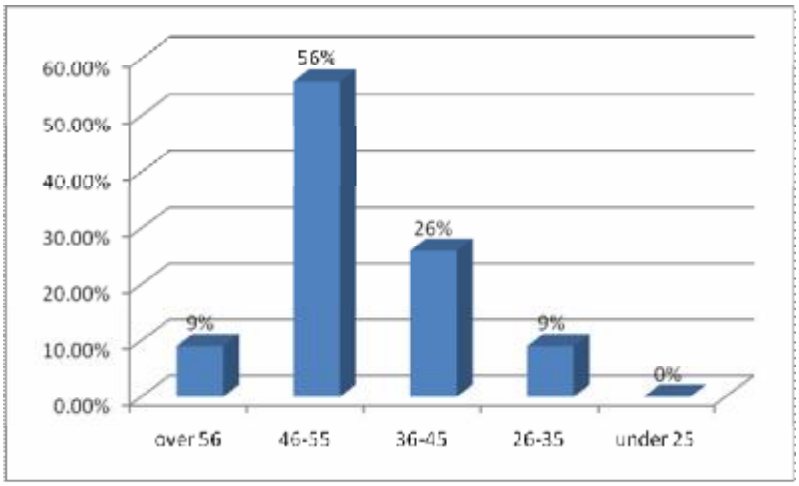

Figure 1. Department of English faculty distribution by age (2010)

5. Findings and discussion

a. Lecturers' technological readiness

Before exploring teachers' opinions about integrating ICT into their teaching, it is necessary to explore their technological readiness. Nearly all teachers have a computer of their own at home (only one member said that she shares a PC with the rest of the family), but none has his own PC at the university. Leh (1995) affirms that that despite positive attitudes by 12 American teachers towards the use of technology in language teaching, their actual level of use was minimal. This was due to the fact that they lacked access to equipment and knowledge of how to use the technology.

Interestingly, 22 out of 23 instructors (96%) had Internet access at home and only one accessed the Internet from a neighbouring Internet café. However, 70% of those with Internet have only dial-up connections which is rather slow and tiresome. Only 26% had *ADSL* at home. It is

worth mentioning here that staff members who were teaching at the Syrian Virtual University had access to *ADSL* too.

As for IT training, 21% of current faculty have *light ICDL* (International computer driving license - Word/PowerPoint/Internet/Windows). The reason why more and more professors now are working on obtaining the *light ICDL* is because it has recently become a prerequisite for promotion at the university. Another 22% of current faculty teach or have taught in a virtual learning environment and have undergone some IT training as a perquisite for teaching in the virtual mode. However, none of the current faculty has received any ICT pedagogic training.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show that 95% of staff members at the department of English reported feeling competent using word processing, 81% using e-mail, 77% using Internet searches and 59% using presentation tools. On the other hand, only 23% were confident creating web-pages, 18% using video-conferencing and 18% teaching in VLE. 41% reported feeling competent using online chat boards (mainly Yahoo and Messenger) but mostly for keeping in touch with friends and family members. The interviews on the other hand revealed that a good number of respondents did not know what presentation tools are. The same applies for video-conferencing, creating web-pages and Virtual learning environments. The researcher had to explain what these tools meant so that the respondents could fill in the questionnaire.

	NC	LC	C
Word processing	0%	5%	95%
Presentation tools	14%	27%	59%
Internet searches	5%	18%	77%
E-mail	5%	14%	81%
Web-page creating	68%	9%	23%
Online chat-rooms	41%	18%	41%
Video-conferencing	55%	27%	18%
Virtual Learning Environments	41%	41%	18%

Table 2. Level of the department of English faculty's ICT competence (NC= Not competent, LC= low competence, C=competent)

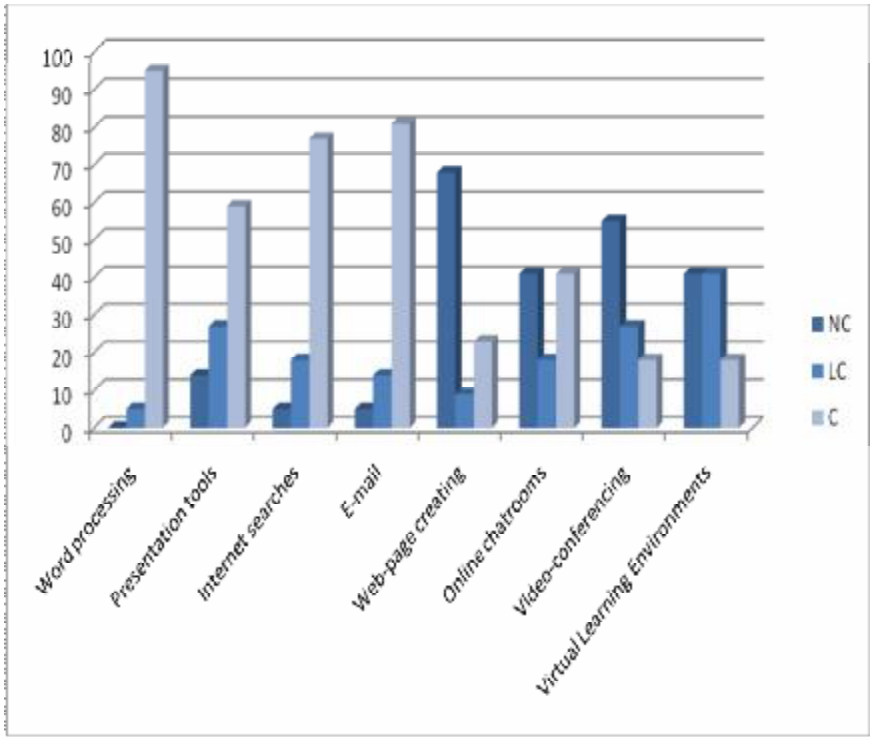

Figure 2. Technological competence of the faculty at the Department of English (NC= Not competent, LC= low competence, C=competent)

b. Teachers' psychological readiness

On the whole, as can be seen from table 3 and figure 3 the respondents were remarkably positive when reflecting on the impact of ICT technologies on their learners. Around 91% agreed that using ICT will increase their students' confidence in the use of technology. 87% agreed that technology can increase their students' learning, none disagreed and 13% were unsure. 96% believed that the use of ICT will make their learners more independent. This is a highly significant factor in a context where learner autonomy will help facilitate learning.

Although 91% of faculty agreed that ICT will help their learners become part of a large community of learners, only 56% had confidence that technology can help their context of large classes, 26% were unsure and 18% disagreed altogether. This may indicate that over 50% of current faculty members are not sure as to how ICT can help contexts with large number of students. As concerns the time factor, 65% of lecturers felt that using ICT will increase their preparation time and 22% were unsure. Only 13% felt that using the technology will not add a burden to their packed schedules. This finding may point to the faculty's worries about the extra time that introducing the technology might add to their overloaded schedules. As for using technology to enhance communication with learners, around 70% felt that using ICTs will help them communicate more efficiently with their learners, 22% were unsure and only 9% disagreed. These findings may indicate that around one third of Damascus University professors are still unaware of the potential of ICTs in promoting better communication between them and their learners.

Statement	*disagree*	*unsure*	*agree*
1. Using the technology will increase my preparation time.	13%	22%	65%
2. Using the technology will enable me to design activities that will increase my students' learning.	0%	13%	87%
3. Using the technology will enable me to communicate more efficiently with my students.	9%	22%	69%
4. Using the technology will enable me to collaborate and share tasks with colleagues.	9%	22%	69%
5. Using the technology will increase students' confidence/skill in the use of technology.	0%	9%	91%
6. To integrate technology into my teaching I need inservice training on ICTs skills.	4%	4%	92%
7. To integrate technology into my teaching I need inservice training on ICT pedagogical skills.	9%	9%	82%
8. To integrate technology into my teaching I need to have at university adequate technical support.	4%	0%	96%
9. To integrate technology into my teaching I need the administration to support my efforts.	9%	0%	91%
10. To integrate using the technology in my teaching I need my colleagues to support my efforts.	13%	30%	57%
11. Using the technology in teaching may help my context of large classes.	18%	26%	56%

12. Using the technology in teaching may help learners become more independent.	0%	4%	96%
13. Using technology in teaching may help my learners become part of a large community of learners.	0%	9%	91%

Table 3. Psychological readiness for ICT use by the professors at the department of English

As to training and IT support, over 90% felt that to be able to implement technology in their teaching context, professors need adequate technical support. 92% felt that they need training on ICTs skills and 82% felt that they need training on ICT pedagogical skills. It seems that to Damascus University faculty members, training on technological skills comes before training on ICT pedagogical skills. This might be an indicator that faculty are unaware that with the introduction of technology, comes different pedagogical approaches. As concerns the support of the administration, 91% too felt that they need the administration to support their effort. None were unsure about this and only 9% felt that they can do it on their own. There is evidence in the literature to point to the fact that when instructors are not given sufficient assistance, they prefer conventional methods. Tutunis (1991) found that when English as a second language (ESL) teachers in Britain were not given enough time and financial assistance for self-development, they preferred conventional teaching aids to computers. In sum, all these findings confirm the faculty's need for IT technical support, IT training and institutional support.

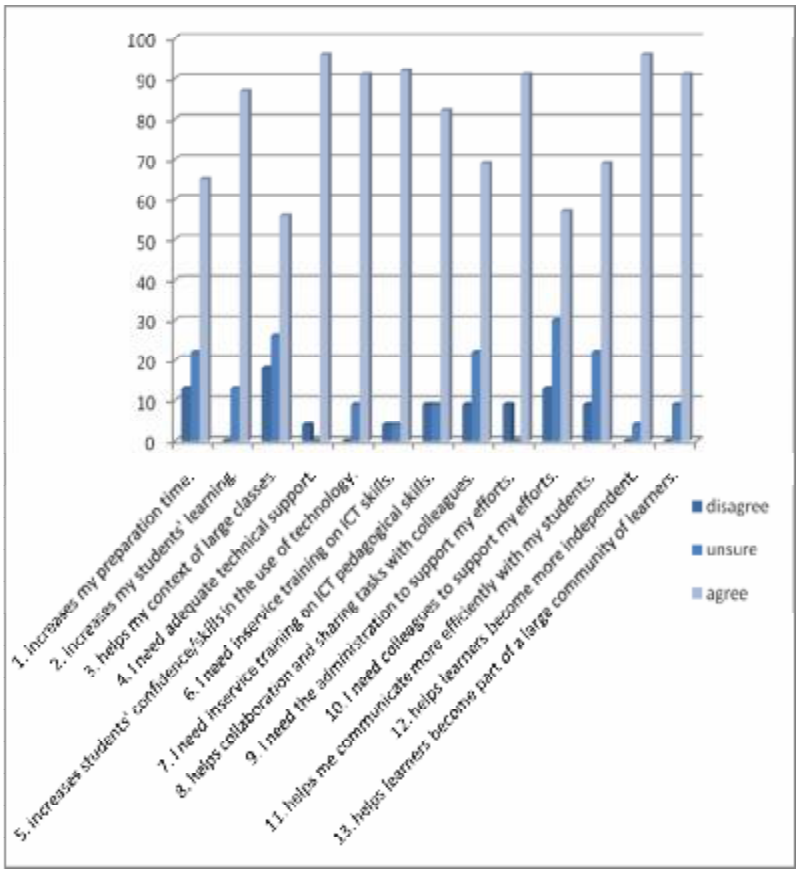

Figure 3. Psychological readiness for ICT use by the professors of the department of English

Concerning support from colleagues, this factor was not as important to faculty members as the factors on training and institutional support. Only 57% thought that support from colleagues is important and 30% were unsure. Not an unexpected finding in a context where learning is largely compartmentalized and each professor feels only responsible for the course s/he is teaching and knows very little about what goes on in the other classes. However, around 70% agreed that ICT will facilitate collaboration and sharing tasks with colleagues. Only 22% were unsure about how sharing tasks with colleagues can be of value to them.

Statement	disagree	unsure	agree
1. VLE' s encourage learning.	9%	30%	61%
2. E-mail communication encourages learning.	9%	17%	74%
3. I don't think I need e-learning skills to progress in this profession.	61%	9%	30%
4. I don’t think my learners need e-learning to become life long learners.	70%	4%	26%
5. I have skills and knowledge to integrate e-learning into my teaching.	22%	22%	56%
6. I don't have the time to integrate technology into teaching.	44%	4%	52%
7. I am willing to change my teaching style to integrate e-learning activities.	13%	22%	65%
8. I feel competent enough to rely on e-learning as a teaching medium.	43%	22%	35%
9. It's important for my university to have a shared vision on e-learning pedagogy	4%	9%	87%
10. My students have the ability to develop their skills and knowledge to use technology in their learning.	22%	39%	39%

Table 4. Pedagogical readiness for ICT use by the professors at the department of English

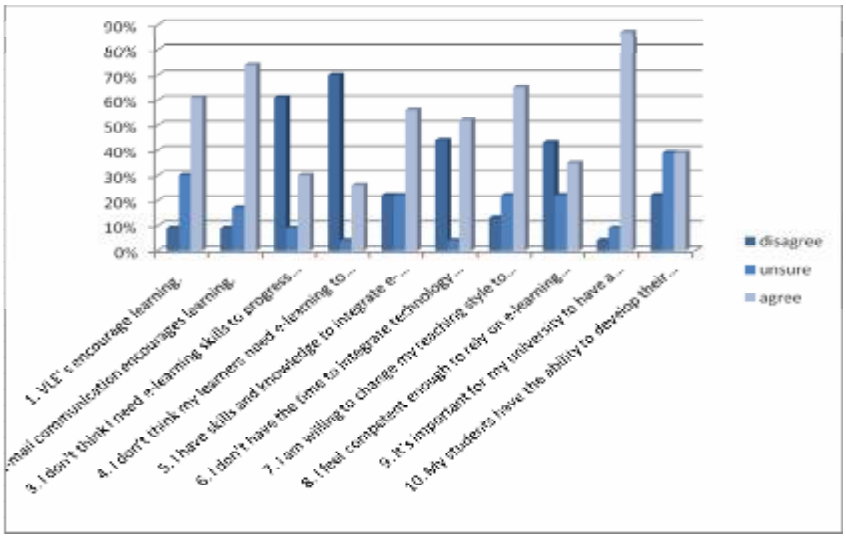

Figure 4. Pedagogical readiness for ICT use by the professors of the department of English

c. Teachers' pedagogical readiness

Table 4 and figure 4 present the views of the faculty members at the department of English at Damascus University regarding their pedagogical readiness to integrate technology into their teaching. 61% agreed that virtual learning environments will encourage learning and 30% were unsure. Interviews confirmed this uncertainty as a good number of respondents were unsure what a virtual learning environment involves and how it could help their learners. 74% agreed that e-mail communication between teachers and students promote learning, 17% were unsure. 70% of respondents disagreed with the statement that their learners don't need e-learning skills to become life-long learners. This highlights the fact that faculty members are aware of the importance of ICT in today's education system.

As concerns IT skills and professional development, 61% of the professors agreed that they need e-learning skills to progress professionally. This points to the fact that over two thirds of faculty members are aware of the significant role of ICT to their professional growth. As to their confidence in their own IT skills, over half of the respondents (56%) felt that they have adequate knowledge and skills to integrate e-learning into their teaching, 22% were unsure and 22% disagreed. It is worth mentioning here that those professors who have had the experience of teaching in the virtual mode at the Syrian Virtual University may be at an advantage in this respect. They are more confident and more aware than other faculty members of the potential of ICTs in the teaching of languages.

Despite their modest technological skills, 65% of respondents showed willingness to change their teaching styles to integrate e-learning activities, 22% were unsure and only 13% disagreed. However, 52% confirmed that they do not have the time to integrate technology into their teaching. This indicates that faculty are overloaded and time is a major obstacle to the implementation of this initiative. An interesting finding is that only one third of informants (35%) felt competent enough to rely on e-learning as a teaching medium, 22% were unsure and 43% disagreed. Here again the impact of teaching in the virtual medium at the Syrian

Virtual University is evident. Nevertheless, 87% felt that it is important for the university to have a shared vision on the use of ICTs and e-learning pedagogy.

Regarding learners' ICT readiness, 39% of professors were unsure and only 39% felt that their learners have the ability to develop their skills and knowledge to use technology in their learning. An unexpected finding knowing that the majority of learners grew up with the technology and are 'digital natives'. This may be an indicator that professors do not have a clear idea about the IT capabilities of their learners which is understandable due to the impersonal medium that prevails in this massive educational context. Interviews confirmed this as some professors were unsure what these skills involved and others expressed their worries about whether their learners could afford the technology.

d. Interview data analysis

Interestingly, during interviews, the majority of participants expressed their interest and willingness to integrate ICTs into their educational context. However, most felt that they didn't have the necessary skills or knew very little about how to go ahead with that. Many lecturers also said that they would use the technology if they had it. In their view, technology has the potential to positively influence teaching and learning though they expressed reservations as to how it could be of help in the context of large classes. A good example is in the MA classes where due to the small number of students, one professor was able to use presentation tools and this practice disseminated through the students from one class to another and all professors went ahead using this technology in the classroom provided that students took care of the technological issues.

According to the respondents, the first and most important factor for the successful integration of technology into their teaching is to have adequate technical support. This was almost a unanimous view. All participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the current situation

where there is little technical infrastructure or technical support. Many faculty members expressed that they would like to use technology but do not have easy access to technology or Internet in their lecture theatres. They have to use their own laptops, a portable projector and a *3G*. It is a lot of hassle which puts many off the process. The second important factor to them was proper training on ICT skills which they rated as more important than training on ICT pedagogical skills. The third important factor was the support of the administration. They valued the role that the administration will play to support this initiative. It was also clear from the interviews that they were not aware of the value of peer support. Hence, this factor was underrated and came last on the list of indicators of psychological readiness.

More than half of the participants shared the view that integrating technology into their teaching requires more preparation time and thus many expressed their concern over the time that it may take them if they are to use technology in their teaching. Overall, it was noted that respondents had insufficient knowledge about e-learning pedagogy except those participants who have had experience in virtual learning environments at the Syrian Virtual University. Those were more enthusiastic and some reported the positive effects of e-learning and how such an environment can be motivating to their learners and how it can provide them with opportunities for collaborative learning and better communication with professors and peers. The majority suggested that they need training on how to integrate e-learning into their teaching but expressed little concern about the pedagogical implications of the new mode of learning. The majority also reported a high degree of competence when using word processing as they all use it for preparing their MCQ exams, but many had to ask what presentation tools, VLE, web-page creating and video-conferencing meant before they could answer these questions. Searching the net and sending emails were also used frequently by most faculty members but mainly for personal reasons. In contrast, very few reported knowledge of VLE and even less so of video conferencing tools.

6. Interpreting the results

Specifically, the analysis of the results revealed the following regarding the faculty's three levels of e-readiness:

(A) Technological readiness:

- The majority of faculty claimed to feel most competent when using word processing, searching the Internet and sending e-mails.
- Over half of the faculty members reported feeling confident using presentation tools.
- Online chat rooms were reported to have been used by respondents mainly for personal chats.
- Over three quarters of the respondents reported that they were not competent when using videoconferencing tools, web-page creating and virtual learning environments.
- Few of the respondents had received ICT training and none had received pedagogical ICT training.

(B) Psychological readiness:

- Almost all of the respondents considered it important to have adequate technical support at the university.
- The majority of the respondents said that they felt it important to have institutional support for integrating ICTs.
- The majority of the faculty agreed that in order to integrate ICTs into their teaching they will need in-service training in ICT and pedagogical skills.
- Most of the respondents agreed that ICTs can help their learners become independent and part of a large community of learners and can increase student's learning and their confidence in the use of ICT.
- Around two thirds of faculty members agreed that ICTs will enable them to communicate more efficiently with students.

- Around two thirds of the respondents agreed that ICTs will increase their preparation time.
- Over half of the respondents agreed that they would need their colleagues' support to integrate ICTs effectively, and two thirds felt that ICTs will enable them to collaborate and share tasks with colleagues more easily.
- Over half of the respondents had doubts as to how ICT can help their context of large classes.

(C) Pedagogical readiness:

- The majority of respondents believed that it is important for their university to have a shared vision for ICTs use.
- Three quarters of faculty agreed that e-mail communication between teacher and students encourages learning.
- Around two thirds of the respondents agreed that the VLE will encourage learning.
- Two thirds of respondents agreed that they needed e-learning skills to progress professionally.
- Around two thirds of faculty members agreed that their learners need e-learning to become life long learners.
- Around two thirds of faculty members reported that they were willing to change their teaching style in order to integrate e-learning activities.
- Over half of the respondents agreed that they had adequate skills and knowledge to integrate e-learning into their teaching.
- More than half of the respondents stated that they would like to integrate e-learning into their teaching but they didn't have the time to do so.
- Over one third of respondents felt that their students have the ability to develop their skills and knowledge to use technology in their learning.
- Only one third of the respondents felt competent enough to rely on e-learning as a teaching medium.

7. Conclusion

The overall picture is a positive one. There is a great deal of interest and motivation amongst Damascus University professors at the department of English language and literature with regard to learning more about the potential of ICTs. There is also an acknowledgement amongst faculty that this is the direction things are likely to take in the future. In line with Hadjiathanasiou (2009), findings from this study indicate a range of implications which Damascus University might wish to consider for enhancing ICT use to supplement the teaching of English at the university level. These including the following:

1. Establishing a comprehensive policy

Initially it is necessary for Damascus University to clarify its educational vision for ICT and establish a comprehensive official policy which would determine the role and potential of ICTs, its educational value and type of use. According to Hadjiathanasiou (2009), the absence of a national e-learning policy jeopardizes the integration of ICTs in teaching and learning, "as on the bottom line this means that integration remains optional, leaving it is up to teachers' personal interest and willingness to adopt it".

2. The need to enhance the faculty's technological confidence

A variety of studies indicate that technology will have little effect on learning unless teachers are adequately and appropriately trained (Silverstein *et al.*, 2000; Sandholtz *et al.* 1997). This survey's findings indicate that professors need to receive technological training that will develop their competence and raise their confidence in using ICT tools in their teaching.

3. The need to enhance the faculty's ICT pedagogical confidence

This study provided evidence that some faculty members are unaware of the impact of ICTs on their current teaching practices. The research carried out by Hadjiathanasiou (2009) provided evidence to support the view that if ICT implementation is to be effective, teachers need to think carefully about how they can combine the "e" with the "learning". Evidence in the literature clearly points to the fact that: "It is not

technology, but the instructional implementation of the technology that determines the effects on learning" (Collins, 1996:146). Hence the need for training to develop the faculty's ICT pedagogical skills.

4. The added value of ICT

Findings in the literature indicate that even if teachers receive training in how to integrate ICTs into their teaching they will be willing to change their practices only if they are convinced of its value to their learners. "The knowledge, beliefs and attitudes that teachers have… shaped what they choose to do in their classrooms and explain the core of instructional practices that have endured over time" (Cuban, 1993:256). Hence, it would be beneficial if teachers are informed about worldwide research evidence indicating ICT's "relative advantage" (Rogers, 2000) and the positive effect that ICT can have on students' achievements.

5. Planning with technology

In line with (Hadjiathanasiou, 2009), this study suggests that "policy planning should not be imposed through a top-down strategy, but rather that teachers should actively participate in decision making". The evidence indicates that faculty members need to have the space to express their views on how they view this new innovation, and what they need in order to integrate it into their teaching.

6. Students learning with technology

In order for students to be able to learn with technology, they need practical training on how to use ICT tools. Therefore, this study suggests that it might be helpful if students have an ICT module that will help them develop skills of higher-order uses of ICT tools.

7. Technical support

'There is no e-learning without the "e" ' (EIU, 2003). "Undoubtedly, the first ingredient for integrating ICT into higher education is high quality infrastructure, technical support and maintenance" (Hadjiathanasiou, 2009). There is a need for the provision and maintenance of the infrastructure that will provide staff and learners with computer labs, high quality hardware and software and Internet access. Findings of this study pointed to the importance of the technical support which if not present

could demotivate teachers. BECTA research (2004) confirms that when there is a lack of technical support and maintenance teachers tend to avoid using technology in the first place.

8. E-learning culture

Overall, integrating ICTs into higher education is not a technical issue. In line with Hadjiathanasiou (2009), it requires a significant change of culture in the Syrian education context in order for teachers first to develop the willingness and capability to integrate ICTs into their teaching and second to develop a vision built on the understanding that technology is a tool that can offer solutions to long-standing teaching and learning problems.

References

- Akins, K. (1992). Revolution or Rhetoric: Factors affecting teachers' decisions about computers in classrooms. Masters' Abstracts International, 32, 795
- Albirini, A. (2006). 'Cultural perceptions: The missing element in the implementation of ICT in developing countries'. International Journal of Education and Development Using ICT. Vol. 2(1). http://ijedict.dec.uwi.edu. [Accessed September 2009]
- Al-Juhani, S. (1991). The effectiveness of computer-assisted instruction in teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi secondary schools. Dissertation Abstracts International, 52(07), 2383A.
- Becta (2004). A review of the research literature on barriers to the uptake of ICT by teachers. British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta). Available online at: http://www.becta.org.uk/
- Blurton, C.,"New Directions of ICT-Use in Education". Available online http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/lwf/dl/edict.pdf; [Accessed December 2010]
- Bradford, C. (1984). An analysis of the relationships between computer literacy, attitude and theutilization of microcomputers in public school settings. Dissertation Abstracts International, 45(07), 2070
- Burke, M. (1986). The effects of in-service microcomputer training on teachers' attitudes toward educational computing. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(06), 2026A
- Clerc, R. (1985). Acceptance of technological change in the public schools. Dissertation Abstracts International, 46(06), 1452A.
- Collins, B. (1996) Tele-learning in a digital world: the future of distance learning, London: International Thomson Computer Press.
- Cox, M. J., Preston, C., & Cox, K. (1999, 2-5 September). What motivates teachers to use ICT? Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association (BERA), University of Sussex, Brighton
- Cuban, L. (1993). How teachers taught: Constancy and change in American classrooms: 1890-1990, 2nd edition, New York: Teachers College Press.

- Demiray, U. (ed.) (2010). e-Learning Practices: Cases on challenges facing e-learning and national development, Volume: I, http://www.midasebook.com/dosyalar/volume_I.pdf [Accessed December 2010]
- Dudeney, G., & Hockly, N. (2007). 'How to teach English with technology'. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Dunkel, P. (1987). 'Computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and computer assisted language learning (CALL): Past dilemmas and future prospects for audible CALL'. Modern Language Journal, Vol. 71, pp. 250-260
- EIU: Economist Intelligence Unit (2003) The 2003 e-learning readiness rankings. Available at: http://graphics.eiu.com/files/ad_pdfs/eReady_2003.pdf
- European Commission (2003). eLearning: Designing Tomorrow's Education. http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/elearning/doc/mid_term_report_en.pdf. [Accessed December 2010]
- Finnemann, M. D. (1996). 'The World Wide Web and foreign language teaching'. ERIC/CLL News Bulletin, Vol. 20 (1), pp. 6-8
- Fraley, L.E., & Vargas E.A. (1975). 'Academic tradition and instructional technology'. The Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 46, pp. 1-15
- Gale, L. E. (1989). Macario, Montevidisco, and interactive Dígame: Developing interactive video for language instruction. In F. Smith (Ed.), *Modern technology in foreign language education: Applications and projects* (pp. 235-247). Lincoln wood, IL: National Textbook.
- George, G., & Camarata, M. R. (1996). 'Managing instructor cyberanxiety: The role of self-efficacy in decreasing resistance to change'. Educational Technology, Vol. 36(4), pp. 49-54
- Gratton, W. (1998). The development of computer technology in ELT. In J. Kahny & M. James (Eds.), *Perspectives on secondary school EFL education* (pp. 44-49). Odawara, Japan: Language Institute of Japan
- Graves, W. (1999). Developing and using technology as a strategic asset. In R. Katz *et al*. (Eds.), *Dancing with the devil: Information technology and the new competition in higher education* (95-118). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers

- Hadjiathanasiou P., (2009). 'The e-learning readiness of Cyprus primary teachers ahead of Dias system integration into Cyprus schools, European journal of open, distance and e-learning'. EURODL (European Journal of Open,Distance, E-Learning), Vol. 2009/I.
- http://www.eurodl.org/materials/contrib/2009/Panayiota_Hadjiathanasiou.pdf.
- [Accessed December 2010]
- Harvey, T.E. (1987). 'Second-language composition instruction, computers and first-language pedagogy: A descriptive survey'. Foreign Language Annals, Vol. 20, pp. 171-180
- Hennessy, S., D. Harrison , L. Wamakote, (2010). 'Teacher Factors Influencing Classroom Use of ICT in Sub-Saharan Africa' , Itupale Online Journal of African Studies, Vol. 2, pp. 39- 54
- Hopwood, T. (1989). The use of the word-processor in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Cambridge, UK: Bell Educational Trust. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 312 892)
- Kellenberger, D. (1994). Preservice teacher beliefs related to educational computer use. (Doctoral dissertation. University of Toronto, 1994). Dissertation Abstracts International, 58(07), 2643A.
- Kellenberger, D. W. (1997). 'Predicting preservice teacher perceived computer use under
- Differential access to resources'. Journal of Educational Computing Research, Vol. 16 (1),
- pp. 53-64. http://www.hiceducation.org/Edu_Proceedings/David%20W.%20Kellenberger.pdf
- [Accessed December 2010]
- Kozma, R., McGhee, R., Quellmalz, E., & Zalles, D. (2004). 'Closing the digital divide: evaluation of the World Links Program. International Journal of Educational Development'. Vol. 25(4), pp. 361-381.
- Lam Y., (2000). 'Technophilia vs. Technophobia: A Preliminary Look at Why Second-Language Teachers Do or Do Not Use Technology in Their Classrooms'. The Canadian Modern Language Review/la Revue canadienne des langues vivantes, Vol. 56(3) (March/mars), pp. 389 - 420

- Leh, A. (1995). The reformation in foreign language instruction. In Proceedings of the 1995 Annual National Convention of the Association for Education Communications and Technology (pp. 333-342). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 383 320)
- Librero, F. (1981). A descriptive analysis of audiovisual media utilization by the faculty of the School of Education at Indiana University. Dissertation Abstracts International, 42(07), 2984A.
- Mayora, C. A. (2006). 'Integrating multimedia technology in a high school EFL program'. English Language Teaching Forum, Vol. 44(3), pp. 14-21
- Marcinkiewicz, H. R. (1993). 'Computers and teachers: Factors influencing computer use in the classroom'. Journal of Research on Computing in Education, Vol. (26), pp. 220-237
- Mohammed, M. (1994). 'Media utilization by faculty at the University of Qatar'. Educational Technology Research and Development, Vol. 42(4), pp. 108-119
- Moore, Z., Morales, B. & Carel S. (1998), 'Technology and teaching culture: Results of a state survey of foreign language teachers'. CALICO, Vol.15 (1-3), pp.109-128
- Pickard, V., Chan, K., & Tibbetts, J. (1994). Concordancing for schools: Problems and potential. Paper presented at the Annual International Language in Education Conference, Hong Kong, 1993. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 386 056)
- Rogers, P. (2000). Barriers to adopting emerging technologies in education. Journal of Educational Computing Research, Vol. 22 (4), pp. 455-472.
- Saint-Léon, C. (1988). 'The case for authentic materials on videodisk'. CALICO Journal, Vol. 6 (2), pp. 27- 40
- Sandholtz, J. H., Ringstaff, C. and Dwyer, D. C. (1997). Teaching with technology: Creating student-centered classrooms. New York: Teachers College Press
- Silverstein, G., Frechtling, J. and Miyoaka, A. (2000). Evaluation of the use of technology in Illinois public schools: Final report, (prepared for Research Division, Illinois State Board of Education), Rockville, MD: Westat.

- Sofranova, N.V. (1993). 'Teachers' attitudes towards the use of new information technologies'. Russian Education and Society, Vol. 37(2), pp. 5-28
- Sorenson, D. L. and Reiner, C. (2003). 'Charting the uncharted seas of online student ratings of instruction'. New Direction for Teaching and Learning, Vol. 96, pp. 1-21
- Stenzel, L. (1982). Teacher attitudes toward computer literacy. Dissertation Abstracts International, 44(01), 145A
- Taylor, C. (1986). Teacher opinions of instructional computing in selected public elementary schools in Michigan. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(01), 81A.
- Tella, A., Tella, A., Toyobo, O. M., Adika, L. O., & Adeyinka, A. A. (2007). 'An Assessment of Secondary School Teachers Uses of ICTs: Implications for Further Development of ICT's Use in Nigerian Secondary Schools'. The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 6(3), 12
- Terrell, S. R., Dringus, L., & Rendulic, P. (1995). A transitional model for the introduction of technology. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 386 171
- Thrush, J. A. & Thrush, R. (1984). 'Microcomputers in foreign language instruction'. The Modern Language Journal, Vol. 68 (1), pp. 21-26
- Tinio, V. L. (2003). ICT in education. E-Primers for information economy, society and policy. [Online] from http://www.apdip.net/publications/iespprimers/eprimer-edu.pdf [Accessed December 2010]
- Tutunis, B. (1991). The integration of computers into the teaching of English to speakers of other languages. Dissertation Abstracts International, 52(05), 1671A.
- Wills, S. & Alexander, S. (2000) Managing the introduction of technology in teaching and learning. In: T Evans and D Nation (eds), *Changing university teaching: reflections on creating educational technologies.* London: Kogan Page, pp. 56-72
- Winnans, C. & Sardo Brown, D. (1992). 'Some factors affecting elementary teachers' use of the computer. Computers and Education'. Vol. 18, pp. 301-309

- Yaratan, H. & C. Kural (2010). 'Middle school English language teachers' perceptions of Instructional technology implementation in North Cyprus'. TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, Vol. 9 (2), pp. 161-174
- Zammit, S. (1992). 'Factors facilitating or hindering the use of computers in schools'. Educational Research, Vol. 34, pp. 57-66

.

Received 30/12/2011.