



Language Teaching Research Quarterly



2017, Vol. 4, 25–30

Technology in ELT: Iranian EFL Teachers’ Perception towards Using Fotobabble in English Classes

Hamid Ashraf¹, Bahman Kazemi², Sara Kazemi^{3,*}

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Torbat-e-Heydarieh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e-Heydarieh, Iran.

PhD Candidate, English Department, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e-Heydarieh Branch, Iran.

PhD Candidate, English Department, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e-Heydarieh Branch, Iran.

Received 19 August 2017 **Accepted** 8 December 2017

Abstract

Teaching with technology has gained attention around the globe and internet use has become an integral part of teaching. Web- based tools are used in language classes to enhance interaction among learners and increase learning and teaching opportunity. Thus, the aims of this study are to introduce fotobabble which is a web tool that can be used in English language classes for teaching purposes, and to know the Iranian EFL teachers’ perception towards it. To collect data, 30 EFL teachers teaching at schools and private English institutes were randomly selected and their attitudes and opinions were investigated through semi- structured interviews. The participants were sent via telegram and e- mail an informative text about fotobabble and then were asked to talk about their opinions about its benefits and merits in language classes. The collected qualitative data was analyzed by means of content analysis and it was revealed that the majority of Iranian EFL teachers had a positive attitude towards the use of this web- based tool in their classes; however, a few number of teachers shared their concerns about its application in English classes. It is believed that studies about technology use in classes can help increase effective teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Technology, Fotobabble, Web- Based Tools, Effective, Internet*

Introduction

Undoubtedly, improvements in technology are going to change lifestyles in society. Being an indispensable part, different aspects of our lives are under the influence of that. Of those

kazemisara59@gmail.com

influenced areas is education. Without question, uses of technology and web-based tools have been interwoven into our education system. Teachers and students can well benefit from new forms of technology in improving the qualities of teaching and learning.

Given the fact that learners have a limited chance to practice language skills in society, use of this technology could be of very high importance in EFL context (Merc, 2015). Reasonably, due to improvements in technology and their applications in EFL contexts, teachers' and students' roles change as well. Being a technician in the field, to be up-to-date, knowledgeable and technowise, taking part in training classes is a must for teachers. Living digitally and having fresh information are of their needs. Moreover, the search for professional development has caused teachers and instructors to pursue lifelong learning and catch up on new information related to technology. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers towards technology use in English classes; specifically a special form of technology called Fotobabble. To meet this end the following research question was posed:

RQ: What is the Iranian EFL teachers' perception towards using Fotobabble in English classes?

Review of literature

With no question, technology has been entering all parts of lives and education. Using technology and web-based apps and tools have lots of benefits for teachers and learners. Teachers are not the mere source of help in language classes these days and learners can access websites and tools to assist them in their education. There are many reasons why students need technology in classes. If used correctly, technology can prepare students for their future job. Giving students a new taste and bringing variety to teaching styles, integrating technology in classes is very crucial. It can enhance interaction among learners, used to increase group work and pair work and improve collaboration. As societies have become more technology dependent, it can help teachers prepare students for the real world environment. As students like to work with different apps and tools, the use of technology keeps them motivated and involved in the process of learning. It can bring fun and make a happy condition for learning. Easily accessed to net, students would be able to be up-to-date and gain new information faster and easier. Traditional roles of teachers in classes would be different with the help of technology and they would become advisors, coaches and facilitators. The use of technology in classes would give students more responsibility and they would have more control over their learning process. Students would also have more access to e-books and articles and then get rid of heavy paper books.

What is Fotobabble

Fotobabble is a software company that provides photos and audio-powered social marketing solutions for different business. Fotobabble can be used for different purposes such as business, photography and education. In education Fotobabble is an important tool especially in EFL classes because it allows users to record their voice and then have the ability to replay that recording and review it and this can be very effective for teaching and learning. What makes this technological tool interesting for learners according to Coskun and Marlowe (2015) is the ability

to personalize Fotobabble recordings by uploading pictures and photos and then using the time to describe them or telling an interesting story of personal life. There are lots of assignments and activities that can be done using Fotobabble in EFL classes. It prepares students to speak more in target language and improves their speaking ability. It helps learners lower their stress and anxiety and speak more easily and listen to their own sound. Doing lots of speaking projects students will become active, confident and willing.

Fotobabble is accessible on ipads or ipods, mobile phones, lap tops and any other device. Very simply people can have access to it through sites and using internet. It works very simply just by going to the Fotobabble app, going to “setting”, clicking on “not logged in”, creating an account or signing in, taking a new photo or select one, Pressing the red button “record” and record the voice, then press the “share” button, at the end choosing a title and pressing “done”.

Suggested Activities for the Classroom

Activity 1: Learners can create illustrations, find images or take pictures that define a word. Then they can record their voice and ask others what the word means. After a few seconds they can give the word and its definition. This is a good activity to practice vocabulary.

Activity 2: Students can choose a picture of an event or process and then talk about what happens in that event. This is a good activity for explanation and small talks.

Activity 3: A character can be created for a creative writing assignment. Students can create a character and then record their voice and tell a story or describe something.

Advantages of Fotobabble in education

There are lots of ideas about the benefits of this app and its possible uses for the classroom. Some of these collected ideas are as follows:

- Oral assessment: students record their voice and teachers listen to them
- Language practice: learners watch and listen to English
- Lesson review: by uploading images and recording voices, learners can review vocabulary and previously taught material
- Practice writing: students can select a picture that represents writing
- Writing prompt: students can look at the pictures and start brainstorming about them
- Adding variety: sometimes instead of writing they can record
- Practice making inferences: learners may be asked to infer the meanings behind pictures
- Having fun: by recording songs or a piece of music
- Portfolio: teachers can record the samples to show the development of students
- Exchanging experience: teachers can record their own personal experience or personal stories and share with students
- Informative tool: lots of information can be given to learners by selecting pictures
- Practice English at home: different kinds of exercises can be given to students

Related studies

There are lots of studies around the world regarding the role of technology and its applications in the classroom. Taj et. al (2016) investigated the impact of mobile assisted language learning on EFL and they came up with the idea that using mobile in classes can foster EFL instruction. Okada and Sakamoto (2015) tried to illustrate how lesson plans, teaching styles and assessment can be adapted by using a new e- learning system in a reading classroom. They tried to explore how receiving feedback from students can help teachers plan a lesson dynamically. Gonzalez Otero (2016) did an action research and aimed at identifying EFL students' communicative needs and improving their oral skills by the use of ICT. Jalali and Panahzade (2014) tried to find out the language teachers' classroom management orientations on the basis of their computer attitude. Their findings showed that as the experience and age of teachers increase, their attitude towards computer become more negative.

Methodology

Participants

A group of 30 (17 female and 13 male) EFL teachers teaching at schools and private English institutes in Mashhad were randomly selected and participated in the study. They were all in the age range of 20 to 50 years. They came from three main streams of studies: Teaching English, Translation and English Literature and they had different teaching experiences between 5 to 30 years. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample.

Table 1: Distribution of sample

	Range	Percent		Calss	Percent
Age	20-30	30	Teaching Experience	0-5	0.0
	31-40	60		6-10	30
	41-50	10		11-15	36.6
Gender	Male	43.3		16-20	23.3
	Female	56.6		26-30	10
Major	Teaching	46.6		Degree	BA
	Translation	20	MA		40
	Literature	33.3	PHD		0.0
	Other	0.0			
Total	-	30			100

Instruments

To find answers for the research question that is what the Iranian EFL teachers' perception towards using Fotobabble in English classes is, a semi- structured interview was conducted. The participants were sent via telegram and e- mail an informative text about Fotobabble and then were asked to talk about their opinions about its benefits and merits in language classes. Some of the interview questions are as follows:

- What's your idea about using technology in language classes?
- What do you know about Fotobabble?

- Is Fotobabble applicable in language classes?
- What are the advantages of using Fotobabble in language classes?
- What are the disadvantages of using Fotobabble in language classes?
- How would you like to change the way of using technology?

Results and discussion

The present study employed a qualitative data collection instrument which was interview and the results were reported after detailed analysis of the data. The results of the interviews indicated that generally Iranian EFL teachers had a positive view towards using technology in language classes, especially using new apps and web-based tools such as Fotobabble. Most of the teachers didn't have enough knowledge about Fotobabble, but after reading a short text about it and gaining information; they could share their opinions about this app.

Most of the teachers believed that bringing new forms of technology to language classes is advantageous. In the world of technology, using new web-based tools in classes can enhance the effectiveness of teaching. They believed that all teachers need to be techno wise and be up-to-dated. Technology literacy is a must for language teachers.

23.5 percent of the EFL teachers participated in the present study believed that Fotobabble is an interesting tool which is liked by most of the students and is useful in increasing motivation and involvement of learners. Class participation and interaction will be increased using this app in activities. Pair works and group works can be developed and student- student communication will be enhanced using this app in language classes.

16.5 percent of the EFL teachers in the present study talked about the happiness which can be added to language learning through using Fotobabble in classes. They believed that learners can understand more with fun and using web- based tools can bring fun to classes. Varieties of activities can be done using this app.

33.5 percent of Iranian EFL teachers participated in this study believed on using new methods of teaching in language classes and talked about technology as a new way of conveying information to learners. They said that the role of the teachers as the only source of knowledge in the classroom should be regarded as traditional and old and new roles should be assigned to language teachers. Technology can be considered as a powerful source of knowledge in classes which can be helpful to students.

Although most of the Iranian EFL teachers had a positive view towards using Fotobabble in language classes, there were some teachers who were not very optimistic and considered the problems, challenges and limitations of using this app in language classes in Iran. They said that lack of technological tools in most of the classes in private and public schools stop teachers from using apps and web-based tools. Lack of time is another preventive factor. Lack of money and high cost of using technology in classes should be regarded as important. Lack of knowledge and training on the part of the teachers is very crucial in language classes. They said that there are lots of teachers who are not familiar with these apps and tools and cannot apply them in their teaching. Most of the teachers do not receive the required training courses for technology use in classes. In

some public schools there are some limitations for teachers and they are not allowed to bring apps and tools in to their classes.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the perception of Iranian EFL teachers towards using Fotobabble in language classes. The results of the interviews indicated that most of the Iranian EFL teachers had a positive view towards using Fotobabble in language classes. They also talked about the advantages of using this app in increasing the quality of teaching and learning. However there were some teachers who talked about the challenges and problems of using Fotobabble in language classes and talked about their concerns about limitations of using technology in Iranian context.

There were some limitations and problems in conducting the present study. As the only tool for data collection was interview, it was not easy to find teachers who have enough free time to participate in the study. In addition, all language teachers were not included in the study. Moreover, demographic differences among teachers were not taken into account.

The results of the present study can be beneficial for different groups. First, teachers and instructors who are not familiar with Fotobabble can take advantage of the findings. Second, supervisors and those who are in charge of pre-service training courses for teachers can use the results and provide teachers with some training courses about technology integration. Third, material developers can integrate texts related to technology in language books. In addition, syllabus designers can anticipate some times for technology use in classes.

Further study and research is needed in L2 context about the use of different kinds of apps in language classes. Moreover, further research should attempt to find out the perceptions of Iranian learners about technology use in EFL classes.

References

- Ali, M. E. R. Ç. (2015). Using technology in the classroom: A study with Turkish pre-service EFL teachers. *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 14(2).
- Coskun, A., & Marlowe, Z. (2015). Technology in ELT: English Teachers Investigate Animoto and Fotobabble. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 4(3), 119.
- González Otero, R. (2016). Innovative Resources Based on ICTs and Authentic Materials to Improve EFL Students' Communicative Needs. *Research-publishing. net*.
- Jalali, S., & Panahzade, V. (2014). Predicting Language Teachers' Classroom Management Orientations on the Basis of Their Computer Attitude and Demographic Characteristics. *International Journal of Instruction*, 7(2), 135-148.
- Okada, T., & Sakamoto, Y. (2015, August). Dynamic lesson planning in EFL reading classes through a new e-learning system. In *Critical CALL—Proceedings of the 2015 EUROCALL Conference, Padova, Italy* (pp. 444-449). Research-publishing. net.
- Taj, I. H., Sulan, N. B., Sipra, M. A., & Ahmad, W. (2016). Impact of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on EFL: A Meta-Analysis. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7(2), 76-83.