

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING THE EFL WRITING SKILL IN SAUDI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Education

KEY WORDS: integrating technology, teaching EFL writing skill, teachers' perceptions, Obstacles of technology integration.

Hind Ali Al-Ghamdi*

Master student of English Language Curriculum and Instruction.

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Dalal **Abdullah** Alqaiawi

Associate Professor of English Language Curriculum and Instruction

University of Jeddah.

The current research investigates the perceptions of English language teachers toward integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in Saudi public schools. The study adopts the descriptive method, which depends on describing the nature of a demographic segment without covering "Why" it happens. For data collection, the researchers design a questionnaire consisting of 20 items with a 3 points Likert scale. The findings reveal that teachers have a positive attitude toward integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in Saudi Public school. However, some obstacles hinder the integration of technology in teaching the EFL writing skill. These obstacles include restricted availability of the resources, lack of time required for technology infusion, lack of students' technological skills, lack of lab equipment and facilities, lack of knowledge and skills in technology integration, lack of suitable curricula for the integration of technology, lack of teacher training opportunities, and high expenses and cost.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' perceptions or attitudes toward the use of technology in English language teaching is significant in facilitating the infusion of technology in language teaching. Their perceptions can be a critical factor in encouraging or impeding the use of technology. Lam (2000) emphasizes that teachers' believes about technology importance affect their decisions on using technology in teaching. Teaching may fail to achieve its objectives if the teachers are not satisfied and convinced of what is going on in class (Williams, 2003). In spite of the wide spread and differing uses of the technology tools in the teaching of English language, the believes and perceptions of teachers' toward the use of technology in language teaching plays a vital role in reinforcing or ignoring the importance of such a role.

The use of technology is establishing an increase importance in the teaching and learning process at present. Worldwide, governments, education system, school officials, teachers and parents consider technology a critical part of the education of a child (Eady & Lockyer, 2013). Technology resolves the issue of passive teaching by offering rich and interactive learning environments (Fu, 2013). The standard of valid teaching and learning experience that is no longer limited to a conventional classroom is promoted by the use of technology (Roblyer &Doering, 2013). Eady & Lockyer (2013) assert that the significant role technology plays in education offers teachers the ability to create meaningful technologyembedded learning experiences. The integration of information and communication Technology (ICT) into foreign language (FL) learning and teaching classroom changes the language learning and literacy acquisition atmosphere as well as the dynamic of language learning settings (Young, 2003). According to Huang, Dedegikas, and Walls (2011) multimedia technology can create a good learning environment that leads to effective language learning. Ilter (2009) adds that technology provides English language learners with the ability to practice and enrich their vocabulary on a regular basis in the target language.

At the turn of the century, modern technology constituted a part of the social fabric. A generation ago, teachers used to teach EFL students the mechanics and techniques of the writing skill, they used to teach them how to write accurate essays and to read magazines, while now they are teaching them to write e-mails and conduct online research. The application of technology in teaching foreign languages

shows a transition in the educational paradigm from a behavioral to a constructivist approach of learning. While constructivism is not a philosophy linked to the use of technology, constructivist theories are guidelines for creating a vision for incorporating technology into the language curriculum. Language is a living thing, so the provision of interactive, authentic environments are the best way to learn a language. Computer based learning and the use of internet are powerful tools to support these language teaching approaches (Brown, 1997; Wolffe, 1997).

From Brown & Wolffe perspectives, there is a shift in the learning process from the past until now. We are in the digital age, so we are compelled to use technology in teaching. Using technology in teaching changes the learning process to a constructivist approach that motivates students to be active participants and build their knowledge on previous knowledge via the use of technology. Constructivist theory is not connected to using technology, but it is a guide for teachers to take into consideration the role of students during the use of technology.

Writing is one of the important skills in language learning as well as a mechanism for interpersonal communication that uses visual signs or graphic symbols to communicate meaning or ideas to another person in a written form (Chitravelu et al., 1995). Writing has a unique role in language teaching since its acquisition involves a practice and knowledge of the other three language skills that are listening, speaking and reading (Janikova, 2005; Zajicova, 2011; Rico, 1989). According to Walsh (2010) writing is a critical skill the students should master because it is commonly used in higher education and in the workplace. If students do not know how to express themselves in writing, they will not be able to interact with teachers, employers, peers or anyone else. Writing is paramount and provides a lot of benefits; It helps to express one's personality, promote communication, develop thinking skills, make logical and persuasive arguments, give an individual the opportunity to reflect on his/her ideas later, receive feedback and prepare for school and job (Chappell, 2011).

Although writing is a very valuable skill, it is the most difficult skill as well. Ghabool & Kashef (2012) assured that writing has always been a difficult task for students particularly for students who are studying English as a second/ foreign language (ESL/EFL). Learners are not enthusiastic about the

writing skill because it is essentially a desk activity; they cannot stand up and move around as in the speaking activities (Nepomuceno, 2011). According to Musgrove (2006), students do not like writing for three reasons: Firstly, they do not care because they do not see the importance of writing in their lives; they see it as a homework and a boring task. Secondly, "What" and "How" to write are not truly understood. Often, they are given a subject and are asked to brainstorm ideas of their own. They are not sure what they should write under the subject and how to write it correctly (Kaur&Sidhu, 2012). Thirdly, they do not see their mistakes, especially grammatical errors because they feel they have completed their writing mission the moment they complete their final draft (Ridhuan & Abdullah, 2009).

In an attempt to solve this problem, researchers believe that teachers need to teach the writing skill in an interactive environment that reflects student's real-life situation. Marleni (2020) suggests that using computers in an educational environment offers authentic opportunities for teachers and students to help them connect and develop the language skills of learners. Therefore, teachers need to use technology in their classroom since learners of the 21st century particularly the new generation are closely attached to the digital environment (Worshauer, 2009). Vygotsky (1997) assures that interaction and collaboration are important factors in the learning process. While students are using technology in the writing task, they scaffold each other in which the weaker students learn from the more proficient ones. Teachers need to provide opportunities for learners to write about topics that are relevant to their lives, to engage in different writing activities and to feel that their writing have a value (Gordimer, 1982). According to Warnock (2009), it is important to teach writing online since the environment can be textual. This environment would guide students to learn how to express themselves using their own words and to introduce students to varied audience. Scott & Mouza (2007) and Gatzke & LeDrew (2008) agree that when students use the computer in the classroom during the writing task, it becomes an enjoyable experience. Although there are many existing studies and reviews on the use of technology as an educational tool, still further studies are required especially with respect to the use of technology in the second or foreign language-learning classroom.

1.1Research problem

In spite of all the benefits and advantages of using technology in the teaching of language skills in general and in the teaching of writing in particular, teachers' attitudes and perceptions about the use of technology in the teaching of writing plays a vital role that one cannot ignore. Teachers are considered active agents in the process of changing and implementing new ideas as their beliefs and attitudes may encourage or impede the progress of any educational reform (Woodrow, 1991). Kim (2002) emphasizes that crucial factors influencing effective technology incorporation into the classroom are correlated with teachers themselves, such as the expectations and attitudes of teachers towards teaching and technology. Teachers' perceptions are key factors that encourage or prevent teachers from using technology. The current study attempts to investigate teachers' perceptions toward integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in the Saudi public schools.

The present research intends to answer the following main question:

Q. What are the teachers' perceptions toward integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in the Saudi Public Schools?

From the main question, two sub-questions emerge:

 What are the teachers' perceptions toward integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in the Saudi

- Public Schools?
- 2. What are the obstacles of integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in the Saudi Public Schools from the teachers' perspectives?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teachers' perceptions

The IGI Global dictionary (2020) defines teachers' perceptions as thoughts or mental images that teachers have about their professional activities and about their students shaped by their background knowledge, life experiences that affect their professional behavior.

Pajares (1992) claims that teachers' perceptions have the same meaning as teachers' beliefs, which are personally-held convictions about the subject matter teachers teach, their roles of responsibility, their students, the curriculum, and their classroom.

2.2 Importance of teachers' perceptions

According to Toyoda (2001) perceptions are different from one person to another. Teachers' application of computers depends on their perceptions of technology, they are more likely to translate their beliefs and perceptions into instructional practices (Ihmeideh, 2010; Kim, 2008). While the majority of teachers agree on the importance of incorporating technology in language teaching, their use of technology might be different depending on their beliefs (Kim, 2008). Several researchers claim that teachers' beliefs about the role of technology are the most essential factors that determine the content and scope of their use of technology in their classrooms (Becker, 1991; Campoy, 1992; Ertmer, Addison, Lane, Ross & Woods, 1999; Pedersen & Liu, 2003). It is necessary to determine causal perceptions on the part of teachers because teacher beliefs and perceptions about students and processes contribute to real teacher behaviors that directly affect student's success and motivation (Wild, Enzle, Nix, & Deci, 1997).

2.3Writing Skill

According to Nunan (2003) writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to articulate them and arranging them into sentences and paragraphs that a reader can find obvious. It helps students to express their ideas in a written form and to achieve a high level of communication (Harmer, 2004). Writing is a skill that is required throughout students' life in many contexts. For example, you can write an email to friends or write essays, letters and articles (Browker, 2007). Writing offers a means to link with relatives, friends and colleagues especially when we are unable to be with them to establish personal relationships. People use writing to create imagined worlds, tell stories, share information, and explore who they are. In reality, it can be psychologically and physiologically beneficial to write about one's experiences (Smyth, 1998).

In teaching English as a foreign language, writing is one of the most critical skills. It represents students' ability to master writing techniques, so students need to be conscious of writing as a commodity (Calhoun & Hale, 2003). Writing is a complex language skill that requires a lot of student effort and practice, plus formal training (Myles, 2002). EFL student writers frequently struggle with the process of writing and with how to create a successful piece of writing. Writing needs an ability to organize ideas by using unambiguous language and practical word usage in simple and consistent ways (Starkey, 2004).

2.4 Integrating Technology in the teaching of English

Dockstader (1999) defined technology integration as the use of computers effectively and efficiently in the general content areas to allow students to learn how to apply computer skills in meaningful ways. Integration of technology, as described

by Hamilton (2007), is any technology or system used in the classroom to help, teach, or evaluate students learning.

The integration of ICT transforms the framework from a teacher-centered model of teaching and learning to an autonomous model of learning that provides critical thinking and innovation for students. The capacity of students can improve with technology-based learning. Technology will make the materials interesting to students because they will be required to involve in the learning process via the use of technology (Cabero, 2001). Prensky (2001) emphasizes that digital technology has changed the way students think and process knowledge, requiring a media-rich learning environment to hold their attention and help them achieve academically. Teaching plans for secondary education are very popular, including some sessions where students use computer-based resources to intervene in the teaching/learning process and adapt to the curriculum.

Technology is essential to connect students in reading and writing as computers generate new chances for writing and collaborating (Holum & Gahala, 2001). Abouabdelkader & Bouziane (2016) state, though not empirically, Computer Aided Language Learning (CALL) and information and communication technology (ICT) are likely to facilitate the learning of writing more than one-on-one and community didactic strategies because computers meet the unique needs of a large number of learners at the same time. Grejda & Hannafin (1992) emphasize that a computer-based writing environment provides learners with a chance to communicate and interact with each other and with their teacher at the same time. Several studies have proved that using computers in the writing class enhances this skill and decreases the mistakes of learners. AL-Wasy (2020) investigates the effect of computer on writing skills. He examines the overall effects of implementing technology in writing and concludes that it synthesizes the relationship between technology and a number of moderators such as stages of writing, language context, learners' target language proficiency and learners' educational level. A number of empirical studies, involving a total of 1.281 second and foreign language learners indicate that technology has a large effect on second foreign language writing.

Razak et al. (2019) examines the attitude, motivation and performances of ESL learners in learning writing using Google Docs. The results of the study show that the students have positive attitudes toward the use of Google Docs in learning and are motivated to learn. Google Doc manage to encourage them to write better. Regan et al. (2019) attempt to understand teacher attitudes and perceptions regarding writing instruction and use of technology. They conclude that although most teachers consider themselves technology users, still they have many barriers to using technology such as time consumption and limited access. However, teachers indicate that technology is positive for students in providing 21st century learning chances. Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum (2016) endeavor to find if Indonesian EFL teachers are familiar with the Internet-based techniques for the teaching of writing. The results of the study show that almost half of the teachers admitted that they have used internet facilities for the teaching of writing.

Ghahri et al. (2015) examine the effect of technology namely English correcting websites in the accuracy of the writing performance of 60 EFL intermediate students. The results show statistically significant differences in students' performance suggesting that experimental group outperformed the control group. Jahin (2015) examine the use of email technology as a medium of online social network communication to develop EFL major student teacher's writing ability. The results of the study show that online technology could help to induce a positive change in student

teachers' attitudes towards EFL writing. Aljumah (2012) conduct a study to examine students' attitudes toward the use of blog in learning writing and to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of using blog in language learning. Findings suggest that learner-perceived benefits of using blogs include; increased interest and motivation to use English because of interaction with, and feedback from classmates and teachers.

3. Research Objectives

This research aims to:

- Investigate the perceptions of English teachers toward integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in the Saudi Schools.
- Identify the obstacles of integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in Saudi Schools from teachers' perspectives.

4. Research Significance

The current research significance can be highlighted in the following:

- Achieving 21st objectives by integrating technology into the educational process in order to develop students' digital skills.
- Drawing the attention of decision makers to the importance of using technology in teaching the English language writing skill.
- Enhancing teachers' motivation to integrate technology in their classrooms to teach the EFL writing skill.
- Drawing the attention of decision makers to the obstacles that prevent teachers from adopting technology in teaching the EFL writing skill.
- Adding further knowledge to the educational research theoretical framework, findings, and recommendation.

5. RESEARCH METHOD

The current research adapted the descriptive method, which depends on describing the nature of a demographic segment without covering "why" it happens.

5.1 Research population

The population of this study includes all Female teachers of English language in the Secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia.

The sample consists of (31) female teachers of English language in the Saudi Secondary School.

5.2 Research Limitation

The present study will be limited to the following:

- Subject: Teachers' perceptions toward integrating Technology in teaching the EFL writing skill, and obstacles of integrating Technology in teaching the EFL writing skill.
- 2. Spatial: Secondary Schools Teachers in Saudi Arabia.
- Time: The first semester of the academic year (2020-1442).

5.3 Research Instruments

The tool for collecting data in the present study is a questionnaire with a 3 points Likert scale. The questionnaire was designed by revising the related literature and previous studies related to integration of technology in teaching the EFL writing skill. The questionnaire was submitted to a panel of experts specialized in the field of curriculum and instructions of teaching English to determine its validity. Considering the experts' opinions and comments, the researcher modified and added items to make the questionnaire relevant and appropriate for the English language teachers. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured by using the Alpha Cronbach Coefficient. The final version of the questionnaire had two major parts: Teachers' Perceptions toward integrating technology in the teaching of English language writing skill, and obstacles of integrating

technology in the teaching of English language writing skill. Under each part, there are a number of items that are related to that part. The questions in the questionnaire were quantified by a Likert-Scale of 1 to 3 (1= Agree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral). The construct validity of the questionnaire was measured by Pearson Correlation Coefficient to identify the correlation of the sub-items of the questionnaire to the main part.

Reliability and Validity of the questionnaire: Reliability

Table (1) Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient

Part	Cronbach Alpha
Perceptions of Integrating Technology	0.74
Obstacles of using technology	0.85
Total Score	0.77

From table (1) Cronbach Alpha was between (0.74-0.85) and reliability coefficient for total score was (0.77) and its an accepted level of reliability.

Validity
Table (2) Items correlation with total score

Item	Item	Item	Item	Item	Item
	correlation	correlatio		correlation	correlation
	with their	n with		with their	with total
	part score	total		part score	score
		score			
1	0.544**	0.454**	11	0.665**	0.623**
2	0.533**	0.511**	12	0.821**	0.799**
3	0.433**	0.421**	13	0.687**	0.659**
4	0.553**	0.465**	14	0.788**	0.765**
5	0.512**	0.478**	15	0.623**	0.604**
6	0.533**	0.511**	16	0.712**	0.691**
7	0.514**	0.489**	17	0.689**	0.663**
8	0.553**	0.498**	18	0.587**	0.554**
9	0.443**	0.413**	19	0.711**	0.691**
10	0.446**	0.432**	20	0.675**	0.643**

Table (2) shows that items correlation with their main part were between (0.433 to 0.821) and with total score of (0.413 – 0,799) which are significant at $\alpha \le 0.01$

Table (3) Pearson correlation between parts and total score

	Obstacles of using technology	Total Score
Perceptions of Integrating Technology	0.85	0.87
Obstacles of using technology		0.90

Table (3) shows the Pearson correlation between part one and part two which was (0.85), and with total score of (0.87 – 0.90) which are significant at $\alpha \le 0.01$.

6. Findings and Discussion

1. What are the teachers' perceptions toward integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in the Saudi Public Schools? To answer question one the Means and SD were calculated to judge on items. The researcher divided the results into two main parts: Agree and Disagree according to the following: 1:00 to $\le 2:00$ Disagree and < 2:00 to 3:00 Agree. Table (4) shows these results

Table (4) Means & and SD for Part One

#	Item	Mea	Std.	Ran	Level
		n	Deviation	\boldsymbol{k}	
1	Acquiring writing competencies and techniques	2.97	0.18	1	Agree

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2	Encouraging students to think deeply and persuasively	2.90	0.30	5	Agree
3	Saving time of checking spelling and structure	2.90	0.30	4	Agree
4	Costing effective investment of time and effort	2.68	0.70	9	Agree
5	Writing becomes faster and more accurate	2.65	0.75	10	Agree
6	Getting words equivalents easily	2.96	0.18	2	Agree
7	Typing is preferred over manual writing	2.74	0.58	8	Agree
8	Developing the process of writing and expressing thoughts	2.81	0.54	7	Agree
9	Building teacher's knowledge and skills to use alternative types of pedagogy	2.94	0.36	3	Agree
10	Providing equity of resources and information	2.87	0.43	6	Agree
Μe	ean score (Part 1)	2.84	0.43	Agre	е

Table (4) shows Means and SD for all items, the means were between (2.65 to 2.97) with SD of (0.18 to 0.75) and all of them are within the agree level. The highest mean was for item 1 **Acquiring writing competencies and techniques**, and lowest mean was for item 5 **Writing becomes faster and more accurate.** In addition, the total mean for Part 1 was (2.84) with SD (0.43) which is within the agree level.

The research conclude that teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill were positive. All the teachers agreed on all the items related to integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill. They believed that technology had advantages in teaching the EFL writing skills. These findings agree with the findings of some previous studies like (Regan etal, 2019), (Woodrow, 1991), (Kim, 2002), (Ihmeideh, 2010; Kim, 2008), (Becker, 1991; Campoy, 1992; Ertmer, Addison, Lane, Ross & Woods, 1999; Pedersen & Liu, 2003), which indicated that teachers' perceptions play an important role in integrating technology in the classroom and that teachers have positive attitudes toward integrating technology in teaching. Also, these findings agreed with (Wasy, 2020) study, which indicated that there is a positive effect of using technology in teaching the English writing skills.

2. What are the obstacles of integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skill in the Saudi Public Schools from the teachers' perspectives? To answer question two the Means and SD were calculated and the criteria was used to judge on items. The researcher divided the results into two main parts: Agree and Disagree according to the following: 1:00 to \leq 2:00 Disagree and < 2:00 to 3:00 Agree. Table (5) shows these results.

Table (5) Means & and Standard Deviation for Part Two

#	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Level
1	Restricted availability of the resources	2.26	0.93	8	Agree
2	Lack of time required for technology infusion	2.42	0.89	5	Agree
3	Lack of students' technological skills	2.35	0.91	6	Agree
4	Lack of lab equipment and facilities	2.55	0.85	2	Agree
5	Lack of knowledge and skills in technology integration	2.52	0.77	4	Agree

6	Lack of suitable curricula for		0.76	1	Agree
	the integration of technology				
7	Lack of students' desire for	1.90	0.87	10	Disag
	technology integration				ree
8	Lack of teacher training	2.55	0.81	3	Agree
	opportunities				
9	Negative attitude of the	2.00	0.93	9	Disag
	teacher				ree
10	High in expenditures and	2.35	0.84	7	Agree
	cost				
M	ean score (Part 2)	2.35	0.86	Agree	

Table (5) shows Means and SD for all items related to obstacles of using technology in teaching the writing skill, the means were between (1.90 to 2.58) with SD of (0.76 to 0.93) and all of them are within the agree level except items (7,9) were within the disagree level. The highest mean was for item 6 Lack of suitable curricula for the integration of technology while the lowest mean was for item 7 Lack of students' desire for technology integration. In addition, the total mean for Part 2 was (2.35) with SD of (0.86) which is within the agree level. Teachers revealed that they had positive attitudes toward integrating technology in teaching the English language writing skill. In addition, students had a positive attitude toward using technology and researchers (Razak et al, 2019; Aljumah, 2012) emphasize that result.

However, many obstacles hinder the integration of technology in teaching the EFL writing skill. Obstacles include Restricted availability of the resources, lack of time required for technology infusion, lack of students' technological skills, lack of lab equipment and facilities, lack of knowledge and skills in technology integration, lack of suitable curricula for the integration of technology, lack of teacher training opportunities and high in expenditures and cost. These results agreed with (Regan et al, 2019) study, which investigated the obstacles of integrating technology in teaching the writing skill.

The highest obstacle is Lack of suitable curricula for the integration of technology because topics of the writing skill are not suitable for the integration of technology as perceived by teachers. Teachers need to make the technology suitable for the writing lessons, but teachers state that they do not know how to fit technology into the writing lessons. They lack knowledge and skills for integrating technology. Educationalists need to solve this problem by re-developing the English content in a way that is convenient to the digital classroom, sources of knowledge, and the actual requirements of students. In addition, teachers need to participate in training courses on integrating technology in teaching the EFL writing skills and in using technology in the English language classes. Lack of the time required for technology infusion, is another obstacle that requires providing specific time in the schedule of teaching the writing skills using technology. Lack of students' technological skills requires developing students' technological skills and providing training courses for students. Restricted availability of the resources, lack of lab equipment and facilities, high in expenses and cost requires providing resources and suitable well-equipped classes.

CONCLUSION

The integration of technology in the English language teaching classes in reaching a consensus among the English language teacher. The writing skill requires the use of technology for many reasons. Some of the reasons according to teachers' perceptions are encouraging students to think deeply and persuasively, saving time of checking spelling and structure, writing faster and getting words equivalents easily, and providing equity of resources and information for students. The results suggest that teachers of the English language in the Saudi public schools have a positive attitude towards using technology in the teaching of the writing skill in the English language classes. However, many difficulties and

obstacles debilitate the use of technology in the teaching of the writing skill in the English language classes. The urgent need for using technology in teaching the English language and the advantages of infusing such a technology stimulate supervisors and English language teachers to overcome difficulties and provide more opportunities for the use of technology in English language teaching and the writing skill in specific.

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