

ICT-Based Approach

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Abstract:

The following paper aims to shed light on the suitable methodology that can fit adequately ICT tasks within ELT classrooms. The paper tackles also all the major post-era approaches and the ways they could be converted into measurable pedagogical objectives.

The paper focuses on the ways how ICT can shape a place within special laboratories and work-shops. "ICT based-approach" tackles also the main problems that face technology insertion in the Algerian curriculum and the main possible solutions in order to take full benefits from its application in education.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology, Methods, approaches, pedagogical objectives, ELT classrooms

1. Introduction

Nowadays, ICT has invaded all the domains and particularly the educational field. Since the 2000's, ICT has been introduced in the Algerian educational curriculum, but after more than one decade, it hasn't shaped a place in ELT classrooms or at least within special laboratories. The main problems reside on the lack of ICT's skilful teachers, and the misuse of the adequate methodology that can go hand in hand with the syllabus objectives and the students' aspirations.

With the available technology and the opportunities it can offer as high performances in what concerns the processing speed, the storage capacity as well as sound, image and video capabilities, teachers and students can only grasp the educative opportunities offered by computers, I pads, smart-phones

2. What is ICT?

ICT is an acronym of Information and Communication Technology that refers to all information and communication tools used in

education or other domains such business, sports...and can send, receive, process, input, output and store data in an electronic form. Computers and cell-phones remain the main ICT tools mainly when equipped with internet connections which make possible wireless links via video-conferences, e-mails, chat rooms...We can find various kinds of technology that could be used in the in the educational domain:

- Audio recorded files mp3/mp4
- YouTube and video files
- Computers, lap-tops, I pads, tablets, smart-phones
- Internet and Websites(social Networking Websites such as Face book, Twitter, Instant Messaging, chatting, texting)

3. Approaches and Methods

Before dealing with ICT and the necessary methods that could be suitable for its use in the learning process, it will be of great importance to make a short distinction between an approach, and a method.

3.1. Approach

It refers to the theories about the nature of language and language teaching. Anthony defines an approach as follows:

‘It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught. It states a point of view, a philosophy, an article of faith – something which one believes but cannot necessarily prove.’ Anthony¹

3.2. Method

It determines the “what” and “how” of language instructions, the oxford dictionary sees method as being a “way of doing something” but in the educational domain method is seen as the way material is presented to learners. Mackey¹ defines: *‘method as a set of teaching procedures’*. As Paulston et al¹ say the choice of a particular method depends on:

‘The lesson plan, the curriculum, the scheduling of class and the selection of textbooks, in fact most decisions made about language teaching outside the classroom, form part of the method and should of

course be harmony with the basic tenets of the approach'. Paulston et al (1976)

2.3. Top-down Vs Bottom-up Approach

According to almost all the definition, we can say that the top-down processing involves the making and testing of predictions about the text based on prior experience or background knowledge, while bottom-up processing relates to the decoding of individual linguistic units, and the building of textual meaning from the smallest unit to the largest one.

In what concerns the top-down approach or the holistic approach, B.A.Neddar¹ comments: *"This is related to the interpretation activity whereby the reader/hearer interprets a written or spoken discourse by primary reference to the schematic knowledge."*

The bottom-up approach or the atomistic approach is the process to start from the lowest level units of language to an interpretation of a higher one, that is from letters or sounds, to sentences/utterances and finally meaning and thinking. Bastone¹ asserts:

'The more we have to attend to the particular grammatical forms of the text, the more we deploy a more careful engagement with language known as bottom-up processing'.

5. ICT and Methodology

Nowadays technology has become an important resource in the pedagogical materials. It allows students to observe differences, analyse facts and make comparisons between the discovered results. Many approaches could be applied to ICT activities but the common thing about these approaches is that the technological tools are the basic elements of all the investigations.

The use of ICT in education could be compatible with all methodologies and mainly those that play a vital role in noticing or in awareness/consciousness-raising. ICT is well suited for methods that can improve and promote learners' motivation and enhance their autonomy. The question is not about the ways these tools are undertaken but about the ways data to be retrieved will be selected and how the results will be analysed.

The main aim of the ICT-based methods is to encourage all students to use ICT tools as part of their language learning; it is why researchers claim for more equipped classrooms and laboratories. The paramount objective is to urge the students to be well trained and should master the use of technology in general.

5.1. ICT and the Task-Based Learning

The most suitable methodology to practicing ICT classrooms is perhaps the task based learning which is an approach proposed by J. Willis (1996:53)¹ where she defines a task as: *‘a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome’*. Most of teachers adopting the TBL opt for the tri-dimensional form of this method. It consists mainly on dividing the lesson into three distinctive parts

-Pre-task: Task identification, explaining the pedagogical objectives, defining the main concepts as well as suggesting and recommending the adequate technology.

- Task: It's the main phase where students collect, select, and analyse data obtained by technology.

- Post-task: It's the final phase where students can present and display their work. They will also compare it to the other tasks and evaluate it. They should comment, discuss and critic the results.

5.2. ICT and Data Driven Learning Approach (DDL)

A DDL approach¹ suggests that the learning process should consist largely of consciousness raising activities rather than the teaching of rules. Consciousness-raising is defined by Rutherford and Smith¹ (1988:107) as *‘the deliberate attempt to draw the learner's attention specifically to the formal properties of the target language’*. Data driven learning is also called the “discovery learning”, it was developed by Tim Johns, for use with international students at the University of Birmingham. Johns (1997:101) says¹:

‘The theory behind DDL is that students act as language detectives, discovering facts about the language they are learning for themselves, from authentic examples. DDL is hypothesized to improve general skills of using context to deduce meaning; it involves setting up situations in which students can answer questions about language...’

The DDL method¹ consists of the following steps:

- The learners don't know what they will discover at the end of the investigation.
- The method consists to collect, select, and analyse data and results
- The learner has to synthesise evaluate and demonstrate the results and make conclusions.

So we can distinguish that learners are completely involved (by using technology). They are so motivated because what is possible by technology is that many tasks could be achieved in few minutes by extracting and downloading huge numbers of files or databases. The disadvantage is that teachers have very limited control over what happens in their classrooms or laboratories. The DDL permits to learners to make hypotheses and draw conclusions, in the same context Johns (1991:2) writes¹:

'Language-learner is also, essentially, a research worker whose learning needs to be driven by access to linguistic data -- hence the term 'data-driven learning' (DDL) to describe the approach'.

Data-driven learning brings huge numbers of data and examples to the classroom that can be studied and exploited in various ways according to the type of technology used. Students learn what they will discover. In the Data Driven Approach, learners are not considered as recipient of knowledge (passive), but they participate actively in the elaboration of their learning it is why the DDL approach is also called "the discovery learning".

5.3. ICT and the Lexical Approach

By using the lexical approach, teachers involve learners to explore, and determine the language using computers, smart-phones, electronic dictionaries.... Teachers engage students in activities such as searching, retrieving information, analysing and making conclusions. The Lexical Approach is mainly based on vocabulary acquisition by using, dictionaries, encyclopaedia, collocations and concordances obtained by very powerful technological tools. Carter & McCarthy ¹(1988:97) argue that: *'Lexical competence recently has been identified to be the most significant predictor to general*

language ability'. In this approach, students are more autonomous and highly motivated. The teacher's role will be limited to just a guide who helps the students to decide and make the right decision. Coady & Huckin¹(1997:1) say:

'The lexical approach is also identified by most learners to be one of the biggest challenges of language learning'.

6. Teacher and Learners' Roles

ICT has deeply affected the teachers and learners' roles. It offers more importance to the learner-centred methodologies rather than teacher-centred methodologies. In almost modern methods, teachers are considered as guides, facilitators, collaborators, co-researchers equally with the students, by giving them more autonomy, more flexibility, more independence and more chance to make and take their own decisions. These Decisions should be taken collaboratively between teachers and learners. ICT requires that both learners and teachers should be skilful in ICT tools. According to T. Johns¹: *"students define their own tasks as they start noticing features of the data for themselves—at times features that had not previously been noticed by the teacher"*.

7. Conclusion

Nowadays ICT is a key element in education, it has strongly forged its place within the Algerian educational system. But the ICT insertion has made a didactic polemic, in what concerns its classroom application and the way it could be introduced to students in different modules. ICT doesn't rely on a specific methodology but it is preferable to use one of the above post-era methods rather the traditional ones. The success of ICT will consist of the way data will be retrieved, selected, analysed, synthesised and evaluated. The strong sides of the ICT approach are the students' autonomy and motivation as well as the teachers' new roles as advisors, guides, partners, collaborators and co-researchers.

ICT could give better results if it adapted to the task-based learning, the data-driven approach, the lexical approach or other similar approaches that give students more autonomy for better learning and put them in the position of researchers, investigators and decision-makers.

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