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Adaptation and Integration of Advanced Educational Resources (AER) By English Language Teachers in Saudi Arabia

Saleem Ullah Muhammad Aslam

English Language Center, College of Social Sciences, Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah, Saudi Arabia, P.O. Box-56454 Zip code 21955

Abstract: **The study was conducted by a sample of randomly chosen 500 respondents during 2012–2013 for assessing the integration of AER in English language classes. The respondents were selected from several Saudi universities because in Saudi Arabia, government are supporting establishment of cutting age infrastructure for AER like language labs, digital practice materials on CD ROMs, and Saudi Digital Library (SDL) and computers desktops and laptops are available both for teachers and students. However, the outcome is not much noticeable. For this reason the current study was conducted to understand the problems associated with AER and to obtain idea for their solution. Findings of the study indicated that most of the teachers were not fully aware or had difficulty in using AER. The findings provide useful recommendations for educationists to focus on training of teachers and to enhance teachers' capability of using AER. The emphasis should not just be on purchase and availability of AER, but it should be to update the teaching staff with AER by frequent training sessions so that to facilitate the integration of AER in actual teaching.**

Keywords: **advanced educational resources, use, problems, integration.**

1. INTRODUCTION

With advancement in science and technology, there is a continuous improvement in educational technology. No doubt, it is inevitable to use educational technology in teaching. Resources like wikis, blogs, chatting, and conversation exchange, collaborative learning, computer assisted writing assessment (CAWA), learning management system (LMS), etc play an important role in aiding the learners in their studies. Virtual classroom will take the place of traditional classroom. All these facilities are available either free or supported by Saudi government/universities, but in most cases only audio materials or Microsoft word/ PowerPoint are used.

To increase its proper utilization, it needs application on the class level. If technology is available without proper utilization, it is an inadequate educational development. According to Danial K. Schneider (2013) technology should facilitate learning process and increase performance of the educational system(s). With the development of new technology there is equal need of its integration into the classroom instruction. In a 1993 forum sponsored by the Federation of American Research Networks (FARNET) and Consortium for School Networking (CoSN), participants concluded that when properly implemented and supported, technology can empower and excite students and teachers (Cradler & Bridgforth, 2005). Resources are invested in various audiovisual materials but occasionally they are integrated into real classroom instruction. According to Nido (2011) technology is a powerful learning tool that when properly integrated into a challenging curriculum, improves learning and helps us achieve our educational goals. According to Mohammad (1992) traditional education cannot be replaced but it can and should be streamlined with the use of up-to-date educational technology. Al Rashdi (2008) considered technological development essential for facilitation of education. Educational materials like CD ROMs, online practice materials, educational games are mostly prepared one-size-fits-all. However, when some learners do not comprehend the material, they start considering it useless or get

demotivated. Every individual learns according to his own style. Chen (2009) is of the view that there are no fixed learning paths. However, many researchers, for example, Mohammad (1992), Kook (1997) and Nido (2011) support a standard procedure and advance technologies for learning.

To assess teachers' awareness of AER incorporation in the teaching and learning process a survey was conducted in 2013. The aim of the study was to determine the hindrances in the adaption and integration of advanced educational technology in the teaching learning process.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The data was collected through structured and validated questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both open and closed ended questions. It was administered directly to the sampled respondents. The sample of five hundred respondents was selected randomly. Four hundred and fifty respondents whose information was found useful were eventually used for the study.

3. METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed to determine frequency distribution and percentages using Microsoft-Excel (Microsoft Corp., Redmond, WA, USA).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents variously rated their awareness about advanced educational resources (AER) as shown in Table-1. My results are supported by Chambers et al. (2008) that awareness about teaching and communication methods varies among the teachers and students. This is why Juhary (2010) emphasizes on training of the leaders and trainers.

The study brought variety of information regarding advantages of AER (Table -2). Some sort of educational technology is known among the respondents. Most of them have used Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and audio files in their teaching. The data shown in table-2 reveals that 95.5 percent respondents considered the proper use of AER essential in the teaching learning process. Furthermore, 90 percent of the participants considered the use of AER important in making the students independent learners. According to Little (1996) online language program is a "must" to promote learners' autonomy. Educational technology can enhance the teaching learning process. Technology provides opportunity for self-study. It can develop students' creativity. All of the participants agreed that educational technology should be used in the teaching learning process. Technology can supplement classroom teaching. It can optimize learning. Some respondents in the open ended question wrote that computer based activities are interesting for both teachers and students. Hu and Johnston (2012), and Leung and Unal (2013) findings are similar to my findings.

The study further indicated that the adaption of educational technology was often hindered by the shortage of time. Akpinar *et al*. (2012) emphasized tailore-made material if there is a shortage of time for taking initiatives. Goal-oriented customization of material requires instructional skills that the average instructor does not have (Akpinar *et al*., 2012)). Table-3 shows that 70 percent respondents considered shortage of time a big hindrance in the integration of AER in their lessons. The teachers often resort to the use of available material because it saves their time. It has negative implication on the output. It is, therefore, essential that the curriculum development entity should put in place a mechanism that guarantees regular supply of tailor made educational materials to teachers and students. While only 30% of the respondents rated themselves efficient in the use of educational technology, the rest were unable to integrate it appropriately in their lessons. In addition 40 percent respondents considered lack of facilities like labs, Internet and availability of audio-visual aids a hindrance in the use of AER in their teaching (Table-3). Iqbal and Ahmad (2010) have given reasons like institutional and technical infrastructure; computer literacy and access to Internet that cause hindrance to the use of advanced technology in Pakistan, but according to respondents in Saudi Arabia technical infrastructure is not a big hindrance in the use of advanced educational technology.

Moreover 97 percent of the participants strongly emphasized the need of training (Table-4). The participants agreed that there is a need of continues teachers' training. The training should be classroom oriented as supported by Juhary (2010). Teachers do not need to be convinced, they need training to use educational technology (Loredana and Eric Wreth). Most of the respondents wrote that without proper training, purchase of educational technology is fruitless.

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It was discovered that most of the teachers had exam oriented approach towards material. Majority of them responded that online practice material should help their students in the exam. This is a pointer to the fact that there is not only a need of technology development, but its proper integration in the educational system, especially in the assessment system. Deville (2013) also supports the idea of moving beyond paper- and- pencil based testing to technology inspired techniques of testing and assessment. Education technology development and dissemination agencies should not only give awareness about technology to students and teachers but should train students and teachers how to maximize the output by using the right type of material.

Table-1: Awareness advanced educational resources (AER)

AER	Total Respondents	Aware %	Not Aware Respondents	Not Aware %
1. Wikis	450	100.0	0	0.0
2. Webinars	400	88.9	50	11.1
3. Quizlet	154	34.2	296	65.8
4. Voicethread	62	13.8	388	86.2
5. Audacity	51	11.3	399	88.7
6. Edublogs	242	53.8	208	46.2
7. Slideshare	120	26.7	330	73.3
8. Wordle	142	31.6	308	68.4
9. Crossword puzzles	222	49.3	228	50.7
10. Google docs/drive	140	31.1	310	68.9
11. MS word	450	100.0	0	0.0
12. Powerpoint Presentation	450	100.0	0	0.0
13. Google translate	318	70.7	132	29.3
14. Wikipedia	336	74.7	114	25.3
15. Video conferencing , chat/Skype, etc	227	50.4	223	49.6
16. email/face book, etc	402	89.3	48	10.7

Table-2: Advantages of AER

	Advantages of AER	**Total respondents**	**Agree %**	**Do not agree %**	**Undecided %**
1	AER supplements teaching learning process.	450	95.5	3.5	1
2	AER helps students to become independent learners.	450	90	7	3
3	Teaching pedagogy will shift from teacher centered to learner centered.	450	75	20	5
4	The use of AER makes lessons interesting.	450	65	30	5

Table-3: Hindrances in the use of AER

	Hindrances	**Total respondents**	**Agree %**	**Do not agree %**	**Undecided %**
1	Shortage of time	450	70	20	10
2	Lack of training	450	60	25	15
3	Lack of facilities e.g. functional labs, Internet facilities	450	40	55	5

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Participants Demands (Table – 4)

	Aspirations of participants	Total respondents	Agree %	Do not agree %	Undecided %
1	Refreshing courses (in-service training)	450	97	0	3
2	Blended learning – on campus and off campus learning facilities	450	80	10	10

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the current study it can be concluded that only provision of AER is not sufficient for learning. For the fruitful use of AER, it is necessary to provide training facilities to integrate AER in the classroom teaching. Learners should be given opportunities to polish their skills using AER. To get real benefits of AER the following recommendations have been made.

1. Digital training facilities should be established to integrate AER in the classroom teaching. It is necessary that eLearning department should be involved to play a vital role in preparing teachers and students for the proper use of AER.
2. All the language labs need to be functional. In digital learning, language labs play a key role. Labs should be checked periodically. Standby technical support should be provided. It will give confidence to the language practitioner.
3. Pilot project need to be introduced for blended learning (partly on campus and partly online). It will prepare both the students and teachers for the future challenges of educational technology. It will give students a chance to continue their studies uninterrupted irrespective of their geographical location.
4. Last but not the least; students should be encouraged to use digital material. For example web quest, digital portfolios, online assessment, etc. Students should be given extra marks for such activities.

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