



A study of high school English teachers' behavior, concerns and beliefs in integrating information technology into English instruction

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Abstract

This study investigates the current trends and patterns of teachers' concerns and teaching behavior with respect to technology integration. The following concerns of English teachers are addressed: teaching practice, perceive barriers of technology integration in the English instruction and the technology deployed in the classroom. Participants in this study were 332 junior and senior high school English teachers from Taipei and Kaohsiung Cities. The study found that despite pressure on schools to increase the application of technology, the adoption of teaching and learning practices using new technologies has been limited in terms of teachers' SoCQ (The Stages of Concerns Questionnaire), their teaching behavior as well as their use of technology. Teachers' concerns are generally oriented toward Personal and informational issues. English teachers' technology-mediated English teaching behaviors are modest, and most teachers used technology to prepare their teaching activities instead of structuring higher levels of usage. As identified in the literature, higher levels of computer training, computer literacy, well-supported school environment, creative teaching practices and positive beliefs about technology integration among teachers result in higher task intensity, impact concerns and more technology-mediated teaching behaviors in the classroom. In terms of the difficulties affecting teachers' technology integration into English instruction, this study identified significant relationships between first and second-order barriers. Implications for teachers' technology integration are proposed.

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1. Introduction

A growing body of research and discourse on the use of Internet technology as a learning tool for educational purposes can be found in literature relating to language, literacy and the humanities. The arrival of the Internet offers a turning point in English teaching methods (Ganderton, 1998; Hellebrandt, 1999; Kelm, 1992; Lee, 1997; Sanaoui & Lapkin, 1992; Van Handle & Corl, 1998; Warschauer, 1996). The tools and resources available on the Internet offer prime opportunities to cultivate the five Cs¹ through multimodal channels (listening, speaking, writing, reading, and communicating). Through the Internet, English learners can access useful language resources and communicate directly with native English speakers. In the first case, learners can apply information, while also alleviate the decontextualized predicament of English learning. Students can learn to listen, speak, read and write English integratively under real and natural situations. They can also broaden their international viewpoint, learn diverse forms of knowledge, and appreciate and accept different cultures.

Recognizing the power of Internet-based technologies, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan has actively encouraged teachers to integrate technology into the curriculum and pursue technology-enhanced learning activities to cultivate information literacy and improve global competitiveness. The Government has introduced a series of funding initiatives to encourage the use of information technology (IT) in schools. Early initiatives promoted the provision of equipment to support courses that would give students the skills for participating in an increasingly technological workplace. Initial funding is provided to establish computer laboratories for teaching computer literacy, followed by a series of workshops for training teachers' informational literacy, and support and reward for teachers designing Web-based course resources on various subjects. With the swift expansion of internet technology, the improvement of computer literacy is moved from labs into classrooms, shifting from using technology to thinking with technology. The Ministry of Education mandates computer competency standards and technology integration (TI) into curriculum. The 600 seed schools of integrating IT into teaching are well funded and required to fully develop their technology-enhanced curriculum as the role models for other schools.

With the government initiatives, analysts hope that teachers will rise to the pressing challenges of the rapid expansion of the Internet and move technology to a more central role in their classes. The implementation of technology requires changes, is cumbersome and cannot be forced from the top. However, the individual is the primary focus of change (Fullan, 1993; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Hall & Hord, 1987; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Little, 1993). Change is not a finite event. It is a process. In response to school-needs and national-requirements, the study of the change of teachers related to integrating technology in their teaching and their growth over time as they learn to use an innovation is significant for policy and educational intervention.

¹ The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) advocated the “five Cs” of language learning: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Communication is at the heart of second language study. Language and culture are inextricable and interdependent; understanding the culture of the target language enhances understanding of the language. Connections refer to bridges to other disciplines and the acquisition of information, expanding learners' idea of “content-area” reading and functional writing across disciplines. Comparisons relate to the development of insights about the nature of language and culture through comparisons between the language being studied, and their own. Finally, communities refer to learners' participation in multilingual communities at home and around the world.

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