

Measuring The Usage of Information And Communication Technology (ICT) To Teach English vocabulary Development In Western Province Primary Schools of Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Sri Lanka has a proud heritage of free education from primary to tertiary levels and a youth literacy level of 98%, a feat any middle-income country can be proud of. The Sri Lankan government has taken steps to integrate ICT education to school education curriculum since the year 2006. With a mission to drive ICT literacy in Sri Lanka forward, 4500 schools have been provided with ICT infrastructure for student-centered ICT learning. The teachers at local schools have been given a comprehensive training on all aspects of ICT training including providing basic ICT training and providing computer-aided learning in the classroom. In addition to the initial training provided by the Ministry of Education, government school based ICT teachers are also being provided continuous assistance in developing a pedagogical approach to ICT training through Intel Teach Program.

This study investigated how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilitates teaching of English vocabulary, the ways teachers use ICT in teaching English vocabulary and problems that hinder teachers from using ICT in teaching English vocabulary development. The design of the study was survey; the area of the study was Western Province of Sri Lanka. With 1250 primary teachers selected as the sample for the study. Three research questions guided the study with a 24-item questionnaire used to collect data for the study.

Mean scores were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that teachers supported the use of ICT to teach English vocabulary development; teachers do not use ICT in teaching English vocabulary and they identified some problems which hinder their use of ICT in classroom instruction. These problems include poor finances to procure computer, slow and frustrating network connectivity, epileptic power supply, no access to computer facility and lack of computer skills by the teachers and pupils.

Keywords: Information and communication technology, Vocabulary development, English teachers

I. Introduction

English vocabulary development is the act of acquiring words to equip oneself for effective communication, either orally or in writing (Wise, 1992). It is an aspect of language learning which prepares an individual especially a growing learner for language use. During the primary years, children acquire word knowledge in a fundamentally aural way from the language that surrounds them. Through listening to and talking about life experiences and stories, children develop a rich English vocabulary. As they have opportunities to talk about and to categorize their everyday experiences, children begin to make sense of their world and to use language to negotiate and describe it. According to Johnston (2000) English vocabulary instruction focuses on learners expanding the breadth and depth of English vocabulary knowledge.

Sri Lanka has a proud heritage of free education from primary to tertiary levels and a youth literacy level of 98%, a feat any middle-income country can be proud of. The Sri Lankan government has taken steps to integrate ICT education to school education curriculum since the year 2006. With a mission to drive ICT literacy in Sri Lanka forward, 4500 schools have been provided with ICT infrastructure for student-centered ICT learning. The teachers at local schools have been given a comprehensive training on all aspects of ICT training including providing basic ICT training and providing computer-aided learning in the classroom. In addition to the initial training provided by the Ministry of Education, government school based ICT teachers are also being provided continuous assistance in developing a pedagogical approach to ICT training through Intel Teach Program. Due to the uneven distribution of students within the Sri Lankan education system, the Sri Lankan government has been able to empower almost 90% of the local student population by providing ICT facilities to only 50% of the schools scattered in the nine provinces ("ICT Education in Sri Lanka", 2017)

It is, therefore, very crucial to expose children to use software application in English vocabulary development in order to equip them for literacy development. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to find out

how ICT can facilitate English vocabulary development instruction, the ways in which teachers use ICT in teaching English vocabulary development and problems that hinder the teaching with ICT.

II. Objectives

This research study was aimed to identify the use of ICT in

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How can ICT be used in teaching English vocabulary development in the Western Province primary schools?
2. In what ways do teachers use ICT in teaching English vocabulary development in the Western Province primary schools?
3. What problems hinder teachers from using ICT in teaching English vocabulary development in the Western Province primary schools?

III. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design which took place in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. A total of 25 Western Province primary school teachers were studied. Random sampling technique was used to select 1250 teachers out of the total population while three research questions guided the study. A 24-item research instrument (questionnaire) was developed, validated and used for data collection. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale. The instrument had four parts. Part A sought demographic data, part B sought how ICT could be used in teaching English vocabulary development in primary school, part C sought the ways in which teachers use ICT in teaching English vocabulary while D sought to find out the problems which hinder teachers from using ICT in teaching English vocabulary. Mean scores were used to analyze the research questions.

IV. Results

Results of the research question one showed that teachers accepted that ICT could be used to teach English vocabulary. Use of ICT in English vocabulary development provides good opportunities for learners to develop critical thinking. This is so because ICT provides many instructional packages which facilitate learning. The result of research question two showed that teachers do not use ICT in teaching English vocabulary development. ICT provides learners with additional opportunities to extend their vocabularies by increasing the amount of reading and writing they do through the use of online materials and exchanges. The result of research question three showed that there are problems which hinder the use of ICT in teaching English vocabulary development. These problems range from lack of access to computer, lack of knowledge of operation of computer, poor finances to procure computers, poor power supply, children lacking knowledge of how to operate computer, ICT being time consuming, access to ICT being expensive to connectivity being frustrating. The need to use ICT in teaching English vocabulary development cannot be over-emphasised, considering the fact that, using ICT to design a word study programme that explicitly teaches learners necessary skills and about how words work is a vital aspect of literacy development.

V. Conclusion And Recommendations

English vocabulary development as a vital aspect of literacy development is critical and should be handled with utmost concern by educators. Without adequate vocabularies, the child cannot communicate effectively either in speech, reading or writing. Use of ICT in English vocabulary development is therefore crucial to equip the child adequately for literacy development.

The government should provide primary schools with computers and integrate computer education in the primary education curriculum. This would provide opportunities for pupils to be trained in computer operations. Accessibility to computer would also provide opportunities for pupils to explore the software on word study. Children are adventurous; as such they would be enabled to navigate the Net in search of websites for acquisition of effective strategies for word study.

Primary school teachers should be trained by government on the use of computer. This would equip them to teach using ICT. Knowledge of use of computer would enable teachers to identify websites that offer English vocabulary study packages either in form of games, exercises, animations or hyperlinks.

Proficiency in computer usage should be a requirement for recruitment of teachers in primary schools by government.

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