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Benefits of Interactive Whiteboards for Teachers and Students

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Annotation. This article is deals with the problems of teaching and the importance of interactive whiteboards. This article mainly focuses on using interactive whiteboards, materials of the lesson, the role of teachers and students in classroom.

Key words: interactive whiteboards, classroom, materials, interactive, incorporation, learners.

Main part

English language is a global language. Learning English improves the individual's status and opportunities in education, technology, global trades, and business. Moreover, English plays an important role like a channel of communication. Teaching English has been an important issue in countries where English is not their first language, so learning second language is difficult for L2 learners because they cannot use English in real life situations, because they should learn sentences in textbooks not in a real environment. [1,38]

The following section describes the issue of foreign language starting from its definition, and then adds why English is a dominant language. It discusses the effects of globalization on the choice of language learning. Moreover, it gives highlights about affective factors, which are likely to influence students' language learning, and their success.

The term 'foreign language' is used to refer to the teaching and learning of any non-native language outside of its country or the speech community, whereas second language refers to the teaching or learning of any non-native language within one of the speech communities where that language is traditionally used.

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) refers to teaching the English language to students with different first languages, typically used to imply that the English Language Learner may have already learned more than one language, prior to learning English. TEFL can occur either within the state school system or more privately, at a language school or with a tutor. TEFL can also take place in an English-speaking country for people who have immigrated there (either temporarily for school or work, or permanently). TEFL teachers may be native or non-native speakers of English. Other acronyms are TESL (teaching English as a second language), TESOL (Teaching English to speakers of other languages), and ESL (English as a second language, a term typically used in English-speaking countries, and more often referring to the learning than the teaching).[1] Students who are learning English as a second language are known as ESL (English as a second language) or EFL (English as a foreign language) students.[2] More generally, these students are referred to as ELL (English language learner) students. Some of these terms are not in widespread use outside of the materials of providers of various programs and materials.

The teaching profession has historically used different names for TEFL and TESL; however, the more generic term teaching English to speakers of other languages (**TESOL**) is increasingly used to describe the profession, it covers both TESL and TEFL as an umbrella term.[3] Both native speakers and non-native speakers successfully train to be English language teachers. In order to teach English as a Second Language to English Language Learners, or ELL's, one must pass a written and oral test in English to demonstrate proficiency.

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The TESOL profession made progress during the 1970s and 1980s in achieving desired goals, such as shifting its focus from product-oriented to process-oriented teaching, and from a rigid curriculum to a more flexible one.

The use of these various terms has led to confusion about the training options for both prospective students and for employers. Because there is no global standard for the training of English language teacher, it is important to look beyond the actual acronym/title to the components of the training program. Short term certificate programs that do not have an academic affiliation resulting in credits or degrees (such as CELTA or other non-credit programs) can be a good launching pad for beginning positions internationally, but they will generally not provide sufficient training for a career (unless a person already has substantial experience and a degree in a closely related field). People interested in pursuing a career as an English language teacher should invest in credit-bearing programs that result in a university recognized certificate or degree program (MA/TESOL, MA/Applied Linguistics) particularly if one wants to work in higher education. Because of the confusing certification situation, employers now generally look for a certificate that reflects at least 100 hours of instruction in order to determine if the candidate has sufficient preparation to begin teaching English. Institutions with higher standards will require applicants to possess a master's degree for employment.

When a language is studied as a foreign, in contrast to second language, it has got two characteristics: it is studied in formal language classrooms for academic purpose and for international communication, and not for communication with the nearby society that the students live in; when a language is studied as a second language, it serves as a means of communication in the society where it is learnt.

Moreover, learners study foreign language for the purpose of cultural enrichment, communicative benefits, inherent interest and personal motivation. It is also studied for curricular purpose, and it is not used by the students in their immediate environment for any social communicative purpose. As a result, since the environment is not conducive to present students with varied and extensive language input, students face challenges to learn and use the language effectively. Research has also noted benefits that interactive whiteboards provide for teachers. Using interactive whiteboards based resources may reduce time spent in writing and leave more time for teaching, and materials generated in the classroom can be saved, printed, and reused later.

In addition, teachers have pointed out that they are more inventive, creative, and effective in their explanations when they use interactive whiteboards. Furthermore, since teachers can provide immediate feedback to the learners and incorporate more samples, interactive whiteboards may increase the pace of teaching and give an opportunity to the teachers to be more flexible. Interactive whiteboards have also been argued to make it easier for teachers to keep the class together, keep the students' attention longer, and motivate students. Levy states that when the teachers use materials prepared before class, they save time for other teaching activities.

With interactive whiteboards, teachers can allocate more time for the students, focusing on individual problems, extra challenging tasks, and communicative activities, because they do not spend a lot of time writing on the board. Normally, when the teacher is writing on the board, he/she is facing the board not the class, so the teacher might not keep control over the class. In Wall et al.'s study, which was conducted with 80 students at 12 English primary schools, pupils commented that they felt their teacher was more inventive and active during the interactive whiteboards based class.

The teacher seemed better able to find original ideas or interesting ways to teach the subjects in a fun way. Because of this, the students were no longer bored. Levy also mentions reports of teachers' being considered more effective with their explanations because interactive whiteboards have many visual materials and vivid illustrations. Her participants felt interactive whiteboards made the teaching process more interesting, interactive, and exciting.

Another benefit of interactive whiteboards noted in some studies is that they increase the pace of teaching and give the opportunity to teachers to be more flexible. According to Kennewell, a wide range of internet resources made accessible by the interactive whiteboards allows the teacher to choose materials flexibly in order to cover the diverse needs and consider the different characteristics of the students in a classroom.

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In addition, Moss et al. point out that the pace of teaching can be increased by bringing in and moving between the texts or materials quickly. When learner characteristics are taken into consideration, it was shown that for students who are quick and good at learning new items, the pace of the lesson can be increased and the lesson can be made more challenging with extra materials.[1,76]

Although the benefits of interactive whiteboards in the literature outnumber the drawbacks, studies have also shown that there are some important difficulties and drawbacks which may hinder the expansion of this technology. The lack of teachers' confidence and competence in using interactive whiteboards, extra time needed for the planning and preparation of the materials, the need for special training, and technical issues such as the possibility of breaking down, the need for recalibration, and position of the board are the main problems or difficulties that both students and teachers face while using this technology.

In Levy's, Hall and Higgins's, and Wall et al.'s studies, some pupils reported that the lack of teachers' competence in using interactive whiteboards causes problems during the lessons. For instance, if the teacher is not comfortable with finding necessary files, the students get bored and the real value of this technology is not understood. This kind of competence includes both technical and pedagogical aspects of interactive whiteboards use. In other words, the teacher should know how to benefit from interactive whiteboards both in terms of teaching techniques and flexibility of using the resources for the different needs of students. According to Levy, teachers who have confidence in ICT are more comfortable with the use of interactive whiteboards.

This finding demonstrates that teachers should receive training to integrate ICT and interactive whiteboard technology into classroom settings. In line with this, many studies indicate that there is a need for training in order to take advantage of IWB technology fully. Levy states that teachers who have no or little knowledge of ICT should receive special training in the use of interactive whiteboards individually, in particular, because some teachers may have barriers regarding the use of technology and need more time and practice to be confident in using the technology in class.

Hall and Higgins point out that teachers should be trained to learn not only technical but also pedagogical aspects of IWB technology and this training should be continuous. In addition, Moss et al. and Gray et al. stress the importance of training to help teachers understand the real value of interactive whiteboards for teaching and learning and the role of training for personal development in order to be more effective and creative teachers. Both Gray et al. and Levy reveal that teachers need more time to prepare resources and plan interactive whiteboards-based lessons.

Teachers cannot use their traditionally prepared materials for interactive whiteboards-installed classrooms. They have to plan when to display extra materials, how to design the activities so that more interaction can take place in the class with the help of the interactive whiteboards, and determine what kind of activities to use to enhance the learning process. They also have to plan the amount of time they will allocate for the actual use of the interactive whiteboards during the class time, because some students may find it boring when interactive whiteboards are overused. Since this technology is more complicated compared to traditional blackboards or overhead projectors (OHP), technical problems may occur more 31 often. In Levy (2002), students reported that half of the time IWBs do not work properly and sometimes if they break down, the teacher may not have anything to use for rest of the class time. Some students also complained about the difficulty of using the electronic pen and noted problems related to the manipulation of the images on the board. In Hall and Higgins (2005), some students reported the problem of freezing, which means the teacher has to switch the interactive whiteboards off and on again. In this case, the teacher has to reload everything, which wastes time.

In addition, if the interactive whiteboard does not display the images and texts properly, it needs recalibration and this process has to be repeated each time if the place of the whiteboard is changed. Lastly, the positioning of the interactive whiteboard is also very important. Especially for young students it is easier to touch and write on the board if the interactive whiteboard is mounted at a suitable height.[2,94]

According to Gray et al, use of the interactive whiteboards in conjunction with PowerPoint can lead teachers to a "show and tell" style of teaching, which pushes students to be more passive. In

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their study, one of the teachers stated that the interactive whiteboards changed the teachers' role, making them less involved in the teaching process because they only deliver the material for the students with the help of the interactive whiteboards. This in turn may cause a decline in the authority of the teacher in the classroom.

Another point about the use of interactive whiteboards is that there are different types of interactivity when interactive whiteboards are used in the lessons. The interaction can be between pupils and pupils, teachers and pupils, and interactive whiteboards and pupils. If interactive whiteboards are not used as tools for enhancing the interaction between pupils and interactive whiteboards in a proper way, the teacher's role in the classroom can be questioned by the students. Another study indicates that due to the increase in the pace of the lesson through the quick manipulation of images, the result may be limited interaction between the teacher and the students.

Furthermore, according to Goodison, teachers are cautious that their lessons may become more teacher-centered if too much focus is given to the interactive whiteboard technology. They caution that there must be a balance between the use of interactive whiteboards and traditional teaching activities and techniques, which give more opportunity to the teachers to take responsibility for the teaching process. As it is expensive to invest in computer technology, educators have to reconsider their priorities and budgets.

According to the teachers' comments in these studies, interactive whiteboards are effective tools in enhancing student learning and help their lessons to be more enjoyable, interesting, and motivating. Although these various studies have investigated the attitudes of students or teachers, only Schmid and Gray et al. focused on students' and/or teachers' attitudes in language learning settings. Schmid conducted a small scale qualitative study, in which he collected data from a small group of students who were taking an English for Academic Purposes course in Lancaster University.

The aim of the study was to obtain an understanding of the processes and analyze the use of interactive whiteboards from the perspective of a critical theory of technology. The findings showed that several elements, such as the inherent charcteristics of the technology, pedagogical beliefs, and students' own understanding affect technology use in a certain context. Gray et al. is a case study of twelve English teachers in Britain.

While it provides information about the language teachers' positive opinions about the potential of interactive whiteboard technology, giving some suggestions for the effective use of this technology as well, it fails to provide a broad and comprehensive understanding of language teachers' views about the use of interactive whiteboards in language teaching. In short, there remains a need for a larger-scale study, focusing on language instruction contexts, and including all stakeholders.[3,157]

The use of interactive whiteboards in education dates back to the late 1990s in some developed countries, but in technologically developing countries, they are now becoming more common in educational institutions. However, it takes time to incorporate new technologies in education due to factors such as financial barriers, training of users, misconceptions about technology and computers, and availability of adequate and good materials.

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