

21st CENTURY ENGLISH PRIMARY TEACHERS AND TECHNOLOGY LOS PROFESORES DEL SIGLO XXI Y LA TECNOLOGÍA

Jesús García Laborda
jesus.garcialaborda@uah.es

Facultad de Educación. Universidad de Alcalá.
C/ Trinidad, 3; Virginia Woolf Office, 28801. Alcalá de Henares (España)

Recibido: 01/10/2017
Aceptado: 06/12/2017

Abstract:

Being a teacher is much more than delivering contents in the classroom. It implies setting standard behaviors as well as showing ways to work. In one word, teachers are an example in the classroom. The implementation of their way to teach will be considered as good or bad teaching by their own students for many years. Likewise, the way they use technology in the classroom can trigger motivation and perceptions in their future students. That is why, teachers need to be conscious of what they do in the classroom and adopt technology principles to be applied in a near future. This paper addresses how teachers do that at Universidad de Alcalá (Madrid, Spain). The paper shows the main work done in class and considers the effect in the short and long run.

Keywords: technology, attitudes, teacher education, English teaching.

Resumen:

Ser un maestro es mucho más que entregar contenidos en la clase. Implica establecer comportamientos estándar, así como mostrar formas de trabajar. En una palabra, los maestros son un ejemplo en el aula. La implementación de su forma de enseñar será considerada como buena o mala enseñanza por sus propios estudiantes durante muchos años. Del mismo modo, la forma en que utilizan la tecnología en el aula puede desencadenar motivación y percepciones en sus futuros estudiantes. Es por eso que los maestros deben ser conscientes de lo que hacen en el aula y en el futuro. Este trabajo aborda la forma en que los maestros lo hacen en la Universidad de Alcalá (Madrid, España). El trabajo muestra el trabajo principal realizado en la clase y considera el efecto a corto y largo plazo.

Palabras clave: tecnología, actitudes, formación de profesorado, enseñanza de inglés.

Introduction

Much of what happens in the classroom is due to the teacher's attitudes and values toward content and procedure (Street, 2003) especially in the use of technology (El-Daou, 2016). At present the relation of teachers and technology is in full revision as projects like Assessment & Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21S, <http://education.unimelb.edu.au/arc/projects/completed/2012/atc21s>) have drawn attention to what is or is called to be a good teacher through assessment in the 21st century (maybe a little late!) (Scalise & Wilson, 2011; Wilson, Gochyyev, & Scalise, 2016). Most importantly, the omniscient teacher so admired in the Renaissance and, why not to say, in many phases of the twentieth century, was probably influenced by the authoritarian wills of several totalitarian political regimes (Williams & Gray, 2004; Moree, 2013) that overstress the teacher's authority of his wisdom to a large extent in the teacher reducing the negotiation capacity of the student. In Spain, the traditional series of the 70s *Crónicas de un Pueblo* is a sample of this type of vertical education. In this sense it will be useful for the reader to visualize this example (figure 1) (<https://youtu.be/6qZjk5rMmQ?t=840>).



Fig. 1 Rural (crónicas de un pueblo, 1971-1974)

Therefore, nowadays we move towards a model that, apart from being more participatory, includes much more active abilities of the students. In this new context, therefore, the teacher becomes a facilitator of learning rather than the central figure of teaching (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). In this sense, returning to the ATC21S model (Figure 2) we observe that the memoristic and conceptual knowledge that prevailed at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of 21st again has a fundamental effect on foreign languages (Luquet, 2015), decision taking and resource selection – especially online resources- (Sherman & Kurshan, 2005). In this scheme (Figure 2), the review of ways of thinking (creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, lifelong learning and metacognition), thinking (communication, collaboration, digital literacy, literacy of information sources), and life in the world (citizenship, life and personal career, social responsibility). This leads to new teachers with an ability to convey skills such as:

- Mother tongue communication;
- Communication in foreign languages;
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- Digital competence;
- Learning to learn;
- Social and civic competences;
- Feeling of initiative and entrepreneurial spirit; Y
- Cultural awareness and expression.

All these aspects can be seen in figure 2.

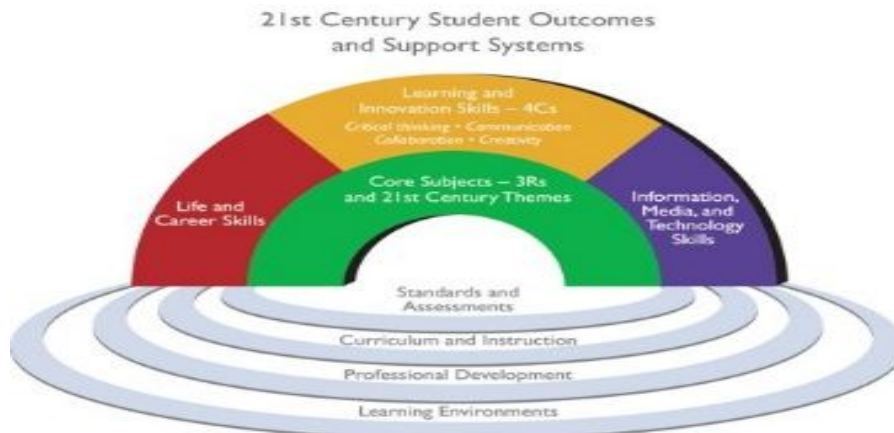


Fig. 2 21st century skills (Proyecto ATC21S, <http://known.hsiaoyun.net/2015/atc21s-week-1-defining-21st-century-skills>)

Of course, technology has a fundamental role in this context but technology is not seen in the same way by all educational agents according to their field of specialization. Future teachers will confront two seemingly contradictory paradigms: the use of technology subordinated to the teacher, and technology as a center of discovery and dialogical interface between teacher and students (Lucas & Wright, 2009, García Esteban & García Laborda, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to observe closely what happens when we contrast a similar profession chosen by future professionals who come from the field of education, on the one hand, and the social sciences, on the other. It is true that in addition to the personal inclinations of foreign language teachers other issues centered on the school context such as school organization, availability of facilities, ICT quality and integration of programs and even standards will have a determining effect on the future use of technology in the classroom (Reiser, 2001, Bitner & Bitner, 2002, Butler & Selbom, 2002, Hanessey, Ruthven, & Brindley, 2005). However, as Bax (2000) affirms, innovation must be well received in order to put it into operation in the classroom.

Objectives and development

This reflective short paper addresses the case of the students of the subject “Didactics of English” (*Didáctica del inglés*) in terms of the use of technology for learning. These students bring different degrees of naturalization and familiarity with computers. Since the class is delivered in their fourth year, most students will be teaching regular courses within a year. This may imply that in not few occasions, students will apply what they learn in the classroom to their ways of teaching almost immediately. Thus, what they do in that classroom, as opposed to what they could have done in different courses before, needs to be very applicable.

For the realization of this work the researcher would use non-scientific observational techniques based on the subjective perceptions of the author trying to analyze and understand the facts without starting from a previous hypothesis and based on occasional events. The intention was not to alter or affect the variables that cause this type of behavior. The annotations were collected in a non-systematic way in a field notebook in a planned way and done in the three computer sessions that this subject includes. In this sense, the following aspects were intended to be observed and analysed:

- Motivation
- Capability
- Interest
- Creativity and innovation
- Observations

Motivation

Students addressed in this observational research actually got involved in an uneven manner. From the beginning, it was clear that while some probably worked quite a good deal, some others probably did not as much. It was also clear that there had been a division of roles between those students who would prepare the contents in English and those who would use and implement the computer applications. Obviously, this fact leads to different degrees of acquisition regarding the two skills: English and Technology. In the three sessions used in this observation there was a noticeable inequality between the various groups of the class. While some students proved an adequate competence in both English and technology applications, others just managed to finish the projects and from their presentations we could understand that little had been learned. It is true that for students with less previous experience with technology, the blog (figure 3) and the use of the other applications can be more or less challenging but it is even clearer that previous experience has a direct effect on motivation. Therefore, students with no prior experience were far below more experienced students in this regard. This is especially important in this class because most students actually are more Arts & letters-oriented than science-oriented.

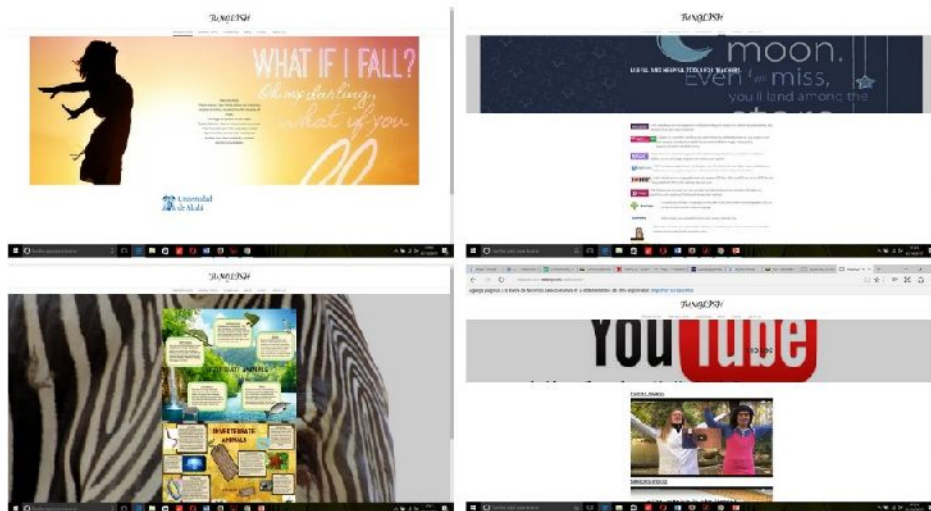


Fig. 3 Student-created blog (<http://didactics1617.weebly.com/>)

Additionally, previous experience could have an influence on students. This is so because students could have greater experience in the use of ICT in the classroom if they had had tutors who used ICT in their periods of external practice. That means, students who had had experience with teaching applications of what they had learned in the schools would not only be more acquainted with educational applications but also more willing to use them and go beyond their own experience as students.

As a consequence, there was good motivation among students and, overall, they evidenced great interest in this project. However, contrary to expectations, due to being aware of the external reality of the faculty itself, it was observed that this motivation tends to be constrained by a certain pessimistic view based on their own experience in school visits ("This was not done in any of my schools", said one student, while another commented "the interactive whiteboard is only used for video and as a traditional slate"). Although the observer tends to think that it may be exaggerated, perhaps there is doubt as to whether technological resources are far ahead of teacher training.

Capability

Most of the students showed similar ability when given instructions or explanations of what to do exactly. That is why in future years, it would be advisable to have students to give a short description of how to create and use of blogs. However, this is not perceived when students must work autonomously and without a strict guide of what to do. Weaker technology students also show greater ignorance of applications (not only use) and web pages for teaching. That is to say, while the students with more experience progress autonomously and have greater capacity to use online educational resources, the students with weaker skills demand greater attention from the instructor to make a similar progress.

Interest

The degree of interest is also significantly different. Less skilful students tend to decline in their efforts. It is true that in works outside the classroom they show similar products to their analogues in the classroom, but in many cases, it can be seen in collaborative works that these products can have been hardly created by themselves. On the other hand, the students with lower abilities show an instrumental interest of application in the classroom, the preparation for competitive exams and a genuine interest to experience what is observed in their interest for readings and autonomous learning.

Creativity and innovation

Closely related to the above aspects, all in all, the students of the Faculty of Education show good abilities, capacity of analysis and a tendency to apply what is being learned for their future students. It is true that most of them will shortly become teachers themselves in the classroom and that, in addition to getting them highly motivated may lead them to trying to develop their own materials. A reason could be as simple as they have also observed more classes in formal education courses and therefore have a wide range of resources that become novel through small changes of thematic, strategy and application.

Conclusions

From what is observed here it can be concluded that student teachers make good selections and applications of technological resources for the English classroom. There are many determining factors highlighting the experience or lack thereof in the development and choice of utilities (Baek, Jung, & Kim, 2008; Friedrich & Hron, 2011; Ritzhaupt, Dawson, & Cavanaugh, 2012; Badia, Meneses, & Sigales, 2013). Less interest in less skilled students may also lead to less involvement in the process of use. These tentative results could have implications for the use of technology at different educational stages and, secondarily, less use of technologies in

secondary versus primary education. Of course, as we have said initially, there may be contextual factors that modify this perception so new and much broader and deeper studies would be desirable. In this sense, this work would only be a first approach that must be supported by reliable methods and data. However, this same work can be useful for university teachers to introduce greater use of educational technology in the university and the search for more practical classes even when they might be firstly rejected. Therefore, we must be prepared to offer our future teachers greater and better opportunities and make a future commitment to the new technology in teacher training courses.

References

- Badia, A., Meneses, J., & Sigales, C. (2013). Teachers' perceptions of factors affecting the educational use of ICT in technology-rich classrooms. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 11(3), 787-808.
- Baek, Y., Jung, J., & Kim, B. (2008). What makes teachers use technology in the classroom? exploring the factors affecting facilitation of technology with a korean sample. *Computers & Education*, 50(1), 224-234.
- Bax, S. (2000). Putting technology in its place: ICT in modern foreign language learning. In Field, K. (Ed.), *Issues in modern foreign language teaching* (pp. 208–219). New York: Routledge.
- Bitner, N., & Bitner, J. (2002). Integrating technology into the classroom: Eight keys to success. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 10(1), 95-100.
- Butler, D. L., & Selbom, M. (2002). Barriers to adopting technology for teaching and learning. *Educause Quarterly*, 2, 22-28.
- EL-Daou, B. (2016). The effect of using computer skills on teachers' perceived self-efficacy beliefs towards technology integration, attitudes and performance. *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues*, 8(2), 106-118.
- Friedrich, H. F., & Hron, A. (2011). Factors affecting teachers' student-centered classroom computer use. *Educational Media International*, 48(4), 273-285.
- García Esteban, S. & García Laborda, J. (2016). Human communicative dialogic practices in content and language-based educational interactions with technology. *The Anthropologist*, 25(3), 220-228.
- Hennessy, S., Ruthven, K., & Brindley, S. (2005). Teacher perspectives on integrating ICT into subject teaching: Commitment, constraints, caution, and change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37, 155–192.
- Lucas, S. B., & Wright, V. H. (2009). Who am I? The influence of teacher beliefs on instructional technology incorporation. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 20(3), 77-95.
- Moree, D. (2013). Teachers and school culture in the czech republic before and after 1989. *Curriculum Journal*, 24(4), 586-608.
- Reiser, R. A. (2001). A history of instructional design and technology: Part I: A history of instructional media. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 49(1), 53-64.
- Ritzhaupt, A. D., Dawson, K., & Cavanaugh, C. (2012). An investigation of factors influencing student use of technology in K-12 classrooms using path analysis. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 46(3), 229-254.

- Scalise, K., & Wilson, M. (2011). The nature of assessment systems to support effective use of evidence through technology. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 8(2), 121-132.
- Sherman, T., & Kurshan, B. (2005). Teaching for understanding. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 32(4), 6-11.
- Street, C. (2003). Pre-service teachers' attitudes about writing and learning to teach writing: Implications for teacher educators. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 30(3), 33-50.
- Warschauer, M., & Healey, D. (1998). Computers and language learning: An overview. *Language Teaching*, 31, 57-71.
- Williams, S. E., & Gray, P. (2004). Cultural, political, and social influence in the development of the lithuanian educational system. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 13(1), 46-57.
- Wilson, M., Gochyyev, P., & Scalise, K. (2016). Assessment of learning in digital interactive social networks: A learning analytics approach. *Online Learning*, 20(2), 97-119.