Chapter 2
EFL Teachers' Knowledge of Technology in China:
Issues and Challenges

Yanjiang Teng
Michigan State University, USA

ABSTRACT

Through the lens of teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China, this chapter aims to examine what knowledge of technology EFL teachers at all levels possess and how they apply their technological knowledge in teaching practice. The reviewed literature indicated that most EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards technology. However, there still exists a gap between the curriculum requirement and the reality in terms of technological pedagogy in EFL teaching context. EFL teachers' use of technology in teaching varies in terms of personal preferences, school levels and locations, and administrative support. In addition, this review revealed that several factors influence EFL teachers' integration of technology into their practice and some challenges are still on the way: 1) EFL teachers' knowledge of technology is insufficient; 2) Lack of resources for schools and teachers at less developed areas, and 3) Lack of specific support for EFL teachers' technological needs.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are evolving at an astonishing speed which has dramatically revolutionized almost every aspect of our lives. In educational settings, technology offers new ways of teaching and learning and has the potential to enhance students' learning outcome (Cabanatan, 2003; Felix, 2005; Kozma & Anderson, 2002). Scholars hold that ICT is increasingly playing a significant role in school curriculum reform across the nations (Kozma & Anderson, 2002; Li & Walsh, 2011; Li, 2014; Pelgrum, 2001).

Internationally, from 1990s, ICT has been regarded as an indispensable literacy skill for global competition (Tsui &Tollefson, 2007) and as the catalyst to promote educational reform and development (Cabanatan, 2003; Li, 2014). In 1996, the U.S. government issued its first National Educational Tech-

nology Plan (NETP, 1996; revised version on 2000, 2004, 2010, US Department of Education, 2010) aiming at getting American students ready for the 21ˢᵗ century through training and supporting teachers and their students with computer and Internet access. Similarly, the U.S. National Educational Technology Standards (NETS), also known as International Standards for Technology in Education (ISTE) were released in 1998 (for students), in 2000 (for teachers), and in 2002 (for administrators) respectively. In 1998, the ICT Standards for UK teachers was issued (Office for Standards in Education, 1998), aiming at encouraging teachers to demonstrate their ICT skills in a wide range of contexts. In the same vein, the Japanese government also issued the Science and Technology Basic Plan (1996-2000, 2001-2005) to increase technology competitiveness in the world (Cabinet Decision, Japan, 2005). Since 2000, the Australia government decided to increase teachers' budget on ICT training. All these efforts by policy-makers and educational experts believe that ICT has a direct impact on the nations' competiveness and economic growth, and the use of ICT can increase the effectiveness of teachers' teaching and students' learning compared with the traditional way of instruction (Kozma & Anderson, 2002). ICT integrated teaching in this chapter is defined as a process of using any ICT tools to enhance teaching and facilitate students' knowledge construction.

Research studies suggest that, the benefits of ICT integrated teaching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings lie in its potential to engage learners and support their autonomous learning (Chambers & Bax, 2006; Chapelle, 2003; Hu & McGrath, 2011; Li & Walsh, 2011), provide EFL teaching with authentic language environment (Xie, 2005), and establish new roles of teachers and learners (Stepp-Greany, 2002). Overall, ICT can benefit both language teachers and learners by creating a more interactive language classroom, motivating learners, and providing authentic language input from real life situations (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). On the other hand, the successful realization of ICT integrated teaching depends on teachers' technology knowledge (Cabanatan, 2003; Gu, 2012); teachers' technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK; Mishra & Koehler, 2006), which involves teachers' competence to combine knowledge of technology, pedagogy, and content; and teachers' attitudes or beliefs towards ICT integration into the curriculum (Bitner & Bitner, 2002). In reality, EFL teachers still report that they are slow to adopt ICT integrated teaching productively in their practice (Li & Walsh, 2011; Li, 2014). Therefore, it's critically important to understand what technology knowledge EFL teachers possess, how they use technology in their practice, and what influential factors affect their applications. In this chapter, teachers' technology knowledge refers to the knowledge necessary for teachers to conduct ICT integrated teaching to facilitate students' learning. This requires teachers to have the competence to integrate different methods, approaches, and pedagogies, together with the medium of technology, to improve teaching and enhance learning effectively.

Similarly, China also witnesses its advancement in technology and its application in education. China's steady rise in the world economy over the past few decades has brought the country more interactive opportunities with the outside world. English, a medium of international communication, has received more attention from the Chinese government and its citizens. In China, English is one of the compulsory subjects at all levels of school curricula. The update of the New English Curriculum (NEC; Ministry of Education, 2001, 2012) in elementary and secondary schools is a result of such corresponding thrust. At the higher education level, in 2004 (Revised version in 2007), Chinese Ministry of Education released the College English Curriculum Requirements (CECR, 2007) in an effort to improve non-English majors' communicative language skills, particularly oral communication competence. Among all these efforts to innovate EFL teaching efficacy in NEC and CECR, the use of technology in EFL teaching is being

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/efl-teachers-knowledge-of-technology-in-china/160325

Related Content

edTPA Preparation: Building Support Structures for Teacher Candidates
Randa Suleimanand Clavon Byrd (2016). *Evaluating Teacher Education Programs through Performance-Based Assessments (pp. 138-165).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/edtpa-preparation/146035

Relevance of the Use of Instructional Materials in Teaching and Pedagogical Delivery: An Overview
Monsuru Babatunde Muraina (2015). *Handbook of Research on Enhancing Teacher Education with Advanced Instructional Technologies (pp. 145-165).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/relevance-of-the-use-of-instructional-materials-in-teaching-and-pedagogical-delivery/133811

Can Technology and Affinity Be Bridges for Well-Being in Educators?
Ben Seipel, Nora Aguilar-McKay, Claudia Bertolone-Smith, Char A. Moffit, Karen Schreder, Tal Slemrodand Erin Whitiney (2024). *Transforming Teacher Preparation Through Identity, Development, and Effective Technologies (pp. 237-266).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/can-technology-and-affinity-be-bridges-for-well-being-in-educators/353455

Context and Teaching with Technology in the Digital Age
Joshua M. Rosenbergand Matthew J. Koehler (2015). *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education in the Digital Age (pp. 440-465).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/context-and-teaching-with-technology-in-the-digital-age/134580

Offline Peer Dialogue in Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication Activities for L2 Teacher Development
Keiko Kitade (2016). *Teacher Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1038-1059).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/offline-peer-dialogue-in-asynchronous-computer-mediated-communication-activities-for-l2-teacher-development/153350