FOSTERING INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT OF ORAL PERFORMANCE USING STUDENTS' ICT PORTFOLIOS

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Abstract :	Article info
. Oral performance can be demonstrated through the use of different activities which motivate students to speak such as pair and group discussions, vocabulary games, simulations, role plays, storytelling, and brainstorming. Students might think that experiencing all these different activities frequently can really help them develop their oral skills. Yet, they need to know how to assess effectively these oral tasks by themselves since a good assessment is also considered as the key element to know how to develop this type of performance. Hence, this experimental research aims at showing the effect of using students' ICT	**Received** 19/04/2021 **Accepted** 29/05/2021
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portfolios to foster innovative assessment in oral classes and to indicate to what extent students' self-assessment using their own ICTs can enhance their oral performances. Along this line of thought, 22 students were divided into two groups; ICT portfolio group and non-ICT portfolio group to go through an experimental study. A focused group interview was also undertaken. The results showed a welcoming sign of interest among the students and, the students were excited when using ICT to achieve validity, practicability, consistency, and transparency of learning assessment and self-correction with a great development in students' oral performances

✓ *Innovative Assessment,*
✓ *Information and Communication*
✓ *Technologie*

1. *Introduction*

The 1980s decade witnessed an ultimate change in Education due to the wide spread of technology. First, the UK government, the avant-garde[1] to ICT-based educational systems, accompanied a program to support and provide services to schools. The aim was to help pupils with difficulties and disabilities benefit from the use of technology. Second, initiatives of technology-related centers such as Special Education Micro-Electronic Resources Centers (SEMERCs)were established through this program. They focused on providing development, peripherals, and training to support students' needs (Florian & Hegarty, 2004, pp. 23-26).

Late in 1980, technology was not only important for supporting learning, but also learners became independent, and achieved exceptional potentials that were not expected before. Besides, ICT seemed indispensable; it became overall across the educational

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[1] It is a French borrowed word, which means the pioneer, the primary, or the first who took the leading position.

spectrum. In the meantime, the government placed enormous financial magnitudes for research and development concerning the use of ICT. As well as making technology part and parcel of instructors' tools of teaching. (Florian & Hegarty, 2004, pp. 26-27)

In the 1990s, the Information Technology in schools persisted until 1993, and pictured a dedication of £90 million into support and training for ICT use; however, new priorities aroused to consume the energy of teachers. The first was creating the National Curriculum, which resulted the teachers to spend large amounts of time adapting their requirements to the new curriculum. Still, the project became a failure even after several revisions ranging from 1994 to 1997 because it was not designated as a 'core subject'. The second priority was to build an IT infrastructure where hardware and other equipment took place in schools such as CD-ROM technology, and multimedia computers.

Eventually in 1997, Dennis Stevenson, in his report, explained that despite the increasing number of initiatives the "state of ICT in our schools is primitive and not improving" Stevenson, (1997, p. 6); nonetheless, he implicitly funneled a new strategy for ICT usage when he described the National Grid for Learning, one of the government initiatives, as a "mosaic of interconnecting networks." Therefore, it had three components: Infrastructure (computers, printers, and connectivity – including cabling, internal networks, and internet), Content (documents, textbooks, and resources), and Practice which involves how people helped learning in the classroom and schools (Florian & Hegarty, 2004, p. 29).

Since different information and communication technologies are being integrated to develop students' learning process, considerations need also to be given to explore the effect of these tools on the assessment of the learning process as well. As a result of this thought, the main objective of this research is to examine the effect of integrating different information and communication technologies when assessing oral performances by EFL students. Hence, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1) Does the integration of ICTs as tools for assessment help EFL students foster their oral performance?

2) What are the EFL students' perceptions towards the integration of ICT portfolios in their learning assessment and oral classes?

1. Literature Review

The term Communication and information technologies comes as a result of the interaction between both hardware (computers) in its software (applications). This term has been defined by many computer scientists and researchers. Bibri (2015, p.39) explains that ICT "describes a set of technologies used to access, create, store, retrieve, disseminate, exchange, manage, and transmit information in a digital format. ICT involves computing systems (e.g., laptops, wearable computers, smart mobile phones, augmented-reality devices, Internet network, telecommunication systems, sensors and actuators, etc.) and the associated innumerable software applications". Different technology tools are used in this digital ear in different ways and for different purposes (Knezek & Voogt, 2008, p. 643). Therefore, understanding the different applications which are installed in these technologies involves classifying them according to their function, content, and purpose. The development

and integration between such technologies and applications has led to the emergence of two notable fields in ICT; the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). CALL refers to a field in applied linguistics that is designed to exploit technology for language teaching and learning purposes. It comprises both English Language Teaching (ELT) software, and the web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, podcast, forums, and word processors which are integrated in teaching and learning environments (Poole, 2001, p. 40). CMC is a term which describes the use of the internet as a means of fostering teaching and learning. This term can be taken through a classification of synchronous/asynchronous. (Buck & Wighwick, 2013, pp. 50-51). The term synchronous indicates a web-based communication form, which is characterized by the spontaneity of its various uses. Those uses include the Chat and IMs, video conferencing. Web-based communications can be used for formative assessment if they are recorded; they can be useful for helping students assess the others' point of views about learning tasks. (Buck & Wighwick, 2013, p. 51).

In the past decade where ICTs were not emerged and with the use of teacher- centered approach, teachers used to grade students' oral performance by observing and limiting their presentations with a number of scores. After the emergence of ICTs and with the shift in applying a learner-centered approach, stakeholders have begun to focus on assessing the entire learning process by giving students the chance to do this task by themselves using their available ICT portfolios to measure their oral performances. In other words, this learner-centered task gives students the opportunity to record and document their oral performances using different ICT portfolios to do learning assessment and self-correction. By analyzing the

different documentations of oral performances, both teachers and students are able to detect and address all positive and negative points during the whole process of a particular oral presentation. In the field of language assessment, stakeholders are no longer relying on scores given to students as a result of a particular test, but on the documentations which demonstrate the progress of the entire learning process undertaken by the learners themselves. In this respect, Petrina (2007, p. 285) believes that "A fair program of assessment demands a range of forms of documentations and evidence, such as experiments, images, innovations, interviews, quizzes, observations, presentations, problems, projects, portfolios, recordings, and rubrics". This new perspective is highly illustrated in oral classes. Fassett and Nainby explain also that students tend to document their oral performances. This helps them obtain concrete evidence as a result of their presentations and which help them make decisions about their speaking performance in the future (2015, p. 91).

Numerous researches have been undertaken in the context of assessing students' oral performance through the use of different ICT tools. The main objective of these investigations was to check the effectiveness of integrating different CALL and CMC as assessing tools to improve oral performance. For example, Gromik (2017, p. 99) relied on the use of video recordings using either cell phones or cameras. Students in this experiment were asked to make a video record every week. Videos were recorded one time inside the class and another time outside the class. The themes which students were asked to talk about were changed every week. The main objective of this experiment was to check whether students were able to make any

improvement in their oral abilities through the assessment of these different records. The results collected indicate that the use of video recording tools helps students identify different errors related to the linguistic and strategic aspects. For the linguistic aspects, the analysis of the videos which were collected indicates students' use of wrong words, inability to produce L/R sounds correctly, problems with pronunciation, and misuse of tenses and grammar structures. Regarding the strategic aspect, the results revealed that most students' problems include the lack of eye contact maintenance, the misuse of body language, and the inability to remember parts of the speech Gromik (2017, p. 113).

Peiterse (qtd in Merolla etal., 2012, p. 39) also emphasizes that the combination of technology tools and applications for recoding and social media websites for sharing these records can physically interpose between the performer and the audience in a form of feedback (i.e., peer assessment). In other words, students after recording their oral performance through video or audio tapes can disseminate these records via various social media websites such as Facebook, Instagram, or What's up. These media provide students with an opportunity to obtain both self and peer assessment for their oral performance. In another study in 2013, Miller (qtd in Tafazoli & Romero. 2017, p. 84) concluded that audio technologies like podcasting is considered as an effective tool to improve students' oral performance. Podcasting can provide students with both authentic input to listen to and give them opportunities to produce more output (creating podcasts). Facer et al. (2009 qtd in Tafazoli & Romero.

2017, p. 84) have also showed the effect of technology tools on improving the oral skills. They converted popular iPod and other MP3 players into multipurpose learning tools in oral classes. The results revealed that students with these technology tools outperformed the group of conventional instruction. The outperformance incorporates improvement in pronunciation, vocabulary, oral skill, and strategy for presentations.

2. Method and Tools

This investigation purports to explore the effect of using different ICTs such as audio tapes, smartphones, and other technology applications as assessment tools to develop students' oral performance. To reach this purpose, the researcher followed a certain research design undertaken with a particular sample of students.

2.1.   Participants

The sample of this research consisted of 22 third year students from the department of English, Djelfa University. It was first chosen randomly as one whole group. Later, the researcher divided the students into two main groups; control and experimental group. Each group incorporated 11 students. Since the main objective of this research is to check the correlational effect of ICTs on oral proficiency, the researcher has first insured that all participants possess some ICT tools and applications such as smartphones, audio tapes, and other applications. The reason behind choosing this particular population is based on the fact that third year students have already been exposed to a maximum amount of oral expression

sessions. Thus, they are expected to be more aware of the problems they experience and the way they assess their oral performance.

2.2. Research Design and Procedure

The study, with the help of the two main groups of participants, aims to examine how students' assessment of their oral performance using different ICTs may affect their oral proficiency. To reach this aim, the researcher undertook an experimental study which lasted for six weeks. The experiment was conducted with the participants which were divided into an ICT portfolio group and non ICT portfolio group. Both groups were asked to make an oral presentation each week (i.e., six presentations). The themes of the oral performance were selected by the researcher. After each performance, students from both groups were provided with an evaluation grid to assess their oral presentation. The only difference between the two groups was that students of the ICT portfolio group were equipped with different ICT tools and applications to be used during the presentation and the assessment phase. Whereas, the control group was asked to present the work and assess it with no use of ICTs (i.e., conventional performance and assessment). As a result of this experiment, the researcher collected 12 oral presentations (six presentations for each group) and 12 assessment results (six assessment results for each group). The presentations and assessments were analyzed and compared in order to recognize to what extent the integration of ICTs helped students assess effectively their presentation and develop their oral performance.

2.3. Data Collection

The results collected in this investigation were based on the use of two main research instruments including an oral assignment and a focused group interview. In other words, the researcher used these two research instruments in order to test the correlation between the two variables ICT portfolio assessment and oral performance. The participants were asked each week to provide an oral performance about one particular theme. The main objective of this instrument is to collect different performances in order to be assessed and compared. The results gathered from the assessment and comparison of oral performances presented by both control and experimental groups would help the researcher to check the effectiveness of using ICT portfolios to assess and develop oral proficiency. The second research instrument includes a focused group interview to triangulate the data gathered a"nd to understand English students' perceptions towards the use of ICT tools to assess and bolster their oral performance.

2.4.   Data Analysis

The research instruments used in this study include both oral performance and focused group interview. Consequently, the researcher used a descriptive analysis to analyze the data gathered from these two instruments. Regarding students' oral performances, the researcher relied on certain criteria including verbal (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, coherence) and non-verbal (gestures and facial expressions) elements. Each criterion is out of two points. In other words, all criteria of assessing students' oral performances are given the same score simply because the researcher tends to give the same importance to all these criteria in the assessment of the presentations. The results gathered from this descriptive analysis

helps the researcher answer the first question which concerns the extent to which using ICTs can aid to assess and develop students' oral proficiency. On the other hand, the focused group interview provides the researcher with data which answer the second research question. The latter concerns students' perceptions towards the use of ICTs when assessing and developing their oral skills.

3. Results and Discussion

The data presented in table 1 indicate the frequency of errors identified by students in both control and experimental groups. The errors are related to micro skills such as pronunciation, word choice, phrase, sentence structure, and tense and macro skills including coherence, non-verbal communication, and strategic skill. As it is noticed, the frequency of errors identified in the experimental group (ICT portfolio group) is higher than the frequency of errors identified in the control group (non-ICT portfolio). This may indicate that students who used ICT tools during their oral performance and assessment were able enough to recognize the different types of errors related to both micro and macro skills. In other words, the use of ICT tools such as smartphones, audio tapes, dictionary and transcription applications helped students of the experimental group to record and analyze their oral performance. Therefore, errors related to pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence structure, use of tense, gesture, facial expression, and strategy use for communication were frequently detected. Whereas, students in the control group were not able to detect all errors which were made in their oral performance. This may be attributed to their inability to focus on assessing all criteria related to micro and macro skills at one time.

According to the results presented in table 1, the researcher was able to compare also the frequency of errors identified during the first and last weeks of the experiment with both ICT portfolio and non-ICT portfolio group. The results show that the frequency of errors identified in the experimental group was highly decreased in the last weeks of the experiment. This may indicate that students who used ICTs during the assessment of their presentations were able to address their errors which they used to make in their oral performance in the first weeks of the experiment, i.e., the use of smartphones, audio tapes, dictionary and transcription applications helped students of the experimental group to develop their micro and macro skills used in their oral performance. Contrary, the frequency of errors identified in the control group was slightly decreased during the last weeks of the experiment. This means that students were not able to address and detect all of their errors which appeared in their performances. The assessment which they undertook without the use of ICT tools and applications did not enable students of the control group to improve their oral skills. This finding confirms the first research hypothesis which emphasizes that the use of different ICT tools and applications help students assess and develop their oral skills.

Oral skills assessed		Frequency of errors identification (%)			
		ICT portfolio group		Non-ICT portfolio group	
		First weeks	Last weeks	First Weeks	Last Weeks
Micro Skills	Pronunciation	82%	42%	49%	42%
	Words choice	59%	35%	52%	47%
	phrases	51%	27%	31% 42%	38%

					51%
	Sentence structure	86%	49%	39%	29%
	Tense	79%	21%		
Macro Skills	Coherence	52%	49%	25%	21%
				35%	29%
	Non verbal communication	49%	30%		
				38%	41%
	Strategic options	63%			
			41%		

Table 1: Frequency of errors identified by control and experimental group

The second research instrument which involved a focused group interview with students provided the researcher with other findings. First, different types of ICTs and applications are used to assess students' oral performance. Examples of these ICTs include smartphones, audio tapes, dictionary and transcription applications. Smartphones and audio tapes allow students to record and observe their oral performance for many times. This helps them detect their errors related to both verbal and non-verbal aspects. Regarding the verbal aspect, students can observe and reflect on their presentations frequently through the use of other synchronous tools. For example, dictionary and vocabulary applications such as Oxford Dictionary, English Dictionary, Translate All, Speak and Translate, and Vocabulary Learning allow students to check word and phrase meaning when observing their oral presentations. Transcription applications play also a great role in evaluating and developing students' pronunciation. These applications incorporate Audio to Text, Transcription Tool, Transcriber, Otter: Meeting Note, Voice

Recorder, and Audio Transcriber. For the non-verbal aspect, watching the video records frequently helps students detect what types of strategies, gestures, and facial expressions they overuse or lack. Above all, the results collected from the focused group interview demonstrated a welcoming sign of interest among students to the use of ICTs when assessing and developing their oral skills. Students become also more autonomous to the process of making, presenting, and assessing their oral productions.

Oral skills assessed		Frequency of errors identification (%)	
		ICT portfolio used during assessment	Purpose of ICT use
Micro Skills	Pronunciation	Pronunciation applications	- Detect errors related to pronunciation - Diffrentiate between diffrenet accents - Find word and senetnce transcription
	Word choice	Dictionary applications	- Translate words - Find out word meaning in different contexts
	Phrase and Sentence structure	Audio tapes	- Detect errors related to strucutre - Compare sentence structure with its function
	Tense	Audio tapes	- Detect tense errors - Compare tense form with its use
			- Detect irrelevant sentences

Macro Skills	Coherence	Audio tapes	- Check speech cohrence
	Non verbal communication	Smart phones and cameras (video recordings)	- Check students' use, misuse, or overuse of facial expressions and guestures
	Strategic options		- Detect strategies used to overcome problems of communication

Table 2: Students' Perceptions towards the Use of ICTs to assess and develop their oral performance

4. Conclusion

This investigation reports the results of an experimental study conducted in an EFL class to examine the effect of using ICTs as assessment tools on students' oral performance. In other words, it explores whether the use of different tools such as digital video recordings, audio tapes, and certain applications would contribute to the assessment and enhancement of oral skills. The results obtained from this investigation yielded interesting findings in relation to the research hypotheses. The data collected from the students' assessment to their oral performances stipulate that the use of smartphones, audio tapes, and other learning applications helps EFL students detect most of their errors related to micro skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence structure, and tense use and macro skills like coherence, non-verbal communication, and strategic skill. The use of such ICT tools to assess students' oral performances helps them address their errors and develop their oral skills. Regarding the second research instrument, the analysis of the

results gathered from the students' focused group interview demonstrates a welcoming and positive sign of interest among the students towards the use of ICTs when assessing and developing their oral proficiency. As a result of this investigation, a set of recommendations were provided. On one hand, teachers are recommended to integrate the different ICT tools and application when assessing students' oral presentations. This can help them notice and detect the different problems which need to be addressed in order to achieve any enhancement in the students' oral skills. On the other hand, students' use of different ICT tools is strongly recommended to motivate, engage and activate their knowledge related to the oral skill improvement and assessment.

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