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THE USE OF ICT IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' VIEWS

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1. INTRODUCTION

During my teaching placement I had the opportunity to observe how privileged the secondary school I taught at was regarding materials and resources. It is a state secondary school situated at the South of the city and it is the reference school for four surrounding neighbourhoods. It holds four hundred students belonging to heterogeneous backgrounds, most of them middle-class. The increase of immigration in the previous years, which has now slowed down, contributed to changing the traditional student profile. Regarding its staff, the school has lately experienced a renewal process as a consequence of the numerous retirements. There are about forty teachers nowadays aged on average 45.

The school is provided with a great deal of technical and computing equipment. Moreover, this school takes part in the programme *Escuela 2.0*[1] which aims at the digitalization of secondary schools and was introduced in 2011. These are not the only resources available at the school for students who do not take part in the programme can also enjoy the numerous devices and equipment in every class as well as the computer room.

Apart from the students taking part in the programme –three groups who are in 1st year of ESO– 3rd year of ESO students also took part in the research to be reported in this dissertation. Although they are not directly affected by the programme *Escuela 2*.0, they enjoy classrooms equipped with technological devices: a desktop computer with Wi-Fi connection, an interactive whiteboard and an overhead projector. Apart from the classroom equipment, the centre has a computer room which was intended as a language laboratory. However, it seems that most part of the devices did not work since their installation, so it is not in use as such but as a regular computer room.

Through the observation of the use of those resources by different groups this piece of research will try to establish whether they contribute positively to the English teaching and learning process and which the strategies and methodologies implemented in the English class are. Other methods such as questionnaires and interviews were also used to collect data on this matter.

The aim of this research is, therefore, to observe and discuss the use made of various technological resources available for several groups in different levels of the described secondary school and how these groups benefit from them. More specifically, the study will deal with the way in which communicative competence in a foreign language is fostered through the activities and methodologies implemented with the support of

[1] In the autonomous region of Aragón the programme *Escuela 2.0* is regulated by the order of the15th December, 2009. The law is to be in force from 2009 to 2012.This state programme aims to set the conditions for the 21st century digital classrooms. Therefore, it entails providing the schools with the necessary technological infrastructure and connectivity together with teacher training.

The programme supplies each student in the first year of ESO with a netbook (a light, small laptop), a desk computer for the teacher, an overhead projector, an interactive whiteboard and Wi-Fi connection in every classroom together with educational resources (digital books and platforms and other resources). Moreover, teacher training involves both technical instruction and, more importantly, didactic instruction. That is, the teacher will receive training not only about the technical aspects of the programme (how to use and manage the digital resources) but also about the pedagogical implications and the methodological possibilities of the new situation in class (www.catedu.es/Escuela20_Secundaria/images/documentos/protocolooctubre2011.pdf).

Information and Communications Technology (ICT). I seek to answer the following research questions.

- What is the impact of ICT on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom dynamics?
- What is the use that teachers and students make of them?
- What is the relation between technological investment and a measurable improvement of the key competences of the students?

Thus, the final research question that drives this study reads as follows; to what extent do ICT contribute to an improvement of the students' communicative competence in English? ICT are regarded as a powerful tool for teaching; they are motivating for the students, they make access to information easy and fast and offer new ways for communication; however, the aim of this study is to analyse to which extent the use of ICT in the English class improves the learners' competence.

Researching on this topic can contribute to the analysis of the current not always fruitful language teaching methods in Spanish EFL classrooms. It is not only important but also feasible to innovate in education especially when all these resources mentioned above are available. It would be interesting to see how these devices are incorporated into the language learning process in different classrooms. ICT have an enormous potential for teaching and learning foreign languages, especially regarding the wide range of material they can offer. Taking into account that nowadays students are digital natives, the incorporation of ICT into the classroom is just a natural process to undergo.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the goal of this action research is to state to what extent ICT contribute to an improvement of the students' communicative competence in EFL, it is the first step to define what is understood by such and which the elements composing it are. It was Hymes (1972) who defined it, in opposition to Chomsky's claims, as the use of language by community members in order to fulfil the purpose of communication. Hymes notes that the use of language in context is affected by a set of sociocultural factors which influence both knowledge and ability for its use. Therefore, to be competent in a language a student requires not only grammatical knowledge but also pragmatic competence. Canale and Swain's (1980) analysis of communicative competence distinguishes four areas of competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. The first of these competences refers to the rules of morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology underlying language. Although this language knowledge is very important, it is not enough to be able to use a language communicatively. Sociolinguistic competence is also needed. It has to do with the sociocultural factors involved in communication: participants, norms and purpose of interaction. Thirdly, speakers need to develop discourse competence, which "concerns mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres" (Canale, 1983: 9). It involves features of cohesion and coherence in the construction of texts. Finally, the strategic competence refers to the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies necessary for successful interaction to take place. Any approach, Levy (2006) affirms, which focuses only on fluency or accuracy, that is, on grammatical competence or on strategic competence only, might fail for all the levels of language, pronunciation, vocabulary, discourse and pragmatics need to be paid attention to.

The relevance of communicative competence in order to be able to perform successfully in real communicative situations is also reflected in the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) as well as in the Aragonese curriculum. The term competence is defined as "the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions" and communicative language competence as that "which empowers a person to act using specifically linguistic means" (CEFR: 9). In order to develop this competence, these documents emphasise the need of exposing the learner to a great deal of real situations to participate in. This fact will allow for interaction providing the learner with the required strategies for communication. A varied range of materials will be provided and the use of authentic materials will prevail over those especially designed for foreign language learners.

It is clear that introducing ICT in the classroom can foster communicative purposes of language use and ultimately promote students' communicative competence. Davies and Hewer define ICT as "the term that is currently favoured by most businesses and educational institutions worldwide to describe new technologies. The "C" reflects the important role that computers now play in communications, e.g. by email, the Web, by satellite and mobile phone (cellphone)". This description underlines the key role that technologies play in communication and the potential they might mean for the English classroom. ICT offer the learners plenty of opportunities to access authentic materials

exposing them to a wide range of samples of authentic language which is one of the principles of communicative language teaching (Warschauer 2000)

Moreover, the current society of information and technology we live in, inevitably leads to different ways of interacting, learning and accessing information. The way students gather information has deeply changed and so has the way they create knowledge; the education system must be aware of this new social context to respond accordingly to this new way of learning. In addition, the immediate feedback the learners are used to obtaining makes this generation be an eager audience seeking for instant and direct results. Therefore, the need to incorporate ICT into the education system arises naturally from the existence of such elements in the daily lives of students and consequently triggers changes in methodology.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is no longer related to the language laboratory in which "students were required to repeat and memorize information from artificially created language materials" and in which language teaching and learning was reduced to "drill-and-drill practice" (Erben and Sarieva 2008:15). Nowadays, current language theories and methods like task- based or communicative approaches suggest that the teaching-learning process should be more learner-centred for it must foster the students' autonomy by promoting a constructive way of learning in which they are to be the main agents (Egbert and Hanson-Smith 1999 in Erben and Saviera 2008). The role of the teacher within this approach is that of a facilitator, a guide for the learners in their learning process who allows them to "explore, experiment and discover on their own" (Nunan 1988 in Erben 2008:16). CALL can contribute to such learner-centredness in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, several researchers agree that the use of ICT also enables students to work according to their pace and in an interactive, cooperative and motivating way due to the kind of activities available interactive problem-solving, cooperative tasks, creation of blogs or wikis, gaming, etc. which can contribute to improving the students' communicative competence (Erben and Saviera 2008). Students benefit from technology in several ways for they might change the "teaching paradigm" (Pedró 2011). The most effective learning is that which offers a greater personalisation and motivation to the student (Pedró 2011). ICT clearly fulfil these two requirements; they allow students to work according to their own pace and style in a more constructive way actively creating knowledge by working in meaningful activities, engaged by an appealing visual and interactive support.

The implementation of English teaching with the help of ICT offers clear advantages both for the teacher and for the learners, but requires from the first a constant effort for keeping updated. ICT are changing every minute; new software and hardware tools are generated every day and the Internet is also constantly growing and changing. Therefore, an appropriate introduction of ICT in the classroom demands the constant effort and willingness of teachers to get out from their comfort zone and go beyond the practices they already know. What is more, in order not to promote a distorted use of information and technology that might lead to harmful results, teachers must guide students towards a critical and responsible use of these devices in order to make the most of them. Relevant feedback plays also a key role in the process of learning (Sokolik 2001).

To Francesc Pedró, senior policy analyst for the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation in the OECD, the advantages of introducing ICT in the classroom are not only pedagogical but also of an economic, social and cultural nature although they

are interrelated and include each other. As he claims, the increase of social welfare in the setting of a knowledge economy demands a greater emphasis on technology to ensure highly qualified citizens (Pedró 2011:11). The changing labour demands require that schools prepare the citizens regarding cross curricular areas. Moreover, ICT improve teaching productivity as it saves teachers time.

Another side of technology is its inherent social façade that allows creating a more equalitarian access to education although for some social groups the school is the only contact with technology. Therefore, it is the governments' duty to facilitate some measures for the most disadvantaged sections of society. This is, clearly, one of the main aims of *Escuela 2.0*: to encourage quality education for every child, regardless of their social background. Another relevant feature that ICT bring into class is the interactive component. This is a key point to take advantage of, especially in the context of the English classroom. Not only due to the interactive nature of some computer programmes or the IWB but also because it allows for interaction with the lesson and among students. "El apellido 2.0 implica cooperación y socialización a través de la red" (Almau 2011). Furthermore, Betcher and Lee (2009) emphasise the dichotomy between physical interactivity, talking about the way in which students physically manipulate the IWB, and intellectual interactivity referring to the mental activity they are engaged in when carrying out certain activities.

What is more, ICT enhances a more practical way of learning and provides a great deal of situations in which the students become active creators of their own knowledge which is the principle of constructivism (Moll 1992). Consequently, students do not only remember what they have learnt more easily but they also develop the strategies that will enable them to become long life learners.

According to Pedró (2011), classical and digital cultures coexist in our society and this fact cannot be obviated by schools. Knowledge is created not only through textbooks but also through those formats typical of the digital culture. Therefore, it does not longer make sense to conduct lessons solely based on the textbook as the only possible source of information for education must connect to reality. Nevertheless, it seems that practice is still too influenced by the digital textbook as a material that should fit in this new teaching-learning reality shaped by the introduction of ICT. Even though the administration provides teachers with this new digital version of a textbook it does not mean that they should strictly stick to it as if it were the syllabus of the course instead of just one more supporting tool (Sola and Murillo 2011) as this traditional approach might be in conflict with the potential and the innovative character of ICT. Sola and Murillo (2011) further argue that there is a widespread poor use of technology just for the sake of it; the relevance of pedagogy when introducing ICT should not be ignored as it is fundamental in any successful teaching-learning process (Sokolik 2001).

Despite all the advantages and important changes ICT can bring to the teaching-learning process, not all students and teachers are convinced of their benefits. It seems that many of the students who are not fond of the use of technologies in the schools feel that way because they cannot see any relevant difference from the traditional methods. They do not see any relief in the amount of work or any significant reward. Pedró (2011) affirms that this same feeling is observed among the teachers who do not appreciate an improvement in the students' academic results and also as a result of the lack of instruction for teachers. Even though *Escuela 2.0* provides schools with a digital

textbook to use along with the students´ netbooks, this does not mean that it should become the only resource of knowledge, or that it should be always followed, or that it is communicative just because it is digital. In fact, this is also the case with interactive whiteboards, which are so popular among teachers, though they are not often used as such but as a mere screen to project traditional contents on them. Therefore, the main claim of these authors seems to be the extended wrong use of ICT which can hardly lead to an improvement of the teaching-learning process. Another factor that may lead to negatively evaluate ICT is the fact that what teachers believe to be appealing for students does not necessarily have to be so. This research also examines the reasons why activities fail to engage the students by analysing the proposals they formulated at the end of the questionnaire (see section 4).

Overall, the main justification for an integration and use of ICT in the classrooms must be the multiple advantages they bring to education. ICT cannot only save teachers´ time in the planning and preparation of materials but, most importantly, they represent an improvement in learning and a help for the learner. As has been pointed out, ICT can be a source of motivation, autonomy developers, and providers of authentic and varied material. Moreover, they contribute to the fourth key competence in the Aragonese curricula (Information treatment and digital competence). However, these capacities of technologies are only developed and put into practice if the use of ICT is correct.

An interesting proposal is the one by Abel Gálvez (http://abelsenglishpage.blogspot.com.es/), head teacher and English specialist at Torre del Palau secondary school in Barcelona. The use this teacher and his students promote of ICT is one in which the students do not merely search for information but they actively transform it into knowledge by creating and producing. This is one of the principles for the organisation of their classroom; discover, learn, do-create, share and, finally, reflect. “Si no produces, no eres” Gálvez says in Martí Soler (2011). Thus the group carries out different kinds of activities ranging from the creation of blogs where each student can upload all kinds of materials, including their digital portfolios, to the creation of ECHOES. ECHO stands for a piece of virtual information added to a real image which can be read with the help of technological devices such as smartphones and the use of an application. One of the activities implemented in the secondary school Torres del Palau can well exemplify how the use of ICT facilitates using the language communicatively, fosters interaction and promotes motivation. As an activity to practise the description of sculptures, the students in this school took some samples and commented on them in English and Spanish to create a tourist guide of the city. That is, tourists walking around the city can learn more about the sculptures surrounding the city by pointing at them with their mobile’s camera and they will be taken to the piece of audio recorded by the students. This use of ICT is appealing for the students as the final outcome is something real they can be proud of when shown to others.

With regard to a weak use of ICT, Sola and Murillo (2011) analyse several reasons why some teachers are suspicious of technology are analysed. They state that hardware and software problems along with a lack of instruction are to be blamed. Teachers complain that continuous technological problems (with laptops, Internet connexions, nets and wiring, etc…) seriously impede the use of ICT in class. Concerning training, teachers criticise its quality and frequency and affirm that most of the time the ICT coordinator is busy repairing equipment instead of offering pedagogical advice. These factors have also been taken into account when designing the questionnaires for the

research in order to try to establish whether this is the case as well in the school which is the subject of study.

All in all, the mere presence of technological equipment in a classroom will not bring a significant change into the teaching and learning process. Technology on its own cannot transform teaching and learning practices but, on the contrary, it requires a great effort from all the parties involved in education to make the most of it. Innovation is necessary along with a cooperative spirit and a strong will for improvement. In this sense Davies and Hewer emphasise that "the determining factor for the successful use of any resource in the classroom is the way it is used, in particular the way in which it is integrated into the teaching and learning process".

3. METHODOLOGY DESIGN

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

The criteria followed in the selection of the participants for the study were, in the case of students in the three groups of 1st year of ESO, their participation in *Escuela 2.0,* which was introduced this year (2011-2012) for the first time. At the moment in which this research took place they had been enrolled in the plan for about three months. The group of 3rd year of ESO taking part in this study were my students during my teaching placement and, thus, I knew their working style better and I had more time of observation. Although only a small sample of students in the group participated in the survey, this group is interesting because, as they are already attending 3rd year of ESO, they cannot take part in the programme *Escuela 2.0.* Therefore, they constantly express their disagreement with this. However, their classroom is equipped with several technological devices and twice a week they attend their English lessons at the computers room for a fifty-minute period.

Group	1ºA	1ºB	1ºC	3ºB	Total
Females	15	14	11	6	46
Males	12	11	10	5	38
Total	27	25	21	11	84

Table 1. Students that participated in the research.

The teachers taking part in this project are the ones belonging to the English department: two middle-aged female teachers and a male teacher, head of the department. Also the ICT coordinator at the school, a middle aged woman, participated. The total amount of subjects for my research is eighty-four students, three teachers and the ICT coordinator.

3.2 METHODS

The methods used for data collection are mixed tools of qualitative research, specifically, questionnaires, informal interviews and observation. The design of these research tools departs from the questions emerged during the revision of the literature on the topic and which I considered worth deepening in.

Questionnaires[2] are composed of a mixture of open and closed questions in order to obtain a wider range of information. In the case of the questionnaire filled in by the ICT coordinator, the tool was provided by her. Interviews[3] to teachers were semi structured (Nunan 1992). The questions were designed in advance but the interviewees guided the process. I wanted to let them talk about their ideas, plans and worries, so I decided not to impose the questions over their opinions.

[2] The students' questionnaire can be consulted in Appendix 1.
The teachers' questionnaire can be consulted in Appendix 2.
The ICT coordinator's questionnaire can be consulted in Appendix 3.
[3] The interview protocol to the teachers and the ICT coordinator can be consulted in Appendix 4.

Thus, the instruments designed respond to three main areas of study:

Introduction and running of the programme *Escuela 2.0*	- Informal interviews with teachers and the ICT coordinator
Teaching with ICT	- Questionnaires to teachers and ICT coordinator - Informal interviews with teachers
Learning with ICT	- Questionnaires to teachers and students

Table 2. Areas of study and research tools used in the research.

Once the data were collected, I analysed the results comparing the answers obtained from the groups in the first year of ESO with those obtained from the group in the third year and I contrasted students' and teachers' answers. Answers to open questions were grouped into blocks in order to make the results clearer and the main common answers will be presented in the figures of the next section.

4. RESULTS

In this section I present the findings obtained from my observation, the students' and teachers' answers to the questionnaires and from the interviews.

4.1 STUDENTS' OPINIONS

Students' background concerning ICT and their preferences among different technological devices (Questions 1-6)

As can be seen in Figures 1, 2 and 3 below the favourite technological devices among the group of students in 3rd year of ESO are television and computer to which every student, except for one, has an easy access. Most of them can surf the internet at home and the average time spent at the computer is about an hour (Figures 4 and 5). The main activities carried out with the computers are connecting to social networks and looking for information (Figure 6).

The students in 1st year of ESO are a bit fonder of computers than the group of 3ºB but this device is closely followed by the television (Figure 1). Although six of these students do not have a computer at home, only one affirms she/he cannot use it at ease (Figures 2 and 3). Most of the students use it for about one hour or less, mostly to log in the social networks but also to play or look for information (Figures 5 and 6).

This confirms that current students would see the inclusion of ICT into the classroom as a natural process.

Figure 1. Students' answers to the question: Which of these technological devices do you use most?

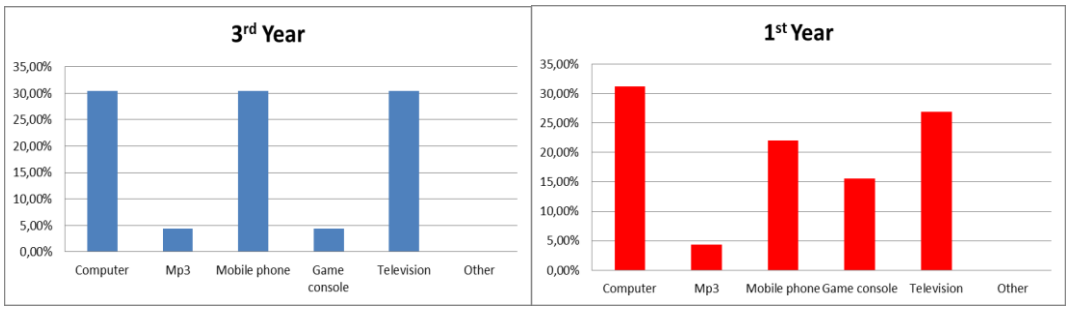


Figure 2. Students' answer to the question: Can you easily use a computer?

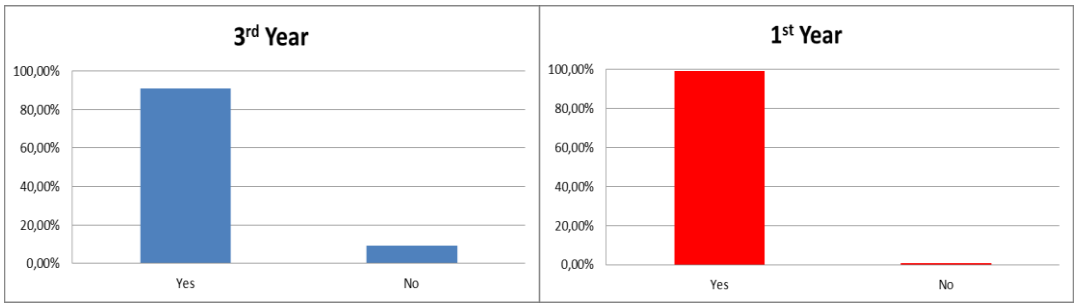


Figure 3. Students' answers to the question: Have you got a computer at home?

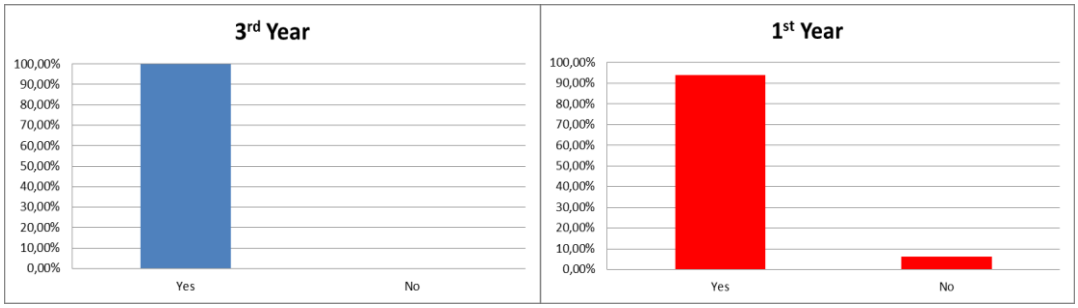


Figure 4. Students' answers to the question: Can you access the internet at home?

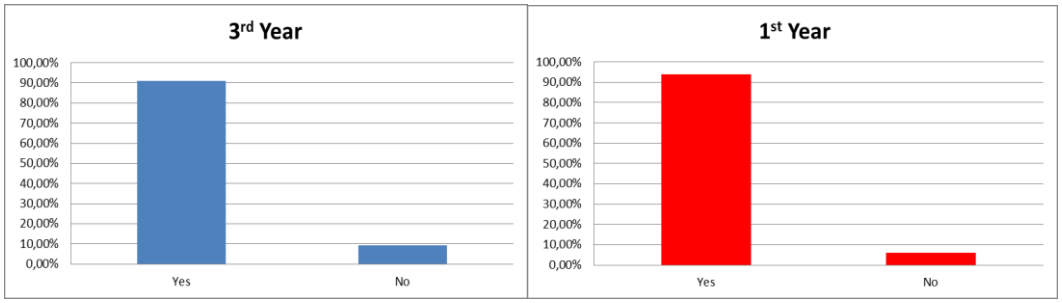


Figure 5. Students' answer to the question: How many hours a day do you use the computer?

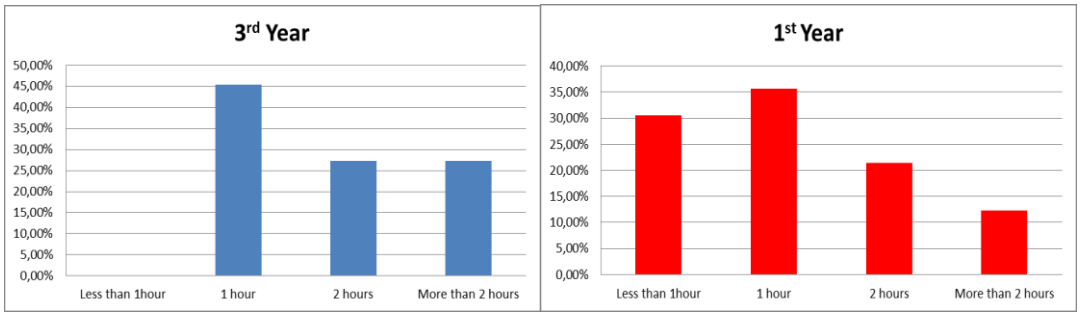
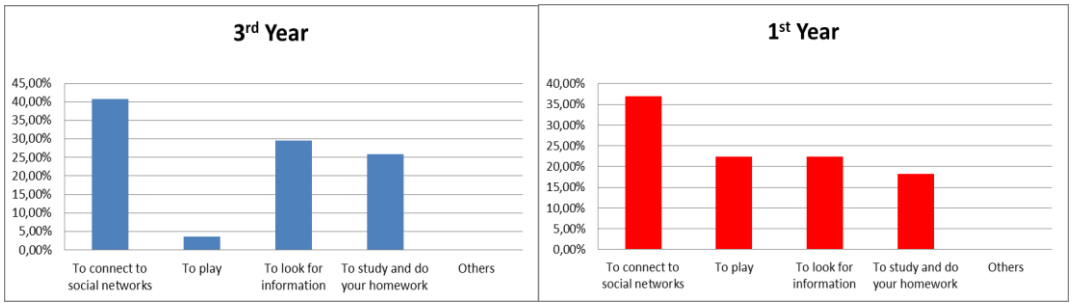


Figure 6. Students' answer to the question: What do you usually use the computer for?



Students' attitude towards the introduction of ICT in the classroom (Questions 7-13)

Regarding their perception on the usefulness of ICT as working tools, students in 3rd year of ESO agree on their effectiveness as such and not only for leisure purposes (Figure 7). Except for one student, all of them find that ICT can lighten the amount of work (Figure 8). It has to be said that the most reluctant student answered negatively to the second question which dealt with the ability to use a computer and perhaps her/his uneasiness arises from this fact (Figure 2). Most of them coincide that lessons become more pleasant and entertaining this way (Figure 11) and what they do not like is ICT not being regularly used in class (Figure 12). Among the devices they like the most is the Interactive whiteboard, although this is never used as such but as a regular screen upon which to project the digital book or other materials (Figure 13).

Similarly, the vast majority of students in 1st year of ESO trust the ICT as a working tool and think they contribute to lightening the amount of work (Figures 7 and 8). It is the majority, once more, who consider that ICT contribute to an increase in the understanding and motivation towards learning (Figures 9 and 10). From those who say they believe that ICT can improve their learning, almost 50% states this is so because lessons become more pleasant and entertaining (Figure 11). However, most students affirm that ICT are not regularly used during the lessons and that is the main reason they do not think that ICT increase their interest (See figure 12). From the technological devices they enjoy most the clear favourite is the netbook (Figure 13).

Figure 7. Students' answer to the question: Do you think that ICT are useful as working tools or just for leisure?

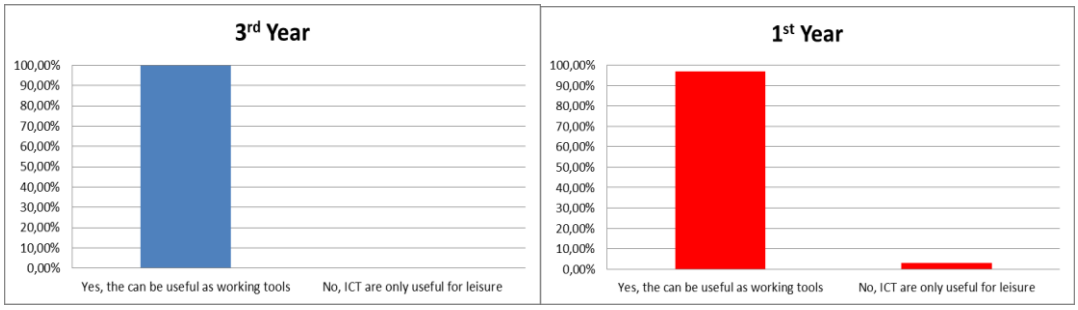


Figure 8. Students' answer to the question: Do you think ICT lighten work?

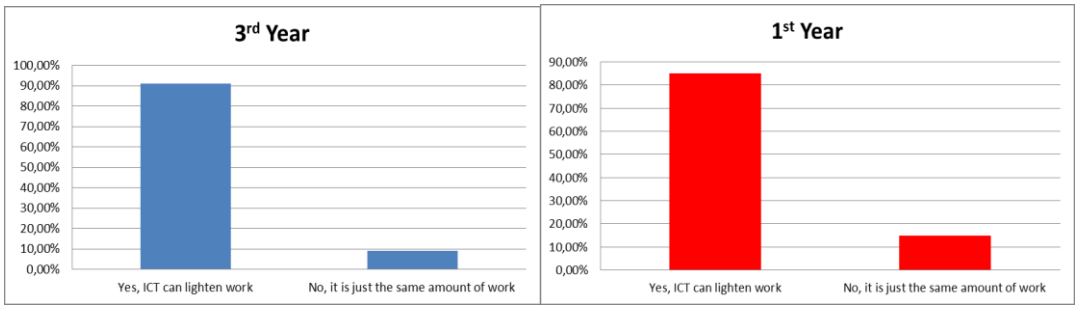


Figure 9. Students' answer to the question: Do you think ICT can improve your learning and understanding?

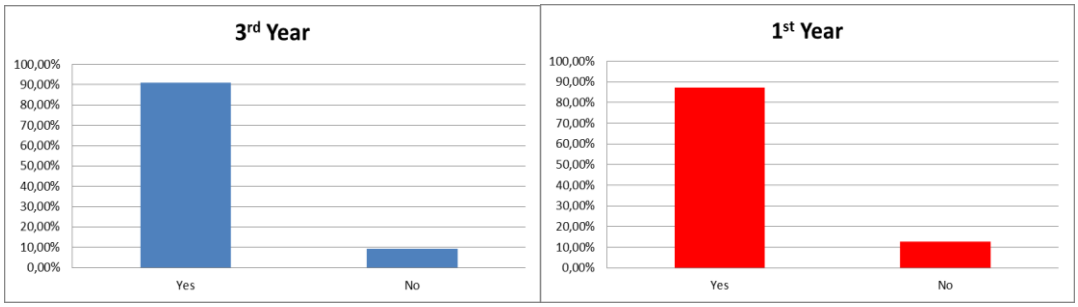


Figure 10. Students' answer to the question: Do ICT help to increase you interest in class?

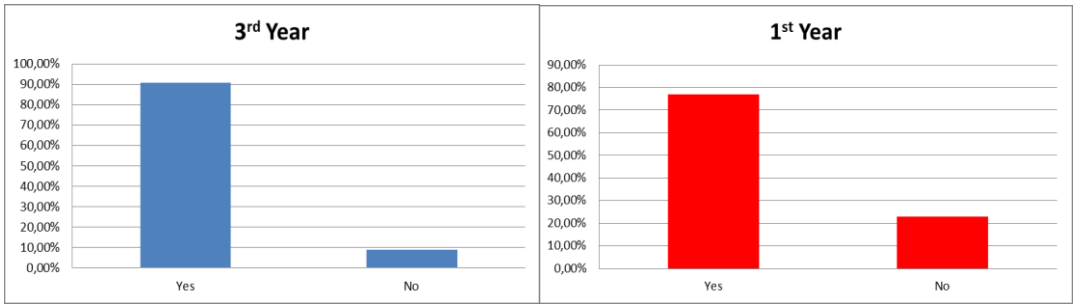


Figure 11. Students' answer to the question: If the previous answer is affirmative, why? (Closed question)

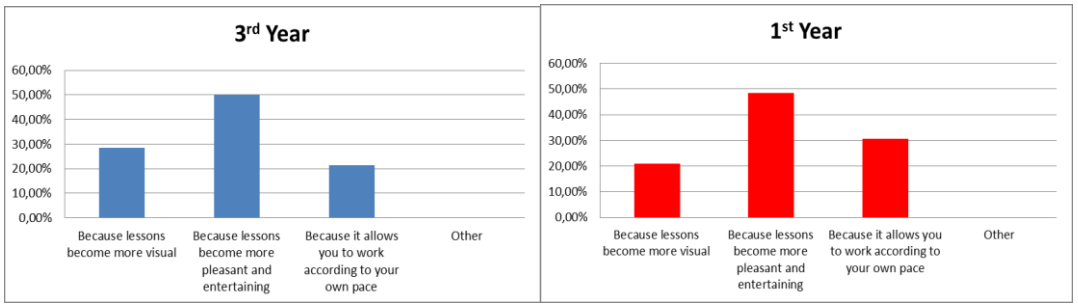


Figure 12. Students' answer to the question: If the answer to question number 10 is negative, why? (Closed question)

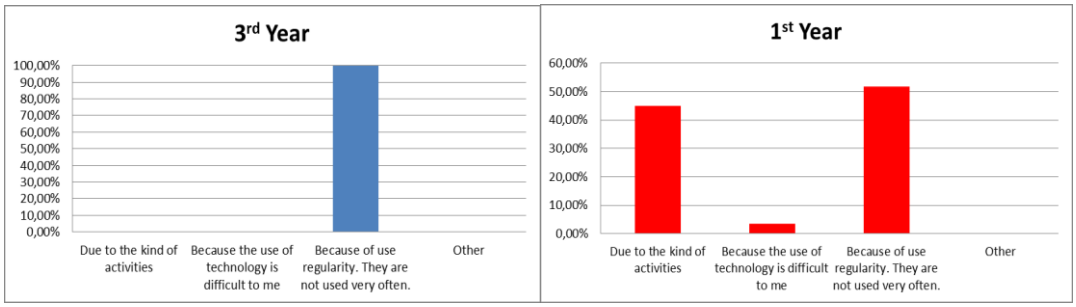
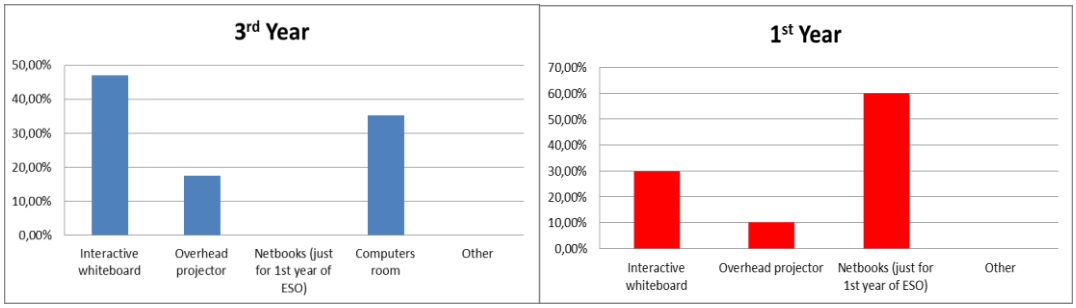


Figure 13. Students' answer to the question: From the technological devices used at class, which are the ones you like the most?

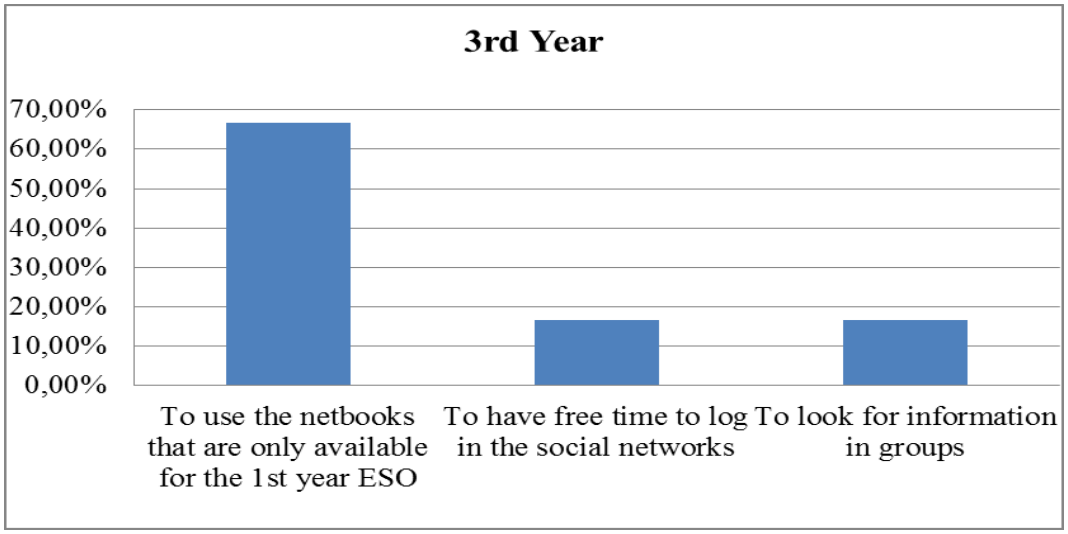


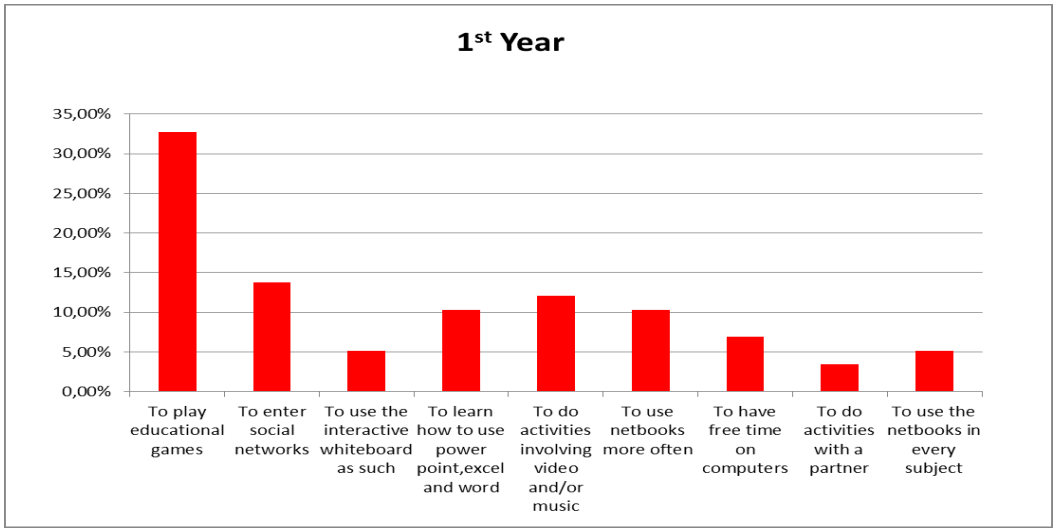
Students' suggestions of activities to be carried out with ICT (Question 14)

Since the students in 3rd year of ESO do not take part in the programme *Escuela 2.0,* their biggest complaint is the impossibility of using the netbooks. Apart from this, students answer that they would like to have free time to enter social networks and they would like to work more cooperatively.

Students in 1st year of ESO mainly show their eagerness to have fun while learning. Thus, they propose the use of educational games in the classroom as a way to engage and motivate them. As the first group, they state they would like to have access to the social networks, to take part in activities involving video and music and to be allowed to use the netbooks more often.

Figure 14. Students' answer to the question: What other activities with ICT would you like to do in class? (Open question)





In fact, even if the groups of students present a different classroom reality, the answers do not differ so much from one group to another. They hold more or less the same claims and complaints regarding the limited use of ICT and the kind of activities promoted in class. Therefore, their interests and motivation could be exploited to maximise their learning through ICT.

4.2 TEACHERS' OPINIONS

The teachers' opinions on the use of ICT were gathered through their answers to a questionnaire and through face-to-face interviews. Their answers show that their feelings and expectations regarding the impact of ICT in the classroom are positive. They believe they contribute to increasing the students' motivation and they help improve their academic performance although they think they are still not able to judge whether ICT improves the students' results and learning.

Uses of ICT and regularity

Two of the teachers report to always use ICT in the classroom, while one of them reports to use them quite a lot.

	Do you use ICT in the classroom? How often?
Never	0
Few times	0
Quite a lot	1
Sometimes	0
Always	2

Table 3. Teachers' answers to question number 7.

This is not in line with the students' answers. Although to the teachers' view ICT are used enough, this is not the same opinion held by students.

Teachers coincide in that they usually use ICT as a tool to prepare the lessons; to create materials, look for information, assess their students, etc. They also use them as a support for lessons. For example they use the IWB and digital book to make lessons more visual and help students to follow them more easily. They also offer the students extra materials such as blogs, wikis, etc (Table 4). In the section open for teachers to describe other uses of ICT, one of them mentioned the introduction of *Webquest* and *Treasure Hunts* and another teacher mentioned the creation of *sites* and the use of *calendar*.

Question 8	**I use ICT as… (you can choose** more than one answer)
A tool to prepare my classes	3
A support during my classes (IWB,digital textbook,etc.)	3
An extra material for students (blogs, wikis, etc.)	2
Other	2

Table 4. Teachers' answers to question number 8.

Motivation

Contrary to what students think, teachers believe that one of the most appealing aspects of ICT is the activities proposed. They declare that together with the technological component, that is, the fact of using digital resources rather than pen and paper, the activities implemented are the most motivating features for the students (Table 5).

Question 2	In your opinion the most motivating aspect of ICT is...
The activities proposed	2
The audiovisual character	1
Interaction in the classroom	0
The technological component	3
Other (differenciation, authentic and current material)	2

Table 5. Teachers' answers to question number 2.

However, from my observation of the diverse ways of conducting lessons and the dynamics of the different groups the methodology and activities provided did not generally fulfil the students' expectations. Even the groups who have access to the netbooks hardly ever use them since most teachers find the technological complications extremely annoying. One of the teachers said during the interviews that the use of netbooks results exhausting for they spend the whole period solving individual problems regarding the netbooks. She also claims that assessment is quite difficult because the programme is not working properly and the students' progress cannot be traced.

In fact, when I asked to attend a lesson in which the netbooks would be used, teachers had to expressly prepare it, which indicates that they are not regularly used. During the interviews, the teachers explained that due to all the technological complications and the dependence on the administrator to provide the students with the passwords they have actually started to use the networks during the second term, about three months after the school year started. Therefore, if any results of the impact of ICT are to be measured it could be done in the third term of the year.

One of the teachers who makes a regular use of the netbooks explained that there are some units which prove too difficult to be approached from the netbooks and the students prefer to follow traditional classes with the support of the textbook and the blackboard. Nevertheless, lessons with the netbooks consist of following the digital book anyway but it seems that some students feel more comfortable having a physical textbook to consult because it gives them a clearer idea of the general organization of the course and they point at which they are. This fact was corroborated by some students I asked during the observation of a lesson conducted with netbooks.

In the case of the students in 3rd year of ESO who have no access to netbooks, they devote two periods a week in the computers room. The lessons observed are dedicated to carry out reinforcement exercises in order to review those concepts they have trouble with. Most of the time the kind of activities proposed consist of mechanical

exercises to fill in the gaps or match different items focusing, thus, on language accuracy. However, the teacher conducting these lessons at the computers room sometimes introduces *WebQuest* or *Treasure Hunts* aimed at fostering students' autonomy and bringing a real communicative purpose to use and practise the language. Nevertheless, this is only done by one of the teachers and not regularly. This teacher claimed during the interview that mechanical exercises are not usually carried out because they do not get students thinking about the mistakes they make but they just keep on trying randomly until they come through the correct answer. She affirms she prefers activities such as *WebQuest* because these lead to a more conscious learning. One of the *Treasure Hunts* carried out in this classroom consisted in students answering a set of questions based on the origins of Saint Patricks Day by looking for information in several online sources. After gathering the requested information some students read aloud the answers which they had just copied from the given sources. However, no follow-up tasks to integrate other skills and to fulfil a clear communicative outcome were designed. When asked about their opinions on this kind of activities the rest of teachers declared they are not very keen on them mainly due to the classroom management problems.

During the interview one of the teachers told me that the last time she tried to implement one of these activities students got too excited, which diverted them from the task. Actually, that is very usual when they are taken to the computers room; the novelty of technologies distracts them form the subject and it is too hard to get them into the task. The result was a frustrated teacher, students not following the instructions, and minimum of time spent on task. They also claim that the syllabus does not allow for these activities to take place more often. They argue that the 3rd year of ESO has only three periods of English a week and that there might not be enough time to cover the syllabus. They suggest that the syllabus should be more flexible and open. My perception is that teachers see these activities as if they offered their students leisure time neglecting, thus, the potential of ICT to achieve the aims in the syllabus. When web-based activities are carried out thoroughly, setting a clear outcome as a result of a coherent sequence of tasks, all four basic skills can be integrated while placing emphasis on a clear communicative objective (Pérez 2004).Therefore, a *WebQuest* or a *Treasure Hunt* cannot be regarded as an isolated activity detached from the syllabus to be carried out only as some kind of entertaining activity but rather as a meaningful practice which could be possibly adopted as a technique to be used regularly in class to achieve the goals set.

Two teachers find the interactive whiteboard a highly rewarding tool due to its visual character. They observe that students are able to follow lessons more easily; they know where they are at any time throughout the lesson. Nevertheless, the interview and classroom observation showed that IWB are not used as such because teachers do not find it worth it. Although classrooms are equipped with *smart* whiteboards, which allows for some of the interaction and dynamism students are demanding, teachers complain that these need to be calibrated which is, in their opinion, a waste of time.

Time, effort and instruction/training

In section 2 on the review of literature, it was seen how some authors have observed a lack of innovation and risk taking on the side of teachers. It has already been mentioned how teachers perform within the limits of their own knowledge without leaving their

comfort zone. Many teachers claim that ICT are very time consuming and effort demanding and that the current role expected from the teacher is utopic. Moreover, teachers often complain about the inefficient instruction received which is concerned with technological rather than with didactic issues. However, when these issues were addressed in my interviews with the teachers, they denied having to spend more time or effort planning and implementing lessons with ICT. On the contrary, they believe they make their job quite easier (Table 6) and only sometimes they do increase their amount of work, especially when dealing with the netbooks for teachers spend quite a lot of time attending individual problems related to their use (passwords, internet connection, evaluation etc.) (Table 7).

Question 5	Do you think that ICT make easier the teachers' job?
Never	0
Few times	0
Quite a lot	3
Sometimes	0
Always	0
Don't know-N/A	0

Table 6. Teachers' answers to question number 5.

Question 6	Do they increase the amount of work?
Never	0
Few times	0
Quite a lot	0
Sometimes	3
Always	0
Don't know-N/A	0

Table 7. Teachers' answers to question number 6.

Although teachers recognise having had enough instruction and training regarding ICT, they would like to deepen in the use of educational platforms such as *moodle, educative*, etc. and the use of educative programmes (Table 8).

Question 10	Would you like to receive more instruction regarding ICT?
Yes	3
No	0

Table 8. Teachers' answers to question number 10.

Only one of the teachers shows interest in instruction regarding equipment maintenance while the other two would rather receive more instruction in the use of educational platforms and programmes (Table 9). The ICT coordinator explained that the *Centro de Profesores y Recursos* (CPR) offers lectures dealing with every single area demanded by the centres. Furthermore, the cooperative spirit of some peers, who aim at the spread of a good use of ICT among the whole educational community, takes them to teach their colleagues voluntarily. This is the case of a teacher from another department who is taking very interesting practices to the classroom and offering instruction to anyone who might be interested just for the sake of promoting a meaningful use of ICT in the school.

Question 11	Which aspects would you like to get more instruction in?
Equipment maintenance	1
IWB use	0
Digital book use	0
Use of educational platforms (*moodle*,*blackboard*,etc.)	2
Use of educational programmes	2
Other	0

Table 9. Teachers' answers to question number 11.

Learners' communicative competence

The main objective of this dissertation is to explore the possible influence of ICT on the improvement of the learners' communicative competence. Unfortunately, there are not established tests within the English department to measure the degree of improvement of the students. These tools are crucial in order to check any kind of improvement through an academic year and, especially, to establish a comparison between the results of previous years (before ICT were used) and the results obtained in 2012. Furthermore, the current inexistence of a diagnostic test from which to depart made it very hard to state solid facts.

Moreover, assessment does not encompass listening, speaking or spoken interaction tasks in this particular school. In fact, oral skills are rarely assessed in class or even practiced as such, not even with the help of ICT. Therefore, the main tool to measure up to which point ICT are an improvement source has been the opinions of the teachers involved and my own observation.

Teachers agree it is too early to conclude that ICT effectively help the learners to improve. ICT were introduced in the school very recently and it is a short period of time to reach conclusions. Nevertheless, they tend to think that ICT are a great help for both teachers and learners. As it was mentioned before, teachers believe that ICT make it easier to design and prepare materials, are a good motivation source and does not imply an extra amount of work. Regarding achievements, they are cautious, as we can see in

questions three and four (Tables 10 and 11). They consider that ICT can often contribute to an improvement of the communicative competence of the learners. However, they have not yet been able to notice an actual improvement in the communicative competence of the learners.

Teachers' answers to questions three and four were rather vague, when a clearer, more positive answer was expected. The students are clearly in favour of the use of ICT in class, since they are motivating, a helpful tool and a way to lighten the amount of work they have to do. It seems that the learners reckon ICT help them to accomplish the different tasks they have to do in class.

Question 3	Do you consider that ICT can contribute to an improvement in learners' communicative competence in EFL?
Never	0
Few times	0
Sometimes	1
Quite a lot	2
Always	0
Don't know-N/A	0

Table 10. Teachers' answers to question number 3.

In spite of the learners' positive perspective, the teachers are not so sure about the efficiency of ICT. Perhaps their reluctance to give a categorical answer relies on the fact that no tests have been done yet and, until a mark is given, they tend not to express strong opinions.

Question 4	Have you observed any improvement in learners' communicative competence?
Never	0
Few times	0
Quite a lot	0
Sometimes	1
Always	0
Don't know-N/A	2

Table 11. Teachers' answers to question number 4.

4.3 ICT COORDINATOR'S OPINIONS

Changes carried out in the school

Regarding the implementation of the programme *Escuela 2.0* the ICT coordinator explained to me that many changes were carried out in the school and the classrooms last year. The introduction of a project of this magnitude implies not only economic investment but also organisational changes that are reflected in the *Reglamento de Régimen Interno* (RRI) and in long hours of meetings. Besides, there is an important labour of involvement and awareness of the families regarding a responsible use of the netbooks. Apart from the programme *Escuela 2.0*, the entire technological infrastructure created both in the classroom and the computers room has, according to the ICT coordinator, brought about changes in the teachers' practices with an increase on their wish to innovate.

Materials and activities

The ICT coordinator states that they are highly satisfied with the technological infrastructures provided. When describing the use of these materials she explains, once more, that the netbooks are mostly used as a medium for the digital books but not to develop the students' communicative competence. Regarding the IWB she confesses that only some teachers use them while students rarely do so. Moreover, those teachers who use it do so as if it were a screen disregarding its potential. Even if simply used as a screen for an overhead projector, the IWB adds plenty of benefits to it as it allows to store lessons, share activities, etc. (Betcher and Lee 2009). Although I had the opportunity of attending a lesson in which the IWB was used in its interactive mode, that is, having students coming to the front and manipulating the IWB, it is true that this is not an everyday practice. In the coordinator's opinion this is due to the possible trouble it might arise from having students moving around and, as it has already been pointed out, the delay caused by the need of calibrating the IWB before every lesson.

Instruction and training

The CPR advisor is in constant contact with the school through a digital platform. The ICT coordinator is satisfied with the advisor's availability to solve any arising problems or doubts. She claims about half of the teachers take part in the instruction provided and they have the possibility of proposing topics they would like to receive more information about. Apart from the lectures offered by the CPR and on-site courses instruction is complemented with on-line courses.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Taking everything into account, it can be concluded that although some students admit they feel more comfortable relying on a physical textbook, in general terms they feel highly motivated by ICT and they do not feel as working when using them. The fact that some of them prefer the textbook might be due to the way the syllabus is organised around grammatical items and the fixed structure it provides. My impression is that students need to have a better understanding of what learning a language entails. The whole academic year is organised around a final test designed to assess grammar. Teachers do not appear to be taking advantage of this interest shown by the students to promote a more communicative, purposeful and meaningful use of the language through the available tools at school.

Even though the students in 1st year of ESO are younger and this fact might be reflected in their answers, like for instance when they express their desire of playing games in class, this should not be regarded as nonsense. Games can provide a good opportunity to practice language in a motivating way. In fact, "digital games provide learners with a unique set of stimuli that promote learning in many different areas, such as cognitive, social and physical dimensions" (Erben 2007) and many of them offer socio-cooperative opportunities. They are also claiming for more dynamic lessons involving interactive and cooperative activities, something that is absolutely plausible and feasible by carrying out tasks, projects or even games using ICT. Another popular practice among students is that of visiting social networks and, consequently, it was one of the most supported proposals. Therefore, why not integrating them in a positive and constructive way? Within the literature review section some good practices with ICT carried out at the secondary school Torres del Palau, in Barcelona, were described. In this very same setting another interesting activity arose as a post-task after watching a film. The group watched *Invictus,* which is the story of the meeting between Nelson Mandela and the captain of the South African rugby union team, François Pieenar, in an attempt to improve the relationships between black and white citizens in the post-apartheid South Africa. After watching the film they contacted one of the rugby players through Facebook and each student asked him a question. Surprisingly, the player answered back all of their questions. As mentioned before, this type of tasks have a real purpose and provide a meaningful outcome. There is no better way of learning a language that using it in real contexts. These are some examples to demonstrate that a meaningful use of ICT is feasible and that there are innovative practices that are currently being carried out.

Overall, from the analysis undertaken it seems that the materials and objectives in the English lessons are the same although the medium has changed. However, teachers do not seem aware of other many possibilities ICT offer especially in the EFL classroom. They express the convenience of a more open syllabus for they feel the obligation of covering all the units in the textbook at the end of the academic year. They fear deviating from the syllabus when offering students more constructivist activities such as *WebQuests*. They do not seem to see the real purpose and value of this kind of activities and regard them as some type of leisure time when it is not the case; it is a good way of using the language meaningfully in real contexts. For these activities to accomplish their autonomy-building and interactive functions they need to have continuity and be frequent in the classroom. In this way overexcitement on the part of students, which –as acknowledged by teachers and through my own observation– tends to be a big problem, could be avoided. Students perceive ICT as something new and,

thus, they feel excited about it. However, if these were frequent practices in the classroom students would finally regard them as any other classroom routine.

Communicative competence does not seem to be the main focus of the lessons as it should be following the Aragonese curriculum and the CEFRL guidelines. The activities implemented do not aim at improving this competence and do not provide situations and clear purposes to use language. When a task is proposed it does not follow a continuity leading to a real outcome which students can regard as their own product and be proud of, which could have a positive impact on the communicative competence. The exposition of their products provides students with a motivating purpose to communicate. Besides, in order to assess if these practices have an impact, the design of assessment tools is needed along with constant monitoring consisting of initial, processual and final assessment. The learners' progress should be measured to determine if ICT have a positive influence.

Nevertheless, from the teachers' point of view the use they are making of ICT is innovative and meaningful. They are not aware of other possibilities ICT offer, especially as regards fostering the students' communicative competence and skill work as highlighted above, although this might be due to the kind of instruction received. Training on the use of ICT seems to focus on technological aspects disregarding its pedagogical dimension.

ICT must be integrated within the teachers' methodology; they should neither bring deep changes into teaching nor be avoided. Through a gradual integration in our planning we will achieve a significant use of technology which will help us to improve students' learning. However, this transformation obviously takes its time and it is not an overnight change. Davies and Hewer assert that "technology alone is not a panacea - although it is often perceived that way by administrators. If insufficient effort is put into training teachers to use technology - and to use it imaginatively - then it is probably better to dispense with technology altogether". In the same way, the *Escuela 2.0* protocol states "para que las TIC tengan verdadero sentido en su incorporación a los centros educativos, las formas de trabajo en el aula deben de ser capaces de aprovechar sus verdaderas posibilidades didácticas". I hope to be able to do so in my future teaching career.

Limitations and contribution

The main limitation of this research lies in the fact that it has been carried out in just one school, where I did my teaching placement. In spite of this fact, this study examines the ideas and beliefs of three different groups of students and several English teachers, so the findings should be relevant depicting the situation of that school.

Another limitation is, obviously, my own inexperience regarding research and its methodology. Although the questionnaires were designed trying not to constrain the subjects' answers, controlling, at the same time, their length in order to avoid superficial questions, they might not cover every relevant aspect for this research. The collection and interpretation of the data obtained by the questionnaires were hard tasks as answers were influenced by individual subjectivity. However, the data was contrasted with interviews to teachers and observation to have a more objective point of view.

Time has been a double limitation. A limitation for me as a researcher, because the amount of time available for the development of this research has been short, and a limitation as regards the implementation and evaluation of the programme *Escuela 2.0.* I expected to find some documents of evaluation and assessment on the programme but the teachers asserted it was too soon to have any ideas about the effectiveness of the use of ICT in the English class.

Thus, this study can only be regarded as a first step for further research. I believe the topic is interesting and worthy of deeper investigation and, with more experience, time and with a broader selection of schools, relevant and more reliable results could be obtained.

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDENTS

Cuestionario para el alumnado

LAS TECNOLOGÍAS DE LA INFORMACIÓN Y LA COMUNICACIÓN (O NUEVAS TECNOLOGÍAS)

Por favor, marca con un tic (√) al lado de la respuesta que consideres adecuada.

1. **¿Cuál de los siguientes aparatos tecnológicos utilizas con más frecuencia?**
   - Ordenador
   - Mp3
   - Móvil
   - Video consola
   - Televisión
   - Otros: señala cuales... _____

     _____

2. **¿Manejas el ordenador con facilidad?**
   - Sí
   - No
3. **¿Tienes ordenador en casa?**
   - Sí
   - No
4. **¿Tienes acceso a internet en casa?**
   - Sí
   - No
5. **¿Cuántas horas al día utilizas el ordenador?**
   - Menos de 1 hora
   - 1 hora
   - 2 horas
   - Más de 2 horas
6. **¿Para qué sueles usar el ordenador?**
   - Para entrar en redes sociales
   - Para jugar
   - Para buscar información
   - Para estudiar y hacer los deberes
   - Otros: señala cuales... _____

     _____

7. **¿Crees que las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TIC) son útiles cómo** herramientas de trabajo o por el contrario sirven sólo para el ocio?
   - Sí, las TIC pueden resultar una herramienta útil de trabajo
   - No, las TIC sólo sirven como forma de ocio.

8. **¿Crees que las TIC contribuyen a aliviar (aligerar) el trabajo o se trabaja por igual?**
    - Sí, las TIC me facilitan el trabajo.
    - No, con las TIC se trabaja por igual.
9. **¿Crees que pueden mejorar tu aprendizaje? ¿te ayudan a entender mejor los contenidos?**
    - Sí
    - No
10. **¿Aumenta el uso de las TIC tu interés en clase?**
    - Sí
    - No
11. **Si la respuesta anterior es positiva: ¿Por qué?**
    - Porque la manera de exponer es más visual.
    - Porque la clase se hace más amena y divertida.
    - Porque te permite trabajar más a tu ritmo.
    - Otros: señala cuales..._____
      _____
12. **Si la repuesta a la pregunta número 10 es negativa señala el por qué.**
    - Por el tipo de actividades
    - Porque me resulta difícil el uso de las tecnologías
    - Porque se usan poco
    - Otros: señala cuales_____
      _____
13. **De los recursos tecnológicos que se usan en clase ¿cuáles son los que más te gustan?**
    - La pizarra digital
    - El proyector
    - Los mini portátiles (pregunta para 1ºESO)
    - Ir al aula de informática (pregunta para el alumnado de 3ºESO)
    - Otros: señala cuales_____
      _____
14. **¿Qué más actividades con las TIC te gustaría poder hacer en clase?**

¡Muchísimas gracias por vuestra colaboración!

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TEACHERS

1- ¿Cree que el uso de TIC en el aula contribuye a motivar al alumnado?

Nunca	Pocas veces	A veces	Bastantes veces	Siempre

2- ¿Cuál cree que es el rasgo más atractivo de las TIC?

Las actividades propuestas	El carácter audiovisual	La interacción en el aula	El componente tecnológico	Otros, señalar cuales:

Otros……..

3- ¿Considera que las TIC pueden contribuir a una mejora del aprendizaje del alumnado en lengua extranjera?

Nunca	Pocas veces	A veces	Bastantes veces	Siempre	No sabe/No contesta

4- ¿Ha observado alguna mejora en los resultados obtenidos por el alumnado?

Nunca	Pocas veces	A veces	Bastantes veces	Siempre	No sabe/No contesta

5- ¿Cree que las TIC facilitan la tarea del profesorado?

Nunca	Pocas veces	A veces	Bastantes veces	Siempre	No sabe/No contesta

6- ¿Considera que suponen un incremento del volumen de trabajo y del esfuerzo por parte del profesorado?

Nunca	Pocas veces	A veces	Bastantes veces	Siempre	No sabe/No contesta

7- ¿Hace usted uso de las TIC en su actividad docente? ¿Con qué frecuencia?

Nunca	Pocas veces	A veces	Bastantes veces	Siempre	No sabe/No contesta

8- Utiliza las TIC…

Como recurso para preparar sus clases (búsqueda de información, vídeos, fotos, evaluación, etc.)	Como soporte durante sus clases (Pizarra digital, libro digital,etc.)	Para ofrecer material extra a su alumnado (blogs,wikis,etc.)	Otros, señalar:

9- ¿Considera que ha recibido la formación adecuada para hacer un correcto uso de las TIC?

Más que suficiente	Suficiente	Insuficiente	Inexistente	Soy autodidacta	No sabe/No contesta

10- ¿Le gustaría recibir más formación en TIC?

SI	NO

11- ¿En qué aspectos de las TIC le gustaría recibir formación? (puede marcar más de uno):

Mantenimiento de equipos/redes	Uso de la pizarra digital	Uso del libro digital	Uso de plataformas educativas (*moodle, blackboard*, etc.)	Uso de programas didácticos	Otros, señalar:

APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE ICT COORDINATOR

TÉCNICO

SERVIDOR 2.0

1: no tienen
2: funciona mal
3: mejora algo la conexión
4: funciona muy bien

AULAS

1: muy mal instaladas
2: bien, pero con fallos
3: muy bien

PDIS

1: sin comenzar a utilizar
2: las usan sólo algunos profesores
3: las usan la mayor parte de los profesores
4. uso por los alumnos de forma esporádica
5: uso por los alumnos habitualmente

CAMBIOS EN EL CENTRO

INNOVACIÓN EN AULA

1: no se aprecia ningún cambio en las aulas
2: comienza a verse alguna innovación
3: prácticas innovadoras habituales algunos profesores
4: prácticas innovaciones extendidas

INNOVACIÓN EN EL CENTRO

1: no se aprecia ningún cambio en el centro
2: comienza a verse alguna innovación
3: innovaciones en la organización
4: cambios profundos en el centro

FORMACIÓN Y ASESORAMIENTO

PARTICIPACIÓN

1: ningún profesor hace formación Escuela 2.0
2: la hace algún profesor aislado (por ejemplo, online)
3. sólo hace formación una minoría del profesorado
4. más o menos la mitad de los profesores hacen formación
5. hace formación Escuela 2.0 la mayor parte de los docentes

ASESORAMIENTO

1: nunca nadie ha solicitado apoyo o asesoramiento
2: ocasionalmente se ha consultado al asesor
3: la relación con el asesor / colaborador es habitual

MINIS

1: no se usan para nada
2: se usan sólo para ofimática
3: se usan para navegar por internet
4: son soporte de libros/contenidos digitales
5: se usan para comunicar por internet

ACTIVIDADES

1: no hay formación Escuela 2.0
2: hay un seminario Escuela 2.0
3 hay un proyecto de formación en centro con Escuela 2.0
4: algún profesor hace formación online Escuela 2.0

APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

As you might know, as a student of the Master Degree in English Language Teaching I need to present a final piece of research. The topic I have chosen to investigate and write on has been influenced by the implementation, in this school, of the programme *Escuela 2.0.* Taking into account that we are teaching digital natives I thought it would be interested to see in which ways ICT affect the teaching-learning process. The main aim of my research project is to state whether ICT contribute to an improvement of the students' communicative competence. In order to collect and analyse data for my study I would like to interview you to find about your feelings regarding the introduction of ICT in the classroom in general and the programme *Escuela 2.0* in particular. Thanks for your collaboration.

Questions asked during the interviews. These were open to discussing other related topics.

1. To begin, I would like to learn which you think are the main advantages and disadvantages of the programme *Escuela 2.0.*
2. Among the equipment provided by the programme, IWB seems a highly interesting tool. How do you feel about it?
3. Do you think that all these technological devices contribute to motivating the students? Why? Why not?
4. Which are the devices you use more often? What for?
5. During my placement I have observed that some of you make use of *Web Quest* and *Treasure Hunt* activities. What are the activities you like the most? Are there other activities that you may be thinking of using in the future?

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