



Iranian Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of Interactive Whiteboards in English Language Teaching Classrooms

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Abstract

This study explored the attitudes of Iranian teachers about utilizing Interactive White Boards (IWBs) in EFL classrooms. The main goal of this paper was to evaluate teachers' beliefs about IWB use and frequency of IWB usage in Iranian schools. To achieve this aim, 174 EFL teachers who used IWB for instruction from different educational levels (grade 6 to 11) participated in this study. A questionnaire consisting of 22 questions was developed by the teacher-researcher based on an extensive literature review on related instructional theories and models. The questionnaire was distributed to the English teachers through both paper and e-mail. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the IWB use were studied with respect to four main themes: instructional effects, motivational effects, usability, and frequency. The findings of this study indicated that Iranian EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards the effects of IWB use in their classrooms in general. It was also found that the more teachers frequently use IWBs, the more they improve their IWB competencies.

Keywords: Interactive Whiteboard (IWB), teacher attitude, teaching environment, EFL classroom

INTRODUCTION

Technology, ever changing, has become more accessible to teachers in the last few years. Teachers need to be able to use technology to increase their professional development and to have a positive contact with students on a regular basis. The Interactive Whiteboard proved to be an exciting and fun bit of technology to integrate (Bacon, 2011; Al-Saleem, 2012).

IWBs create something of a "wow" effect, being brightly lit, colorful and dynamic. They allow for the easy incorporation of multimedia into lessons and access to the internet by the class as a whole group (Levy, 2002). IWBs are said to provide for different input

preferences, visual, auditory and kinesthetic, (Ball, 2003). The educational software available allows abstract ideas to be modeled in visually stimulating ways helping to deepen learner's understanding (Miller, 2003). Beeland (2002) found that the use of the IWB increased learner engagement with the lesson, primarily as a result of the quality of the visual presentation. Glover, Miller and Averis (2004) report that teachers see IWBs as superior to traditional boards because of the possibility of using multiple screens, annotation of the screen as the lesson proceeds, "drag and drop", "hide and reveal", color shading and the capability to recall previous stages in the lesson.

IWBs are seen as a valuable tool supporting interactive whole class teaching, the focus of some attention in recent years. One of the reasons is that it provides an ICT alternative to rooms with banks of computers which came to be seen as giving individuals access to technology yet reinforcing the idea that using ICT is something apart from rather than integrated into the normal work of the class (Ofsted, 2004). Language teachers are wary of moves to put them back in front of the board for long stretches of time, seeing the IWB as potentially luring the teacher into a presentation style of teaching leaving the learners in a passive role (Gray, Hagger-Vaughan, Pilkington & Tomkins, 2005).

Educational institutions have tried to provide students better learning environments by equipping them with the latest technology. This effort has encouraged instructors to use various assistive technologies such as computers and the Internet in their classrooms especially over the last decade; this process is called integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) (Hsu, 2010). As a part of the ICT integration process, the interactive whiteboard (IWB) has been one technology most invested in especially by European countries such as England, Spain, and Turkey (Holmes, 2009; Türel, 2010). As of 2010, England has the highest IWB penetration rate (73%) in the world and many countries including Denmark (50%) and the USA (35%) have substantially increased IWB rates in classrooms; however, according to a recent research report (McIntyre-Brown, 2011), the average rate for Asian countries is still lower than many European and American countries.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

IWB's promising benefits to instruction have led to its increased popularity and attractiveness as expressed by a number of researchers (Bell, 2002; Levy, 2002; Becta, 2003; Brown, 2003; Beauchamp Parkinson, 2005; Smith, Higgins, Wall, & Miller, 2005; Slay, Siebörger, & Hodgkinson-Williams, 2008). According to Aytac (2013), the use of IWB facilitates teaching-learning process and makes it more enjoyable and funny.

Considering the possible advantages of IWBs, teachers can enrich their instructions with various instructional strategies and techniques and, therefore, increase students' attention, motivation, participation, and collaboration by means of an IWB (Levy, 2002; Beauchamp & Parkinson, 2005; Hall Higgins, 2005; Glover et al., 2011; Benmansour & Meziane, 2013). Although those researchers strongly emphasize the positive effects of this technology when appropriately integrated into classrooms, the true success of IWBs

depends on how they have been used by teachers in a learning context. Teachers report that they have used IWBs through appropriate instructional strategies and resources, and above all, learned to incorporate the IWB with their course content. Hence researchers, who have attempted to evaluate IWB use, have relied on perceptions of teachers as the main data source (Slay, Siebörger, & Hodgkinson-Williams, 2008), to determine the effectiveness of this technology in school settings.

In order to better understand teachers' IWB use, the examination of different factors such as time, instructional strategies, and techniques is needed. Depending on the frequency and duration of IWB use, teachers gradually develop their skills and abilities (Hodge & Anderson, 2007). However, overuse of IWBs as a presentation tool in a teacher-led instructional setting may deteriorate students' motivation, attention, and consequently, the efficiency of instruction (Hall & Higgins, 2005).

Results of studies in various contexts such as different countries, across educational levels, and subject domains demonstrate teachers' positive perceptions about IWBs (Slay, Siebörger, & Hodgkinson-Williams, 2008). However in some studies, teachers reported several IWB issues that may dramatically decrease the effectiveness of IWBs in their courses (Somyürek, Atasoy, & Özdemir, 2009). As a crucial issue, many studies (Levy, 2002; BECTA, 2003; Smith et al., 2005; Aytaç, 2013) address teachers' insufficient IWB knowledge, experiences and skills. Beginners use IWBs as a traditional blackboard, while advanced users use IWBs to construct meaning using interactive and fluid lesson strategies. Technical competencies are examined looking at navigating an operation system, importing media from different sources, properly using hyperlinks between programs, and regularly saving lessons (Beauchamp, 2004). Based on this framework, it was found that higher-level experienced teachers use more IWB features.

According to Levy (2002), increasing use of technology is correlated to teachers' acceptance and positive attitudes about the technology use. The duration or frequency of teachers' IWB use is also regarded as correlating factor that may impact teachers' attitudes about IWBs. Therefore, the major purpose of this study is to investigate Iranian teachers' attitudes about IWB use and usage frequency of IWB in EFL classrooms.

In many studies (e.g., Bell, 1998; Beeland, 2002; Cogill, 2002; Levy, 2002; Beauchamp, 2004; Wall, Higgins & Smith, 2005; Moss et al., 2007), teachers' preferences, needs and perceptions about IWBs have been examined to better understand how these factors impact IWB use. The majority of those studies investigated teachers' perceptions focusing on particular variables such as attitudes (Beeland, 2002), motivation (Wall, Higgins, & Smith, 2005; Torff & Tirota, 2010), satisfaction (Bell, 1998), interaction (Levy, 2002; Glover et al., 2007), acceptances (Saltan et al., 2010), and technical issues of IWB use (Wall, Higgins, & Smith, 2005; Somyürek et al., 2009).

In the literature, it seems there are some limitations regarding overall IWB evaluation. Some studies only focused on a specific discipline area (e.g. Glover et al., 2007) while others have a limited sample size (e.g., Bell, 1998; Beeland, 2002; Tozcu, 2008). Additionally, teacher-participants who have not used or have just started to use IWBs in their classes may be an inappropriate data source for an evaluation of perceptions because of their insufficient knowledge, experience, and attitudes about the use of IWBs. Current researches need to be done to best understand teachers' IWB use at least in Iranian schools.

Bearing in mind the increase of IWB technology investments in Iranian schools, there is a strong need for the evaluation and thus improvement of actual IWB use. Considering the importance of teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the effects of IWB use in classroom settings, this study focuses on investigation of Iranian English teachers' attitudes about using IWB as well as the present state of their IWB use in classroom setting. Since English language teaching is one of the necessary courses embedded in educational system in Iran and special attention is devoted to it in the society, the main focus of the present study is on EFL teaching.

THIS STUDY

This study intended to explore the Iranian teachers' beliefs about utilizing Interactive Whiteboards for teaching in EFL Classrooms. The impacts of IWBs in classroom settings have been examined recently in some studies (Mathews-Aydinli & Elaziz, 2010; Al-Saleem, 2012; Aytaç, 2013). The present study looked at the teachers' beliefs about IWB and the duration of IWB use in practical setting. In other words, the study aimed at exploring teachers' attitudes on the different effects of IWB use as well as the frequency of IWB usage in Iranian EFL classrooms. Hence, the objective of this study has been addressed the following questions:

- What are the Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes about IWB use in classroom setting?
- What are the usage frequencies of IWB in Iranian EFL classrooms?

METHOD

The present study was carried out with Iranian EFL teachers. A quantitative descriptive research method was employed to investigate the teachers' perceptions regarding the current state of IWB use in schools. Given that the researcher needed to collect data from many people, it was out of scope for this study to visit each class and observe the use of IWB for each teacher. The potential for self-report bias was minimized since the data was anonymous and was not shared with anyone who directly knew the participants (Chan, 2009). Data was collected from teachers via a questionnaire developed specifically for this study.

Participants

In this study, 174 available Iranian English teachers, both male and female ranging from grades six to eleven, who have used IWBs in their schools, participated in this study. Since the focus of this study was to evaluate how teachers use IWBs rather than why teachers do not use IWBs, it was essential to select participants among ones who have had sufficient knowledge of and experience with IWBs and also were familiar with the issues of IWBs in practice.

Instrumentation

The researcher examined previous studies looking at instructional theories, current practices and perceptions of IWB users in order to develop a questionnaire consistent with the study's purpose, (Bell, 1998; Beeland, 2002; Cogill, 2002; Beauchamp, 2004; Wall et al., 2005; Moss et al., 2007). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were established before they were used with the participants in the main study. Four specialists in language teaching and testing were asked to review the initial draft of the questionnaire, and there was a general consensus among them concerning the content validity of the questionnaire. This step was vital to achieve a comprehensible and relevant questionnaire in terms of face and content validity (Black & Champion, 1976). The reliability of the questionnaire estimated by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.83.

The final questionnaire included two sections. The first section consisted of 22 Likert scale items from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The researcher also classified the Likert scale items along with the existing literature into four themes to provide a better understanding of main dimensions of IWB use. Those themes are labeled as instructional effects of IWB use ($\alpha = 0.83$), motivational effects of IWB use ($\alpha = 0.85$), usability of IWB ($\alpha = 0.82$), and frequency of IWB use ($\alpha = 0.86$). The first theme includes items related to effects of IWBs on teaching in Iranian EFL classrooms while the second theme has items addressing the motivational issues of IWBs. The third theme includes items concerning the usability of IWBs in EFL classroom setting. The last theme includes items addressing the effects of frequency of IWB use.

The second section of the IWB questionnaire included three multiple choice questions about the frequency of IWB usage in current EFL classrooms. Original languages of both paper-based and e-mail-based questionnaires delivered for this study were Persian.

Procedure

The present study is designed on a qualitative-quantitative survey basis. Surveys are one of the most common methods of collecting data on attitudes and opinions from a large group of participants (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 92). As it was illustrated in the participant section, 174 EFL male and female teacher-participants who are IWB users in their classrooms were selected as the sample of the study. Considering the goals for the study, a descriptive analysis was performed to understand teachers' general perceptions about

the effects of using IWBs as well as the current state of teachers' frequency of IWB usage in classroom setting. A questionnaire in the form of both e-mail and paper including questions about perceptions related to IWBs administered to Iranian EFL teachers. The rationale for using questionnaire was that questionnaires allow researchers to gather information that participants are able to report about themselves, such as their beliefs and motivations (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

To provide a clear picture, percentages of teachers' agreement levels in the first section of questionnaire were presented in two groups: agreeing (agree and strongly agree options), and disagreeing (disagree and strongly disagree options). Teachers' frequency of IWB usage statistics in Iranian EFL classrooms were shown in the second section of the questionnaire. For internal consistency and reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated and interpreted for each theme based on the rules (0.9= high level, 0.8= moderate, 0.7= low level, 0.6= acceptable level, and <0.6= unacceptable level) (Murphy & David, 1991). The validity of the instrument was assessed by four experts in language teaching and testing.

RESULTS

Results for the study are presented in two sections: 1) descriptive statistical results of teachers' responses to the questionnaire items, 2) Teachers' IWB usage statistics.

Teachers' responses to the questionnaire items

The results of teachers' responses to the 22 Likert scale items in the first section of the questionnaire were examined according to four main themes: 1) instructional effects of IWB use, 2) motivational effects of IWB use, 3) usability of IWB, 4) frequency of IWB use.

Instructional effects of IWB use

Teachers responded to the questions related to the instructional effects of the IWB use on teaching in Iranian EFL classrooms (Table 1). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this part of the questionnaire is 0.83.

Table 1. Instructional effects of IWB use

Statements	N	Disagree	Agree	Mean	SD
Q1. Interactive whiteboard gives me more time to interact with students easily.	162	11.7	67.9	3.73	1.002
Q2. IWB restricts the movement of students in the classroom.	162	37.0	34.06	2.99	1.098
Q3. The way I give instruction has been changed since I began to use an IWB.	158	17.7	41.8	3.30	0.95
Q4. IWB helps me to manage instructional time effectively.	161	7.5	67.1	3.83	0.87
Q5. IWB facilitates the classroom management for me.	156	8.3	96.9	3.79	0.87

Q6. IWB provides advantages to me to make course content more visual.	174	2.9	77.0	4.16	0.904
Q7. IWB facilitates discussions on the content.	160	6.3	70.0	3.84	0.843
Q8. IWB helps me to share content for team work in the class.	168	10.1	69.6	3.90	1.010
Q9. IWB helps me to use the computer and projector more effectively than before.	172	16.9	49.4	3.45	1.011

Motivational effects of IWB use

Teachers' general attitudes and opinions related to IWB use were examined for motivational effects of IWBs (Table 2). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this part of the questionnaire is 0.85.

Table 2. Motivational effects of IWB use

Statements	N	Disagree	Agree	Mean	SD
Q10. I feel comfortable when I use interactive whiteboard in teaching.	163	10	82.8	4.12	0.837
Q11. I am interested in technology use in the classroom.	162	7.4	75.9	3.90	0.86
Q12. I feel confident in using interactive whiteboard to design new instructional situations.	157	7.6	70.1	3.82	0.859
Q13. Using interactive whiteboard makes me active.	172	7.0	70.3	3.97	0.936
Q14. I enjoy teaching with an IWB	172	5.8	82.6	4.27	0.943
Q15. I notice my IWB motivations are improving day by day.	157	3.8	74.5	3.95	0.830
Q16. Learning how to use an IWB is essential to me.	159	11.3	65.4	3.78	1.017
Q17. Because of using an IWB, I feel myself more prepared for instruction.	160	5.6	81.3	4.06	0.856

Usability of IWB

In order to examine the usability of IWBs, teachers were asked to respond to three statements (Table 3). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this group of questions is 0.82.

Table 3. Usability of IWB

Statements	N	Disagree	Agree	Mean	SD
Q18. IWB can be used for all language skills.	157	29.9	31.8	3.08	1.074
Q19. My course content is suitable with using an IWB.	161	8.7	64.0	3.74	.925
Q20. IWB can be used with various instructional methods and techniques.	157	14.0	58.0	3.57	0.975

Frequency of IWB Use

Teachers' opinions related to the effects of frequency of IWB use in EFL classrooms were examined (Table 4). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this part of the questionnaire is 0.86.

Table 4. Frequency of IWB use

Statements	N	Disagree	Agree	Mean	SD
Q21. The more I frequently use IWB and continued practice, the more I improve my IWB competency.	162	1.9	91.4	4.41	0.701
Q22. The more I frequently use IWB, the more I increase my positive attitudes towards IWB.	172	5.8	82.6	4.27	0.943

Teachers' usage frequencies of IWB

In the second section of the IWB questionnaire, Iranian EFL teachers were asked questions about the frequency of IWB use in their classrooms (Table 5).

Table 5. Teachers' frequency of IWB usage statistics

		Frequency	Percent (%)
1- How long have you used an IWB?	<1 year	8	4.6
	1-2 year	102	58.6
	>2 years	64	36.8
2- How many hours do you use IWB in a week?	<1 hour	6	3.7
	1-2 hour	26	14.9
	2-3 hour	117	67
	3-4 hour	25	14.4
3- What are the usage frequencies of IWB?	sometimes	64	36.8
	usually	79	45.4
	always	31	17.8

As Table 5 related to question one represents, almost 5% of Iranian teachers reported using IWB less than one year while almost 60% of teachers reported using IWB between 1 or 2 years and about 40% of teachers reported using IWB between more than 2 years.

Concerning the second question, 'How many hours do you use IWB in a week', a small number of teachers (3.7%) reported using IWB between less than 1hour per week while the majority of teachers (67%) reported using IWB between 2 or 3 hours per week. As shown in Table 5, when asked to select one of three levels for their IWB use (sometimes, usually, or always), teachers mostly selected either 'sometimes' (36.8%) or 'usually' (45.4%) while 'always' had the lowest rate (17.8%).

DISCUSSION

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes about the IWB use were studied looking at four main themes: instructional effects, motivational effects, usability, and frequency. The first theme is related with the effects of IWBs on teaching process and also addresses the advantages of IWBs. Similar to the results of previous IWB studies (Beeland, 2002; Moss et al., 2007; Erduran & Tataroğlu, 2009; Mathews-Aydinli & Elazi, 2010; Saltan, ArslanGök, 2010; Bacon, 2011; Al-Saleem, 2012; Benmansour & Meziane, 2013), teachers in the present study have positive perceptions about the use of IWBs in general.

Concerning the first item of instructional theme in the questionnaire, almost 70% of the teachers believe that they can easily interact and communicate with students by using an IWB and keep students engaged during a lesson. This finding supports the study conducted by Gerard and Widener (1999) who found that the Interactive Whiteboard increases interaction and conversation in the classroom; it helps with the presentation of new cultural and linguistic elements. This is regarded as a major benefit of IWBs in terms of classroom management (BECTA, 2003). However, teachers who only present course content with an IWB in the same manner as a data projector may not give students an opportunity to sufficiently use it during instruction. Such kinds of teacher-centered practices may lead to a decrease in students' attention and motivation. Aligned with constructivist perspectives, teachers can encourage students to actively participate in the learning process by working on the IWB individually or in groups (Smith et al., 2005).

The second question, 'IWB restricts the movement of students in the classroom' has the lowest mean score ($M = 2.99$). The low agreement level for this item indicates that teachers don't believe in a predominant teacher-centered modality in the classroom. The finding related to this item is consistent with the current studies (BECTA, 2003; Smith et al., 2005) which maintain the importance of a student-centered modality using IWBs for effective teaching.

Teachers were asked the question, 'The way I give instruction has changed since I began to use an IWB' (Q3). Almost 42% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed to this statement which can mean that some level of pedagogical change may have occurred due to IWB technologies. This finding supports the findings of (Benmansour & Meziane, 2013) that it is hard for teachers to match IWB technology to existing pedagogy so they need a pedagogical change.

Two items in the questionnaire are related to managerial issues of instruction: time management (Q4) and classroom management (Q5). According to the results, almost 70% of the teachers believe that IWB provides time efficiency and classroom management during instruction. Likewise, researchers such as Levy (2002) and Tozcu (2008) suggest that using an IWB reduces the time spent recreating instructional materials and content since teachers have an electronic copy from the IWB whereas they do not have an electronic copy with traditional boards.

The sixth item which basically refers to the advantages relating to the visualization of course content has a high mean score ($M = 4.16$). This finding indicates that IWB provides advantages for more than three-fourth of the teachers to make course content more visual. Teachers can design and use visually attractive materials compatible with an IWB; moreover, they can enhance their presentations, before or during instruction, with visual effects including highlighting, coloring, drawing, zooming, or can import visual objects from other sources (e.g., web-pages, paint) via using screen shot or copy-paste feature (Türel, 2010). Wall, Higgins, and Smith (2005) suggest that such presentations help teachers to draw student attention to course content and also facilitate student retention of what they learned and facilitate student understanding of concepts (Levy, 2002).

The agreement level for the question seven, 'IWB facilitates discussions on the content in class' reveals teachers' acceptance (70%) about IWB effect for class discussions. BECTA (2006) suggests that an essential IWB strategy would include using IWBs for initiating discussions about the course content. It contrasts with Latham's (2002) teacher-focused research that found one-third of the teachers felt that pupils from all ability groups were more willing to take part in lessons.

Concerning the eighth item in instructional theme, almost three-fourth of the teachers can use an IWB to share content for a class or a small group discussion and use group work or activities in classroom setting. An IWB can be used for students to share their ideas. The finding of this study related to question eight supports the previous study conducted by Beauchamp and Parkinson (2005) who reported that teachers are expected to improve their skills in terms of effectively using IWB strategies and, to promote their instructional activities and group work in the classroom based on the promises of IWBs. As Gray, et al (2005) point out, pair work is a vital practice tool in language teaching which can supplement whole class IWB work, not be replaced by it.

Related to ninth item (Q9), about half of the teachers (49.4%) agreed to this item which indicates teachers' neutrality about IWB help for the more effective use of the computer and projector. However, it is asserted that IWBs can enhance the functionality of existing ICT such as computers and projectors by adding interactivity to these media that make it distinct from traditional PowerPoint presentations (Hall & Higgins, 2005; Smith et al., 2005; Torff & Tirotta, 2010).

On the other hand, by focusing on motivational effects of IWB use, the five items in this theme (from item 10 to item 14) have the high agreement levels. As the results show, most teachers (more than 70%) agreed that using an IWB is motivating, interesting, engaging, and enjoyable for teachers. This finding is in tune with other studies (Bell, 2002; BECTA, 2003; Smith et al., 2005; Mathews-Aydinli & Elaziz, 2010). Kent (2003) indicated that teaching with Interactive Whiteboards is more fun, more engaging, more exciting and is impacting on the enjoyment, speed and depth of learning (Lee and Boyle, 2003). Benmansour and Meziane, (2013) believed that IWB leads to greater motivation in learning in an EFL classroom setting.

In relation to the fifteenth question, a key finding is that most teachers (74.5%) agree or strongly agree that they are aware of the continuous improvement of their IWB use motivations. Bacon (2011) found that one of the key sources for teachers IWB motivational development is coming from their own experience. Furthermore, teachers (65.4) agreed on the importance of learning to use an IWB (Q16) by reporting how valuable the IWB is for their instruction.

The agreement level for the item seventeen, 'Because of using an IWB, I feel myself more prepared for instruction.' reveals that the majority of teachers (81.3) agreed or strongly agreed to this statement. According to Bacon (2011), teachers need to be able to use technology to increase their professional development.

For the usability theme, in question eighteen teachers were asked to indicate whether IWBs can be used for all language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing,) in teaching English. Teachers' perceptions regarding to usability of IWBs for all language skills in EFL classrooms are not positive because this item has the lowest mean score ($M=3.08$). Concerning nineteenth item in usability of IWBs theme, teachers believe that their course content is suitable with using an IWB. The finding related to question nineteen confirmed the previous findings (Allen, 2010; Bacon, 2011). The results of their studies suggested the positive influence of Interactive Whiteboards in language teaching and learning.

More than half of the teachers agreed that IWBs can be used with various instructional methods and techniques in EFL classrooms (Q20). This finding is consistent with the previous study (Latham, 2002), in which it is argued that two-thirds of the teachers felt that the Interactive Whiteboard offered different methods and strategies for teachers to develop interactive teaching. These findings suggest that IWBs are not tied to a specific method of teaching English.

Regarding frequency of IWB use theme, the very high agreement level for the twenty first question reveals that most teachers (91.4) strongly agreed to this statement. In this study, almost all teachers believe that the more they use IWBs frequently, the more they improve their IWB competencies and the more they cope with the emerging issues of IWB use as competent users. As Glover et al. (2007) stated, 'teachers need time to develop their technological fluency and competency, apply pedagogic principles to the available materials or to the development of materials, and then to incorporate the IWB seamlessly into their teaching' (p. 17).

There is also a high agreement level for the last item (Q22). This level of agreement shows that encouraging teachers to use an IWB more frequently certainly help them to have more positive attitudes towards using it. According to Moss et al. (2007), teachers who frequently used an IWB were more likely to have positive perceptions towards IWB use.

In the second part of the questionnaire (Table 5), the Iranian teachers were asked three questions related to the real frequency of IWB usage in their classrooms. As the statistics

show the majority of teachers described themselves as active users of Interactive Whiteboards in practical setting because the frequency of IWB use indicates the acceptance of this technology use. According to IWB.net (2007), skilled teachers are already taking advantage of the facility with the IWBs to input and readily integrate stimulus material from all manner of local and networked digital sources to create highly engaging and productive teaching situations. They're using the input from VCRs, the Internet, the Intranet, cable television, CD-ROMs, CDs, DVDs, computer softwares, scanners, digital cameras, and even the cell phones.

To sum up, teachers who participated in this study have positive attitudes about the usefulness and usability of IWBs in general. These attitudes are essential indicators in terms of the acceptance and the prediction of effective use of IWB, as outlined by Davis's (1989) model. Concerning teachers' effective use of any technology, several issues are associated with each other such as acquiring appropriate skills and knowledge, perceived efficiency, and usage frequency of the technology. Even after a comprehensive IWB training session, teachers who do not sufficiently use an IWB and do not practice what they have learned may have lost their initial IWB skills and knowledge as well as their confidence over time (Slay et al., 2008).

It is clear that teachers need training particularly on using effective instructional strategies for IWB-assisted courses in order to transform their pedagogy into more student-centered, social and interactive learning. However, there are two existing problems: 1) time training sessions provided by the representative of IWB supplier are superficial, and 2) schools do not have the time and budget to provide regular training sessions. As such, teachers should be supported to continuously use IWBs in their classrooms by working with their peers in order to improve their IWB competencies and knowledge as suggested by Shenton and Pagett (2007). In other words, the more the teachers use IWBs, the more they increase their IWB competencies as well as their positive attitudes towards using IWB in their classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study attempts to investigate teachers' beliefs about the effects of using IWBs for teaching by recruiting IWB users in Iranian EFL classrooms. It is clear that teachers are impressed by the use of technology in class. The findings of the present study demonstrate the characteristics of effective IWB use based on the perceptions of teachers who are IWB users. In general, participants were satisfied with the IWB use and they accepted IWBs as a powerful and practical technology that facilitates teachers' instructions and increase their motivation in teaching.

The results of this study also reflect the fact that there is positive relationship between the frequency of IWB use and improving IWB competency as well as having positive perception about IWB. In other words, most teachers reported that their IWB skills were improved as they continued practice with IWB and stated that they develop positive attitudes towards IWBs, as they frequently used IWBs. The findings of the study may help

teachers who are interested in effective IWB use and integration of ICT with their teaching material. If we are to expect EFL teachers to improve their teaching in the classroom, they need to develop their technology competencies and positive attitudes through continued practice.

In Iran, Interactive whiteboards are relatively new. Hence, more research, both in quantitative by nature and qualitative by nature, is much needed to shed light on all aspects of their use. Interactive whiteboards are new to most teachers and students as well. It would be beneficial to do research in schools that have embedded the Interactive whiteboards in the classroom practice. This would assist in assessing the impact after the Interactive whiteboards are no longer felt a novelty. Much research is needed to assess the advantages and disadvantages of Interactive whiteboards, to justify the cost incurred in integrating this technology into the teaching and learning environment. Such research would be useful to make sure that schools make the right choices and get value for money. Future research should focus on identifying the most appropriate uses and applications of IWB technology in different EFL contexts. We certainly need more context-embedded and situation-based research to improve the status quo concerning the use of IWB in Iranian EFL classrooms.

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