

## Integrating ICT in foreign language teaching: A Sri Lankan experience

Neelakshi Chandrasena Premawardhena<sup>1</sup> and Chandima H. de Silva<sup>2</sup>

Foreign language learning has become increasingly popular in Sri Lanka during the past few decades. This study discusses the significant contribution ICT could make to foreign language teaching in Sri Lanka.

Native speakers are born with the competence to grasp the language(s) spoken and used in the environment they grow up. However complicated the phonetic, phonological, syntactic or semantic structure of the particular language(s) may appear to an outsider, the native speaker acquires it with such ease and competence, which makes human language ability a unique phenomenon.

The foreign language learner has to acquire this language competency with much effort. Thus it is the task of the foreign language teacher to impart the language knowledge effectively to minimise the difficulties faced by the learner. Furthermore, an integral part of learning a foreign language is, understanding the culture and lifestyle of the particular speech community. The limited number of hours devoted to class room teaching is not sufficient to acquire a language or impart knowledge required to master the finer points, mainly the cultural and sociolinguistic aspects of a language. The use of idioms, figures of speech, proverbs, and sociolinguistic variables, for instance, demand a deeper knowledge of understanding than learning the basic rules of grammar and vocabulary of a language.

This paper discusses how the integration of ICT could improve language teaching and pave way for more effective skills in foreign language acquisition. Thus the aim of the study is to find the effectiveness of technology enhanced foreign language teaching comprising language learning software, speech synthesis, web-based technology, virtual platforms for seminars and exchange of information and multimedia content. The study focuses mainly on data available from two pilot projects conducted at University of Kelaniya in integrating ICT in foreign language teaching at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. However, it is expected that the results obtained will benefit foreign language teaching in Sri Lanka at large and reach a wider audience to encourage the use of ICT in language teaching more effectively in the future.

**Key Words:** Information Communication Technology (ICT), computer-assisted learning; technology-enhanced learning; teaching methodology; foreign language teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Modern Languages, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. neelakshi3@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Department of Statistics and Computer Science, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. chandima@kln.ac.lk