PERCEIVED ATTITUDE IN USING ICT FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AMONG STUDENTS OF EDUCATION/ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES IN NIGER DELTA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study is on the perceived attitude of Education/ English and Literary Studies students of Niger Delta University towards the use of ICT in learning English. It also assessed their extent of awareness and utilization. The population for the study consisted of one hundred and nine and nine (109) students of the Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University. The whole population was adopted as the sample. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Perceived Attitude Towards ICT Questionnaire (PATICTQ). The mean statistics was used for data analysis. Results show that the students have a positive attitude towards the use of ICT and are using it to some extent for learning. Recommendations were made, including the Faculty and School making a concerted effort to institutionalize the use of ICT for teaching and learning.

Keywords: Perceived Attitude, Using ICT for Learning English, Students of Education, English, Literary Studies, Niger Delta University

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Introduction

ICT is an abbreviation for Information and Communication Technologies. It is defined by various individuals in diverse ways depending on the benefit they derive from using its facilities. Evoh, (2007) refers to ICT as "the hardware, software, networks and media for the collection, storage, processing, transmission and presentation of information (voice, data, text, images), as well as related services". Ogunsola, (2005) states that "ICT is used to refer to an electronic based system of information transmission, reception, processing and retrieval, which has drastically changed the way we think, the way we live and the environment in which we live" (p3). This therefore points to the fact that ICT facilities and equipment are devices which makes the accumulation and dissemination of information easier and faster across borders. Freeman & Hasnaoui, (2010) opines that ICT is a combination of technological devices that are developed for the purpose of sharing information and communication. Thus, Communication vis-à-vis information sharing plays a central role in the use of ICTs. Again, ICT encompasses the effective use of equipment and programmes to access, retrieve, convert, store, organize, manipulate and present data and information (Gay and Blads, 2005).

ICT is often used in reference to personal computers (PCs) or laptops, with many potential functions and uses, and attached to the internet which provides access to large quantity/quality of information and enables the PC to be used as a communication medium. It includes other devices such as digital still cameras, video cameras and others, which are used in education and mobile telephones seemingly best known in education for their nuisance value (Adewa-Oguiebgen and Iyamu, 2005). Thus, ICT as a term

is broader than computer. However, a general definition of ICT states that it refers to "forms of technology used for creating, displaying, storing, manipulating, and exchanging information" (Meleisea, 2007, cited in Nguyen, Williams &Nguyen, 2012, p.3). More specifically, especially within the scope of the current study, ICT refers to computer-based technologies such as desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and software and internet-based technologies including email, websites, and social networking sites for the purpose of English learning (Davies & Hewer, 2009).

According to Korkut (2012), the integration of information and communications technology in language teaching and learning is considered as a medium through which a variety of approaches and pedagogical philosophies may be implemented. To this end, a variety of ICT applications in English learning abound. Collis and Moonen (2001), as cited in Dang and Nhung (2014) categorized the applications of ICT into three groups, namely "learning resources" including educational software, online resources, and video resources, "instructional organization of learning" referring to software and technology tools for lecturing in the classroom, the course management system like *Moodle*, and the computer-based testing system like *HotPotatoes*, and "communication" consisting of email systems, and websites offering communication options.

It was further explained that technological areas which potentially contribute to the field of education include among others, Extended Learning, in which traditional teaching and learning is enhanced through new communication tools or social networking sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, blogs, wikis, and instant messaging. In other words, the process of teaching and learning is not confined to the classroom setting any longer. It is enhanced beyond the classroom through social networking sites where learners can engage in a communicative platform that "facilitate collaborative discussion, exchange of opinions, and critical thinking" (Cheng, 2012). The second area is called Ubiquitous Wireless, which deals with the "the rapid penetration of wireless networks" (Jung, 2006), fostering students' flexibility in learning via the use of their portable or mobile devices including laptops, tablets, smart phones, and so on. Intelligent Searching, which is the third area, enables learners to search, organize and retrieve data in a more effective way. The fourth category is Educational Gaming, made up of games and simulations, is deemed as a learning tool to have beneficial effects on motivation, communication, critical thinking, and problem solving skills (Jung, 2006).

Furthermore, Dang and Nhung (2014) presented a different form of ICT use in English learning. From their perspective, the use of technologies provides learners with unprecedented opportunities to practice English and involve themselves in authentic environments of language use. For instance, learners can use Skype Chat for interaction, or social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter for writing practice (Cheng, 2012). Again, Wasila (2015) reveals that "ICT can play an important role in helping ESL learners to improve their spelling, reading writing, speaking and listening.

Finally, the application of ICT in learning English gives more opportunities for communication between peer learners: they can exchange information in real time, they can participate in blog discussions, work in teams on different projects, exchange emails, search for information, etc. By using the authentic material provided by the internet, students will have a better insight into the culture of the country and people whose language they study. (Korkut, 2012). Information and Communication Technology has impacted positively on every aspect of human existence, education not an exception. Information technology has potential not only in introducing learning practices, but also for acting as a catalyst to revolutionize the education system. It can empower teachers and learners and promote the growth of skills necessary for 21st century work place (Tricano, 2005). It is largely accepted today that ICT has become an essentially significant tool to be utilized not only by teachers but also by learners in order to ensure a better and more effective language learning experience. In fact, its correct manipulation in language learning experience can be stimulating and engaging for learners, thereby empowering them to control the experience themselves.

A considerable amount of literature has highlighted the benefits of ICT in English language learning. Darasawang and Reinders (2010) cited in Dang and Nhung (2014) stated that an online language support system helps promote students' autonomy. Another contributing factor of ICTs is motivation. The blossoming of multimedia technology including visual aids, sounds, video clips, animations, and so on motivates students, "attracts their attention and elevates their interest in learning" (Kuo, 2009). This makes English learning more enjoyable. Hence, the application of the online resources available to the inside and outside classroom activities can result in the enhancement of their competences in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills which are important for them as students of English. For example, according to Kelsen (2009), *YouTube* has the potential to connect students with authentic English input through what is quite possibly already a part of their life experience and provides a context through which they can interact, exchange ideas, take necessary exercises that will enhance necessary skills for their benefit as students of English, and participate in a web-based environment.

Additionally, ICT makes the students feel more relaxed to learn the various topics and task, and also make the students active, because they learn by applying the technology to a task rather than by being directly "instructed" by the technology (Grabe & Grabe 2005. ICT also has the potential to become communication tools, such as emails, chat groups, discussion groups, pals' clubs and others to conduct activities which require collaboration that could enhance necessary skills required in learning English. (Krajka 2002). It can also be used in facilitating various forms for online conferencing (also known as Teleconferencing) and create virtual discussion with fellow students online (Flecknoe 2000). This online conference enables students to share information with their peers or friends who are staying far apart across oceans. This provides a wide opportunity for students to increase their usage of the language with ease and convenience. Nevertheless, ICT can also provide lessons for students to learn grammar and vocabulary at their own pace as a self-study activity. There are a number of free websites that provide such an opportunity to students. They may practice grammatical structures, improve their listening and reading comprehension, and also build up their vocabulary from the websites.

Furthermore, ICT tends to expand access to education. Through ICT, learning can occur anytime and anywhere. Online course materials, for example, can be accessible by the students at every given time. With ICT, learning and teaching no longer depend exclusively on printed materials. Multiple resources are abundant on the Internet, and knowledge can be acquired through video clips, audio sounds, and visual presentation and so on. ICT also assists in transforming a teaching environment into a learner-centered one; since learners are actively involved in the learning processes in ICT classrooms, they are only authorized by the teacher to make decisions, plans, and so forth (Lu, Hou and Huang 2010). ICT therefore provides both learners and instructors with more educational affordances and possibilities.

Research undertaken in the area of attitude and attitude formation shows that attitudes and beliefs are linked, and attitudes and behaviors are linked; moreover, attitudes are essentially divided into likes and dislikes (Siragusa & Dixon, 2008). With relevance to this study, Kara (2009) cited in Mohamad, Majid and Hanan, (2012) stated that attitudes towards learning besides opinions and beliefs have an obvious influence on students' behaviors and consequently on their performance. It is argued that those students who possess positive beliefs about language learning have a tendency to increase more positive attitudes towards language learning. Conversely, negative beliefs may lead to class anxiety, low cognitive achievement, and negative attitudes (Victori & Lockhart, 1995).

Attitude has three components which are behavioral, cognitive and affective. These three attitudinal aspects are based on the three theoretical approaches of behaviorism, cognitivism and humanism respectively.The behavioral aspect of attitude deals with the way one behaves and reacts in particular situations. In fact, the successful language learning enhances the learners to identify themselves with the native speakers of that language and adopt various aspects of behaviors which characterize the members of the target language community. Kara (2009) stated that, positive attitudes lead to the exhibition of positive

behaviour towards courses of study, with participants absorbing themselves in courses and striving to learn more. These positive attitudes trigger eagerness in students to solve problems, acquire information and skills useful for daily life. On the other hand, the cognitive aspect of attitude involves the beliefs of the language learners about the knowledge that they receive and their understanding in the process of language learning. It can be classified into four steps of connecting the previous knowledge and the new one, creating new knowledge, checking new knowledge, and applying the new knowledge in many situations.

Regarding the emotional aspect of attitude Feng and Chen (2009) opine that the learning process is an emotional process. It is affected by different emotional factors because the teacher and his students engage in various emotional activities in it and varied fruits of emotions are yield. Attitude can help the learners to express whether they like or dislike the objects or surrounding situations. It is agreed that the inner feelings and emotions of English language students influence their perspectives and their attitudes towards the English language (Choy & Troudi, 2006).

A closer look at this three-fold definition of attitude would reveal ideas about how to measure them. The affective component could be measured by physiological responses or verbal statements of like and dislike, while the cognitive component might be measured by self-ratings of beliefs or by the amount of knowledge which a person has about some topic. The behavioral component could be measured by observation of how the person behaves in specific stimulus situations.

Jung (2006) in an inquiry involving five hundred and ninety one (591) Chinese university students' frequency of ICT use for general and English learning purposes and their perceptions of ICT applications in English learning. The findings indicated that most of them spent three to ten hours a week making use of ICTs including computers, PDAs, electronic music devices, camcorders, digital cameras excluding cell phones for general activities with 95% browsing the Internet for pleasure, 93.3% downloading music and videos, 83.4% checking and composing emails, 74.8% instant messaging, and 60.1% playing computer games whereas nearly 40% of them spent below one hour per week on ICTs to learn English. As regards their perceptions, the participants strongly agreed or agreed over the benefits of ICTs to the improvement of listening (75.9%), speaking (46.2%), and vocabulary (40%), but strongly disagreed or agreed over the positive effect of technology on improving their reading (31.5%), writing (32.8%), and grammar skills (41.7%). Caruso, Kvavik & Morgan (2004) undertook a study of 4,374 American students on their ICT use and their perceived benefits of ICTs to learning gains.

The findings in the above revealed that the learners spent a lot of time on communication and entertainment activities, and then study such checking emails (99.5%), surfing the Internet for pleasure (97.2%), and classroom activities (96.4%). As for the preference for ICTs in classrooms, the results indicated that the students preferred to use ICTs moderately in the classroom. On the other hand, when asked about the beneficial effects of ICTs on learning, only 12.7% of the students stated that ICTs improved their learning process. Also in China, Liu's (2009) study which investigated Chinese non-English major students' attitudes towards ICTs as a medium for learning English and factors that gave rise to such attitudes consisting of the affective, cognitive and behavioral components showed that the participants recognized the advantages of ICT to learning English and perceived ICT attributes entailing the advantage, compatibility, simplicity, and observability" , "cultural perceptions of ICTs" involving "cultural or social norms of a country to technology acceptance among its people", "computer experience" and "ICT confidence" were the factors leading to differences in their ICT attitudes.

Kubiatko (2010) also carried out an investigation into ICT-related attitudes among university science education students in the Czech Republic. This study assessed learner attitudes in terms of three variables, namely gender, grade, and residence. When it came to the results, male university, second-year, and town students were more positive in their attitudes towards ICT use as opposed to other groups. In Kullberg's (2011) study on Swedish teachers' and students' perspectives of the use of ICT in the English classroom

setting, the students showed a more positive attitude to ICT than the teachers, and they would like to adopt computers more in the classroom. Finally, Kopinska (2013) analyzed Spanish EFL learners' attitudes to the use of technology after the implementation of an experimental project of ICT in the classroom setting. The findings indicated that the students were fully aware of the usefulness of ICT to their English language learning, but they also said that they had little exposure to new technologies for the learning process.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design which is a form of design that allows the description of the existing phenomena. The population was One Hundred and Nine (109) which comprised all the full time students in the Departments of Educational Foundations and Arts Education, from years two to four level who are studying English and Literary Studies as their teaching subjects in the Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University.

The Purposive sampling technique was used in adopting the entire population (109) as the sample for the study because the population was considered small as suggested by Duyilemi and Duyilemi in 1992. The instrument used for data collection was a four point Likert type questionnaire titled 'Perceived Attitude to use of ICT in learning English Questionnaire' (PATLEQ). The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity. Reliability was established using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) which yielded a reliability Coefficient of 0.78. Data from the questionnaire was analyzed using statistical mean and standard deviation using a criterion mean of 2.5 for decision making.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Summary of mean scores of respondents on their awareness of the benefits of ICT

S/N	*Benefits of ICT*	*SA*	*A*	*SD*	*D*	*Total*	*Mean*	*Std Dev.*	*Decision Rule*
1	ICT helps in understanding grammatical structures	27 (108)	38 (114)	24 (48)	20 (20)	109 (290)	2.7	0.95	Accepted
2	ICT helps increase knowledge of phonetics and phonology	31 (124)	33 (99)	23 (46)	22 (22)	109 (286)	2.7	0.90	Accepted
3	ICT helps the understanding of syntactic structures	29 (116)	32 (96)	26 (52)	22 (22)	109 (286)	2.6	0.91	Accepted
4	ICT helps in the development of composition skills	20 (80)	18 (54)	44 (88)	27 (27)	109 (249)	2.3	0.95	Rejected
5	ICT helps build vocabulary	36 (144)	31 (93)	21 (42)	21 (21)	109 (300)	2.8	0.89	Accepted
6	ICT facilitates the use of Figurative Language	31 (124)	34 (102)	21 (42)	23 (23)	109 (291)	2.7	0.90	Accepted
7	ICT helps to build skills for literary analysis and criticism	21 (84)	20 (60)	41 (82)	27 (27)	109 (253)	2.3	0.94	Rejected
	Grand Mean						**2.6**		

Source: *Field Survey, 2017*: criterion mean = 2.5

Table 1 shows that Items 1,2,3,5 and 6 with mean scores of 2.7, 2.7, 2.6, 2.8 and 2.7 respectively were accepted because their mean scores were above the criterion mean of 2.5, while items 4 and 7 with mean scores of 2.3 and 2.3 respectively were rejected since their mean scores were below the criterion mean. Consequently, the grand mean was computed to be 2.6 indicating that Education/ English students are aware of the benefits of ICT in learning English in Niger Delta University.

Table 2: Summary of mean scores of respondents on their extent of utilization of ICT for learning English

S/N	Utilization of ICT	SA	A	SD	D	Total	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision Rule
8	I use ICT for learning grammatical structures	24 (96)	26 (78)	30 (60)	29 (29)	109 (263)	2.4	0.90	Rejected
9	I use ICT for phonetic and phonological purposes	31 (124)	28 (84)	24 (48)	26 (26)	109 (282)	2.6	0.87	Accepted
10	I use ICT to understand and interprete syntactic structures	23 (92)	26 (78)	32 (64)	28 (28)	109 (262)	2.4	0.91	Rejected
11	I use ICT to build up vocabulary	31 (124)	28 (84)	25 (50)	25 (25)	109 (283)	2.6	0.88	Accepted
12	I use ICT to build composition skills	34 (136)	28 (84)	23 (46)	24 (24)	109 (290)	2.6	0.87	Accepted
13	I use ICT to build skills for literary analysis and criticism	28 (112)	32 (96)	24 (48)	25 (25)	109 (281)	2.6	0.90	Accepted
14	I use ICT to facilitate the use of figurative language	24 (96)	35 (105)	25 (50)	25 (25)	109 (276)	2.5	0.92	Accepted
	Grand Mean						**2.5**		

Source: *Field Survey, 2017*: criterion mean = 2.5

In Table 2, items 8 and 10, with the mean scores of 2.4 and 2.4 respectively were rejected because their mean scores were below the criterion mean of 2.5, while items 9, 11, 12, 13 and 14 with mean scores of 2.6, 2.6, 2.6 and 2.5 respectively were accepted because their mean scores were above the criterion mean of 2.5. Consequently, the grand mean was computed to be 2.5, which indicates that Education/ English students have been able to utilize ICT in learning English.

Table 3: Summary of mean scores of respondents on the attitude of Education/English students towards the use of ICT in learning English

S/N	Attitude towards ICT	SA	A	SD	D	Total	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision Rule
15	Using ICT encourages students to explore other areas not taught in class	39 (156)	27 (81)	23 (46)	20 (20)	109 (303)	2.8	0.88	Accepted
16	Using ICT makes the course content more lively	37 (148)	31 (93)	22 (44)	19 (19)	109 (304)	2.8	0.90	Accepted
17	ICT tools are difficult to use	23 (23)	23 (69)	33 (66)	30 (30)	109 (257)	2.4	0.90	Rejected
18	ICT tools are unsatisfactory in answering my questions	23 (92)	26 (78)	33 (66)	30 (30)	109 (263)	2.4	0.92	Rejected
19	ICT solutions are often incorrect compared to findings from books	25 (100)	23 (69)	31 (62)	30 (30)	109 (261)	2.4	0.88	Rejected
20	Barriers such as no electric power supply, costly ICT devices, complexities of ICT tools, and poor network conditions prevent me from using ICT tools	32 (128)	35 (105)	20 (40)	22 (22)	109 (295)	2.7	0.90	Accepted
21	ICT makes things too easy for students	30 (120)	29 (87)	26 (52)	24 (24)	109 (283)	2.6	0.89	Accepted
	Grand Mean						**2.6**		

Source: *Field Survey, 2017:* criterion mean=2.5

The data presented in Table 3 indicates that items 15, 16, 20 and 21 with mean scores of 2.8, 2.8, 2.7 and 2.6 were accepted because their mean scores were above the criterion mean of 2.5 while items 17, 18 and 19 were rejected because their mean scores were below the criterion mean of 2.5. Consequently, the grand mean

was computed to be 2.6 which indicate that Education/English students have a positive attitude towards the use of ICT in learning English.

The results revealed that students were aware of the benefits of ICT. However, it was discovered that English Education students are aware that ICT helps in the understanding of grammatical structures, increases the knowledge of phonetics and phonology, helps in the understanding of syntactic structures, helps build vocabulary, and helps build the use of figurative language but are not aware that ICT helps in the development of composition skills and building of skills for literary analysis and criticism. This finding is in line with the findings of Jung (2006) which indicated that the participants strongly agreed or agreed over the benefits of ICTs to the improvement of listening (75.9%), speaking (46.2%), and vocabulary (40%) and strongly disagreed or disagreed over the positive effect of technology on improving their writing (32.8%). It is also in line with the findings of Kopinska (2013) that indicated that the Spanish EFL students were fully aware of the usefulness of ICT to their English Language learning. However, this finding is in contrast with the findings of Jung (2006) which indicated that participants strongly disagreed or disagreed over the positive effect of technology on improving their reading (31.5%) and grammar skills (41.7%).

The results also revealed that students have been able to utilize ICT in learning English though not in its entirety because it was discovered that they have not been able to utilize it for interpreting syntactic structures. However, it was discovered that they have been able to utilize it for phonetics and phonological purposes, buildup of vocabulary, composition skills, literary criticism and analysis skills, and facilitation of the use of figurative language. This finding contrasts to the findings of Melor, Maimum and Chua (2009) that showed that urban school students in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia spent only 1-2 hours per week using ICT for learning activities which implies that they were not able to utilize ICT for learning English. Also, the findings of Jung (2006) that indicated that nearly 40% of Chinese university students spent below one hour per week on ICTS to learn English, whereas, they spent three to ten hours a week making use of ICTs including computers, PDAs, electronic music devices, etc, excluding cell phones for general activities with 95% browsing the internet for pleasure, 93.3% downloading music and videos, 83.4% checking and composing emails, 74.8% instant messaging, and 60.1% playing computer games.

The results further revealed that students have a positive attitude towards the use of ICT in learning English due to the following findings. It was discovered that English Education students accepted that using ICT encourages them to explore other areas not taught in class and makes the course content lively as well. They also indicate that ICT makes things too easy for them and barriers such as no electric power supply, costly ICT devices, complexities of ICT tools, and poor network conditions prevent them from using ICT tools. However, they maintain that ICT tools are not difficult to use, and are satisfactory in answering questions, and produce findings that are correct compared to findings from books. This finding is in line with the findings of Kullberg (2011) that indicated that the Swedish students showed a more positive attitude to ICT than the teachers, and they would like to adopt computers more in the classroom.

Conclusion

The findings show that the Education/English students in NDU are positively disposed towards the use of ICT in learning English and are using them already to some extent.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, as related to the findings of this study, there should be a consolidated effort, involving school management, lecturers and the students, towards the use of ICT in learning English Language especially as English is our second language (L2). Listening to native speakers, using ICT tools, for instance, helps the learner understand some word usages as well as pronunciation.

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