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**THE ATTITUDE OF ESL STUDENTS TOWARDS
USING ICT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LEARNING: A STUDY**

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The Attitude of ESL Students towards Using ICT for English Language Learning: A Study

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Abstract – In modern times, the advent of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) offers immense possibilities for the English language learners beyond the confinements of the classroom. Various studies have shown that better understanding of the utilisation of technology for pedagogical purposes is needed for the teachers as well as learners to enhance the quality of learning. Social networking services and various web resources have made learning online a great fun for learners of a foreign language like English. The present day students belong to the digital era and hence most of them are familiar with the use of portable digital devices such as laptops, smartphones, tablets etc. Many studies have shown that the proportion of the population that engages in integrating technology into their routine tasks is increasing over time. However, this novel and dynamic digitized environment, combined with traditional approaches to learning, is yet to be properly harnessed to assist the new generations of learners. ICT which is viewed as support sources, should enable the users to remove all barriers to accessing and using web resources effectively to bring about an intellectually meaningful transformation. Learners need guidance and training in the selection and use of specific and reliable learning resources. Hence this study aims at understanding the views of the learners of English language towards the use of technology for learning purposes. Since there are only a few studies in India regarding this matter, this research becomes quite significant for setting future research trends in ICT and English Language Teaching (ELT).

Key Words – Digitized Environment, ICT Integration, Learning, Technology

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1. INTRODUCTION

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is the backbone of modern communication. In every field, the use of ICT has become more or less indispensable. India as a developing country, is still in a transition phase, moving from conventional methods of teaching to modern ICT-based, innovative methods of instruction in schools and colleges. The present day learners belong to the digital generation and hence have certain degree of orientation towards technology use for various purposes. However, the teachers who belong to earlier generation are not found to be technology-friendly and have certain degree of aversion towards the use of ICT for teaching. This tendency has been observed by many researchers in the field of education. However, most of the young teachers are quite comfortable with the use of ICT compared to the older ones. Government is also launching many initiatives like EduSAT programmes, supply of computers, projectors etc. to schools and colleges, training of the teachers and students in digital literacy, under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) schemes etc. In this way, an effort is made to upgrade the skill-set of both students and teachers.

In this way, the gap between users and non-users of technology can be bridged to certain extent. So, in this context, it is necessary to study the attitude of the learners, with reference to their learning of a foreign language such as English, for which there is enough scope for using technology. Since there are only a few studies in India regarding this matter, this research becomes quite significant for throwing light on the future research requirements in ICT and English Language teaching pedagogy. The outcome of this study is supposed to bring out the technology-orientation of the participants and their attitude towards the use of technological resources for developing their communicative competence in English language. Terantino (2011) observes that there is a paucity of research about the influence of ICT on English language learning and little experiential investigation to find out the effective ways to incorporate technological applications into language instruction.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

We are living in the 'Information Society' and ICT is being used as a powerful tool to perform many functions in the modern society. The development of

communicative competence is a key issue in ELT. At present, most of the teachers and learners are not fully aware of the pedagogical opportunities mediated by technology to facilitate the teaching-learning process. Because of this, neither the learners nor the teachers can make informed decisions regarding the proper selection, usage, and production of E-resources for learning purposes.

ICT provides global access to useful resources for learning English language. Sitting in any corner of the world, any person can generate, share and retrieve any sort of information through Internet. ICT enables sharing of knowledge in digital form, worldwide. Digital televisions, smart phones, internet, video-conferencing, tele-conferencing, digital texts, blogs, social media sites etc. are some examples of ICT being used in every walk of our life.

There is a vast repertoire of online content that can be integrated into traditional English lessons, such as the YouTube videos. YouTube is considered a source that can play a vital role in the teaching-learning process. It has become very popular among young learners. YouTube can provide students with interesting videos and authentic situations that may help them improve their understanding of various aspects of English language in real life. It is observed in a study that learners can learn better when they watch authentic and real-life clips on the Internet (Maness 2004). Berk (2009) emphasizes the key role of teaching language in the college classroom by using technology and identifies multiple benefits of using technology for teaching-learning. Prensky (2009) also highlights the effectiveness of using YouTube videos in learning. The field of education is also immensely influenced by the advent of digital technology. So far as using technology for language learning is concerned, most students are now very much aware of use of modern gadgets such as the smart phone and tablets to learn new things, including foreign language such as English.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To find out the attitude of the participants towards the possibility of using ICT tools and web resources for developing communicative competence in English language.
2. To find out the usefulness of ICT for English language learning and the requirements of the teachers in the digital age.

4. METHOD

This study was carried out during the second half of 2011 in 14 select colleges affiliated to Mangalore University, situated in the State of Karnataka in which convenience sampling was adopted for the study. The

participants were 54 students studying in various institutions of higher learning, their mean age being 19.64 years. Out of 54 respondents, 16 were males and 38 were females. All the participants in this research, study English as a Second Language in undergraduate courses. A questionnaire (print version) was administered to them with a view to find out their responses towards the possibility of using ICT tools and web resources effectively for developing communicative competence in English language. The questionnaire consisted of both open and close ended questions. The principals of the corresponding institutions where the participants are studying allowed the implementation of the questionnaire and the participants gave their consent for the use of the information furnished by them, via a form, for the purpose of the present study. The validity of the questionnaire was assessed by experts before its administration. The data gathered from the survey were analysed to arrive at suitable conclusions.

Table 1: The Attitude of Respondents towards using ICT for English Language learning

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ICT-based learning helps to overcome the fear of making mistakes	18 33.3%	24 44.4%	4 7.4%	6 11.1%	2 3.7%
ICT-based learning drives away the shyness associated with learning	20 37%	22 40.7%	3 5.5%	5 9.2%	4 7.4%
ICT-based learning creates conducive environment to learn English independently	14 25.9%	18 33.3%	10 18.5%	8 14.8%	4 7.4%
ICT-based learning boosts learning confidence	13 24%	17 31.5%	12 22.2%	9 16.7%	3 5.6%
ICT-based learning motivates the learner to discover new things to learn	18 33.3%	17 31.5%	8 14.8%	7 12.9%	4 7.4%
ICT-based learning develops overall communicative ability	19 35.2%	21 38.9%	7 12.9%	4 7.4%	3 5.6%

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

From the above table, it can be observed that majority of the respondents have a favourable attitude towards the use of technology for English language learning.

Statement 1: ICT-based learning helps to overcome the fear of making mistakes.

For this statement, 77.7% of the participants agree while a small portion of only 14.8% disagree and just 7.4% remain neutral. This shows a strongly positive attitude of the learners towards technology use as it enables them to keep away the fear of making mistakes as it happens in traditional classrooms.

Statement 2: ICT-based learning drives away the shyness associated with learning.

For this statement, again 77.7% of the participants agree while a minority portion of only 16.6% disagree and just 5.5% remain neutral. This also shows a strongly positive attitude towards technology use as it they feel that ICT drives away the shyness associated with learning due to the fear of making mistakes and being laughed at.

Statement 3: ICT-based learning creates conducive environment to learn English independently.

For this statement, again 59.2% of the participants agree while a minority portion of only 22.2% disagree and a considerable portion of 18.5% respondents offer to remain neutral. This shows a significant number of participants feel that ICT creates a conducive, learner-friendly environment for English language learning. However, a considerable number of respondents remain uncertain as they are neutral over this statement.

Statement 4: ICT-based learning boosts learning confidence

For this statement, 55.5% of the participants agree while a minority portion of only 22.3% disagree and a considerable portion of 22.2% respondents offer to remain neutral. This shows a significant number of participants feel that ICT boosts confidence for English language learning. However, quite a significant number of respondents offer to remain uncertain as they are neutral over this statement. So, majority of respondents also feel that ICT boosts learning confidence which is important for any learner to learn new things effectively.

Statement 5: ICT-based learning motivates the learner to discover new things to learn.

For this statement, 64.8% of the participants agree while a minority portion of only 20.3% disagree and a considerable portion of 14.8% respondents offer to remain neutral. This shows a significant number of participants feel that ICT provides motivation for English language learning. However, quite a significant number of respondents offer to remain uncertain as they are neutral over this statement. Motivation is an important element of learning. Previous studies have shown that a learner who has higher degree of motivation can learn faster than his peers who lack such motivation.

Statement 6: ICT-based learning develops overall communicative ability.

For this statement, a whopping 74.1% of the participants agree while a minority portion of only 13% disagree and a considerable portion of 12.9% respondents offer to remain neutral. This shows that a vast majority of the participants feel that ICT helps to develop communicative ability in English language learning. Only a small portion of the respondents offer to remain uncertain as they are neutral over this statement. Communicative ability is of prime concern in the context of English learning. Most of the students are normally found to lack this capacity. So it is interesting to observe that learners show a positive tendency towards the use of ICT for developing their communicative abilities in English.

One of this study's main goals was to find out the attitude of the participants towards the possibility of using ICT tools and web resources for developing communicative competence in English language. It is found that students have undoubtedly, a favourable attitude towards using technology for learning English and for developing their communicative competence.

6. CONCLUSION

Technology has made accessing and sharing information, socializing and conversing with friends easy (Geraci & Nagy, 2004). English is the most preferred language on the internet for these purposes. Hence, as the learners involve in using language frequently they get better opportunities for interaction which is a key factor in providing exposure to new language structures and vocabulary. Thus using ICT can be a boon for learners as it drives away their fear and anxiety which is normally found in the classroom learning environment. A study by Boster et al. (2006) shows that online videos can affect educational achievement in a positive way.

However, much remains to be done as the learners have access to a vast amount of information via the Internet and other web resources, they need proper training regarding the adequate use of technology. Some studies have found that even if individuals have access to ICT resources and services, there is no guarantee that they will make optimal use of technology. Hence they must be trained to recognize the potential benefits of ICT for themselves through proper guidance by the teachers. To conclude, we can say that in the information age, teachers should be well-equipped with the digital literacy skills and the effective ways of integrating technology into teaching. Teachers should also shoulder the responsibility of training the learners in proper use of technology for learning purposes.

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