INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) INTEGRATION IN EFL ORAL COMMUNICATION CONTEXT: ENGLISH MAJOR SOPHOMORES PERSPECTIVES ON ENGLISH-SPEAKING

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Abstract: *In today's globalized educational environment, information and communication technologies (ICT) has become a fundamental prerequisite and integral part of education. In the 21st-century learning environment, digital literacy, or ICT, becomes another ability that students need to learn in addition to language and numeracy. ICT has significantly influenced English language education and learning as we enter a new millennium. Speaking is a fundamental language acquisition ability, thus for students to achieve their goals, they need a classroom that is well-equipped. Moreover, education is changing in response to the digital era. The most significant educational problems caused by the epidemic, such as the lockdown, have been addressed by teachers all throughout the world. Hence, this study tries to ascertain how sophomores feel about using digital devices during oral presentation performances. For 139 sophomores of the English Language, a questionnaire was adopted and distributed for the study to the sophomores who were registered for English for Oral Communication course for semester 2, session 2022/2023. SPSS was employed to analyze the quantitative data, and to calculate the descriptive statistics of the current study. The main results revealed that sophomores' attitudes regarding the use of ICT during oral performances were overwhelmingly favorable.*

Keywords: ICT, Perspectives, sophomores, oral communication, speaking.

1. Introduction

ICT has extended throughout the world; it is currently used in practically every aspect of life. Educators frequently employ ICT resources, such as computer, telephone (telecommunication products), walkie-talkies, digital cameras, and audio-recording software to enhance the teaching/learning process. The widespread desire to incorporate and utilise ICT in the classroom gives educators and learners greater chances to be productive in the digital era (Boussebha, 2023; Lawrence & Tar, 2018). The term ICT is seen as the technologies that enable telecommunications-based access to information. It is comparable to information technology (IT), but it is mostly concerned with communication technologies (Ratheeswari, 2018). ICT is simply a set of materials and tools, which are used to communicate, store, and manage information. The latter is considered an important element in the learning process, as it provides learners with opportunities to learn the language and improves their communicative competence.

In the early 2020s, the world witnessed an outbreak of the deadly coronavirus epidemic, also known as COVID-19. Although many endeavors have been made by governments to find a permanent cure, but no effective cure has been achieved yet. The spread of this virus led to unexpected negative consequences (Thomas & Rogers, 2020) as it has impacted the educational systems worldwide (Schleicher, 2020), consequently, universities and schools have been locked down in order to curb the virus's spread. As a result, governments and policymakers have shifted the teaching and learning process towards online learning. Like many other countries, which were infected by this virus, Algeria was one of them. The Algerian educational authority has ordered universities to transmit to online teaching and learning mode by establishing E-learning platforms. Therefore, teachers and learners have been obliged to cope with this new method.

The primary focus of this research is to investigate sophomores' attitudes towards ICT integration in oral performances during the post epidemic period. In psychology, the term attitude refers to the emotions and behaviors of a specific person towards an object, or event. Attitudes have a great impact on behavior; they are often the result of upbringing or experience (Cherry, 2021).

2. Literature review

A number of studies underlined that students' attitudes are the result of their success or failure in any educational process (Benraghda, Radzuan & Lardhi, 2022; Benraghda & Radzuan, 2019; Ghavifekr et al., 2014; Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). It is claimed that perception plays an important role in language learning process (Benraghda, Ali, Radzuan, 2015). Consequently, a positive attitude ought to be the umbrella of language learning (Baföz, 2016; Rabah, 2015; Sosas, 2021). While attitudes are important in traditional language learning, they also have an impact on online learning.

ICT is one of the main forces behind the rapid changes occurring in our society. It is a significant catalyst for rapid societal change. It has the power to revolutionize education and redefine the roles of students and teachers in the teaching and learning process (Baishakhi & Kamal, 2019). Recently, the educational process is shifting towards a learner-cantered approach, necessitating that teachers be equipped to effectively utilize various forms of technology in the classroom. This ensures that teaching and learning become more interactive and engaging (Baishakhi & Kamal, 2019). Subsequently, quality education depends on the advancement of information technology in various areas, including improving learner's motivation, enhancing fundamental abilities, and expanding teachers' technology training. The effective employment of ICT in teaching eventually serves as a subject/curriculum transformation tool (Alkaramah, Fauziati & Asib, 2020; Salinas at al., 2017).

Kitchakarn (2015) conducted a research study at a private institution in Turkey, focusing on the use of computers as a learning aid for language acquisition among undergraduate students. The study found that students had a positive attitude towards using computers as a tool for learning. In a similar vein, Ramadhan (2019) explored the perceptions and attitudes of EFL learners in Kurdistan, Iraq towards online English courses. The findings indicated that participants had positive attitudes toward using the Internet to learn English. Additionally, the use of the internet and applications as platforms among students enhanced language learning and interaction.

Attitudes of learners and online learning both have an impact on one another. This reciprocal influence is crucial in helping EFL students accomplish their learning goals. According to Ridho et al. (2019), Google Classroom is an effective learning tool that enables students to enhance their learning by actively participating in online discussions and assignments. The study found that most participants had a positive response and viewed Google Classroom as a user-friendly and meaningful platform that offers flexibility in learning, allowing students to access materials and engage with their peers without the limitations of time and physical interaction with teachers and classmates.

When Sherine et al. (2020) investigated how Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) affected the improvement of speaking abilities, they realized that participants' pronunciation and speaking performance both dramatically improved. Furthermore, Chau (2021) sought to determine the impact of combining Whatsapp and informal learning in developing students' communicative competencies based on international English exams' measures test, such as fluency, pronunciation, coherence, grammatical range, accuracy, lexical resource. The results indicated that their speaking skills had improved and their attitudes towards speaking skills had shifted.

Similarly to Azzouz (2018) and EL Mortaji (2018) who looked into how videotaping affects college students' public speaking skills when they are learning English. The results revealed that the students' public speaking skills improved. The findings indicated that

videotaping and self-reflection had a substantial impact on improving students' public speaking abilities and promoting learning autonomy and confidence.

Other researchers, however, have found that EFL students have a negative attitude towards online learning. Orlando and Attard (2015) claimed that using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to deliver virtual classes would be ineffective unless the right technological instruments accompany it. Amin and Sundari (2020) investigated EFL students' choices on digital platforms during emergency distance learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia. Three digital learning platforms—Cisco WebEx Meeting video conferencing, Google classroom learning management system, and WhatsApp mobile messenger application were the core of their investigation. Despite their widespread popularity among students, for the most participants, the three digital platforms had less of a favourable impact than in-person instruction. It seems sense that, in comparison to a traditional learning environment, the learners' online digital learning system is not perfect.

In the light of the aforementioned, the emergence of Covid-19 has given more importance to the use of ICT in the educational system, therefore, online technologies will keep the learning process effective in these difficult times (Linda, 2014). Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, different institutions have launched and started using online learning software/platforms to facilitate distance learning, such as, Google Meet, Zoom, and WhatsApp (Mannong, 2020).

3. Methodology

The process that researchers follow when doing their research is known as research methodology. It shows how these researchers formulate their issues and goals and present their conclusions based on the information gathered throughout the research period. (Kothari, 2004). This section is the methodological part of the research. It aims at providing a clear description of the steps, participants and the data collection method employed in the research. This section is devoted to analyze the questionnaire data given to sophomores of the English language at the University of Mohamed El Bachir Ibrahimi. The results obtained will be analyzed statically using SPSS. Bear in mind, the objective behind the investigation is to examine sophomores' attitudes towards ICT integration in oral performance.

3.1. Participants

The current study was conducted at Mohamed El Bachir Ibrahimi University. 139 individuals were chosen at random as the study's sample out of a total of 209 students, according to Krejcie and Morgan's table, which was used to establish the sample size.

3.2. Research instrument

The present study utilized the quantitative research approach where a questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire used for this study is adapted from the questionnaires designed by Fitri et. al. (2020) and Kopinska (2020), it is considered suitable for this research. The questionnaire is composed of two sections. The first section asks the participants about their demographic information such as age, gender, while the second section is comprised of twenty (20) items, which ask the participants about their attitudes related to the use of ICT in oral performances.

3.3. Data collection

The questionnaire was distributed to sophomores of English at Bordj Bou Arrerridj University whom they met on campus without any special arrangement. The distribution was handled by the researchers during students' ordinary sessions. The participants were allotted up to 15 minutes to answer the questionnaire. The questions were designed to get overall feedback from the students about their attitudes.

3.4. Data analysis

The descriptive statistics were used to analyze the questionnaire for this study, which answered the first research question about sophomores' attitudes and perceptions related to the use of ICT in oral performances. The analysis of data gathered from the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS. The sample of the students' questionnaire consists of 40 male students and 102 female students, based on Table 1 and 2. Thus, the majority of participants are female (71.83%). Primarily, (71.83%) of the students were between (19-21) years old. However, (15.50%) were between (22-24) years old and (12.67%) revealed from the students aged 24 years and more.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information (gender)

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	40	28.16
Female	102	71.83
Total	**142**	**100**

Table 2: Demographic Information of Participants (age)

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
19-21	102	71.83
22-24	22	15.50
24 and more	18	12.67
Total	**142**	**100**

4. Results and discussions

The questionnaire of the study is analyzed through descriptive statistics. (Table 3) which revealed the mean scores of some items were medium, (M=3.88) and none of the items scored a Standard Deviation (SD) lower than (SD=1.032). The results show that the items with the highest statistical analysis of mean scores are: item 1 (The use of ICT is important in delivering oral performance) with a mean score of (M=3.88; SD=1.09), item 20 (The use of ICT in my classes helps me to complete the work in my oral tasks) with a mean score of (M=3.61; SD=1.17), item 16 (I become more interested to ICT use in oral performance) with a mean score of (M=3.53; SD=1.07). By contrast, the items of the lowest mean scores are: item 13 (The use of ICT does not motivate my oral performance) with a mean score of (M=3.08; SD=1.25) and item 15 (The use of ICT in oral classes is boring) with a mean score of (M=3.12; SD=1.37), item 14 (It is difficult to use ICT to promote oral performance) with a mean score of (M=3.22; SD=1.35).

The results are depicted based on the percentage as well, in which 43% among students agree that the use of ICT is important in delivering their oral performance. In the same vein, 30.3% of the participants are strongly agreed upon the item mentioned above. Moreover, 14.1% of them are neutral towards it. On the other hand, 6.3% among the participants strongly disagree with the latter and 4.2 % of them are disagreeing.

Table 3: Students' Attitudes towards ICT integration in Oral Performances

Items	Percent					M	SD
	SD	D	N	A	SA		
The use of ICT is important in delivering oral performance, especially post Covid-19 pandemic.	6.3	4.2	14.1	43.0	30.3	3.88	1.09
The use of ICT post pandemic makes oral tasks more enjoyable.	6.3	12.7	21.1	43.7	14.1	3.47	1.09

The use of ICT post pandemic enhances my level in oral performance.	7.7	21.1	21.8	32.4	14.8	3.26	1.18
The use of ICT post pandemic upgrades my oral performance with more updated materials.	6.3	16.2	31.0	27.5	16.9	3.33	1.18
The use of ICT post pandemic helps me increase my speaking quality and oral performance.	7.7	15.5	16.2	40.1	18.3	3.47	1.14
The use of ICT post pandemic helps students to understand the materials in more effective way in delivering an oral task.	8.5	17.6	14.1	35.9	21.8	3.46	1.25
The use of ICT post pandemic encourages the students to be more active and involves their engagement in oral performance.	8.5	20.4	19.0	32.4	17.6	3.31	1.23
The use of ICT post pandemic increases students' interest and motivation toward oral performance.	9.9	17.6	22.5	32.4	15.5	3.27	1.21
The use of ICT post pandemic decreases students' oral performance due to lack of feedback.	8.5	18.3	24.6	26.1	20.4	3.32	1.24
The use of ICT post pandemic enhances oral performance among learners.	7.0	17.6	25.4	34.5	13.4	3.30	1.13
The use of ICT post pandemic enables students to interact effectively with teachers using oral performance.	9.9	18.3	21.1	31.7	16.9	3.28	1.24
The use of ICT post pandemic makes students more productive in their oral performance.	7.0	21.1	20.4	28.9	20.4	3.35	1.23
The use of ICT post pandemic does not motivate my oral performance.	12.0	23.2	21.8	26.8	14.1	3.08	1.25
It is difficult to use ICT to promote oral performance post pandemic.	10.6	24.6	20.4	17.6	24.6	3.22	1.35
The use of ICT post pandemic in oral classes is boring.	15.5	20.4	19.7	21.8	20.4	3.12	1.37
I become more interested to ICT use in oral performance post pandemic.	4.2	14.1	22.5	39.4	17.6	3.53	1.07
It is difficult to have an access to the technological resources in oral classes.	6.3	17.6	22.5	30.3	21.1	3.43	1.19
The use of ICT post pandemic helps me to expand various resources in oral classes.	8.5	14.8	20.4	38.0	16.2	3.40	1.18
The use of ICT post pandemic provides convenience in assessing and monitoring the students' progress in oral performance.	4.9	13.4	30.3	37.3	12.0	3.39	1.03
The use of ICT in my classes helps me to complete the work in my oral tasks.	6.3	12.0	19.0	36.6	23.9	3.61	1.17
Total						3.37	1.19

The statistical analysis results show that the majority of sophomore EFL students argued that the use of ICT is important in delivering their oral performance as shown in item 1 with a mean score of (M=3.88; SD=1.09). In the same vein, students claimed that ICT helped them to complete their work in oral tasks (item 20), (M=3.61; SD=1.17) and make it more enjoyable (item 2) with a mean score of (M=3.47; SD=1.09). They also become more interested in using it as shown in item 16 (M=3.53; SD=1.07). It is concluded that the general attitude of the participants is in accordance with the importance of ICT use in delivering oral performance during the post Covid-19 pandemic, which is in accordance with Puangpunsi (2021) findings that ICT plays an important role in oral production courses. Also, ICT assisted students in improving and

overcoming their challenges in delivering their oral production. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that using ICT tools is advantageous in progressing students' performances. Moreover, ICT integration in EFL classrooms gives access to learners to familiarize with language during lectures, also to get along with native speakers. That is mainly why teachers should be highly aware of its use in order to achieve positive learning outcomes. Similarly, another study conducted by Linda (2014) revealed that the integration of ICT in oral expression classrooms is vital. In addition, students are not motivated to study their oral expression because their teachers used the traditional way of teaching.

In addition, students consider the use of ICT as a way to enhance their level in oral performance with a mean score of (M=3.26; SD=1.18) in item 3. Likewise, a large number of students reported that they agree on the use of ICT in helping them increase their speaking quality and oral performance (M=3.47; SD=1.14) in item 5. Others confirmed that the use of ICT upgrade their oral performance (item 4) with a mean score of (M=3.33; SD=1.18). Therefore, it is concluded that ICT use enhances and upgrades students' level in oral performance. This is in line with previous research in which most students considered ICT as a tool that enables them to enhance and upgrade their speaking abilities. Students declared that using ICTs helped them to overcome difficulties while speaking the target language, they approved that the use of these technologies enabled them to better their English speaking (Azzouz, 2018). Ghavifekr et al. (2014) considered ICT integration as the most excellent technique that enhances students' speaking. Both students and teachers believe that technology may be used in the classroom as a useful and multifunctional tool for teaching and learning. They affirmed that EFL teachers should use ICTs in the classroom in addition to the traditional methods of teaching. Hence, it will be possible to improve language activities and develop student participation, resulting in the improvement of their speaking skills.

Besides, less than half of students believe that ICT increases their motivation toward oral performance (M=3.27; SD=1.21) as shown in item 8. This is consistent with Alkaramah, Fauziati & Asib (2020) who found that the use of ICT increases students' motivation and their speaking performances. It is also consistent with a study by Rabah (2015) who found that the use of high technologies increases students' motivation and improves their oral performance. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between ICTs and students' achievements in oral performance. Aşık et al. (2020). also disclosed that ICT increases students' willingness to learn English by promoting autonomy and helping them feel more competent. Using ICTs in the classroom has a significant impact on learning in general and speaking abilities in particular.

Moreover, the results in item 6 demonstrate that a number of students agree with the effectiveness of ICT use in understanding the materials when delivering oral tasks (M=3.46; SD=1.25). On the other hand, the results showed that the use of ICT during the post pandemic period encouraged students to involve their engagement in oral performance, they become more active, (M=3.31: SD=1.23) (Item 7) and productive as shown in item 12 with a mean score of (M=3.35; SD=1.23). The finding resonates with Ghavifekr & Rosdy's (2015) findings in which the use of ICT in teaching enables students to be more active and engaging in the lessons. Moreover, the use of ICT tools creates a good learning environment for teachers and students.

Numbers of students believe that using ICT fosters the interaction among them and their teachers as stated in item 11 with a mean score of (M=3.30; SD=1.13). Additionally, students approved that ICT enhanced their oral performance among each other (Item10). Likewise, Ghavifekr & Rosdy (2015) found that ICT efficiency lies in encouraging students to orally communicate more with their mates.

Furthermore, participants in item 18 said that the use of ICT helped them expand various resources in oral classes (M=3.40; SD=1.18). Besides, others agree that ICT helped in assessing and monitoring students' oral performance (item 19) with a mean score of (M=3.39; SD=1.03). On the other hand, some students claimed that the lack of feedback caused a decrease in their oral performance. (Item 9) (M=3.32; SD=1.24) However, some participants stated that using ICT during the post pandemic did not motivate them to speak maybe because they prefer face to face

learning as shown in item 13 (M=3.08; SD=1.25). This is inconsistent with a study conducted by Rabah (2015) who encountered that the use of high technologies increases students' motivation, learning's effectiveness, and improves their oral performance. Others believe that, the use of ICT during the post pandemic in oral classes is boring (Item 15) with a mean score of (M=3.12; SD=1.37). Items 14 and 17 show that half of students agree that having an access to technological resources in oral classes is difficult (Item 17), and it is difficult to promote their oral performance using ICTs (Item 14).

Finally, based on the overall mean (M=3.37; SD=1.17) it is concluded that EFL sophomores have positive attitudes pertaining ICT integration in oral tasks. This is similar to Alkaramah, Fauziati, and Asib's study (2020) which concluded that most participants have positive attitudes towards the use of ICT in learning and improving their oral performance. Furthermore, using ICT to practice speaking increases learners' autonomy and prepares them to communicate in English with confidence and competence.

Conclusion

ICT in the language educational setting has become a requirement, particularly during the post Covid-19 pandemic era, to facilitate the process of teaching/learning. When it comes to learning English as a foreign language, many students' main objective is to become proficient speakers of the target language. The usage of ICT tools is one effective way to raise students' speaking performances. In short, this research had led to conclude that sophomores had positive attitudes towards ICT integration in oral performance during the post Covid-19 period. Students are more conscious of the importance of technology tools in helping them improve their speaking skills.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are highly recommended in order to eliminate the hindrances that both teachers and students face when incorporating ICT into the English language teaching and learning:

For students

1. Students are highly recommended to use ICTs to improve their oral performances, and communicative abilities.
2. Students should use ICT tools to become effective web surfers in order to develop fluency and accuracy, as well as knowledge of the English language community's culture and customs.

For teachers

1. Teachers of oral expression are encouraged to employ ICTs in the classroom to transform their teaching methods. Teachers must learn how to improve their ability to teach speaking skills in order to create a positive classroom environment, thus they must be more careful in selecting acceptable teaching materials.
2. Teachers should enable students to use ICT applications when they face difficulties while doing their activities.
3. English language professors should be given training sessions on how to upload content courses to the university's digital platform.

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