



Attitudes, Perceptions and Expectations of Moroccan Undergraduate Students towards ICT Use in the Process of English Language Learning

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Abstract

Successful implementation of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in English language teaching and learning requires both students' and teachers' acceptance of these new technologies. However, few studies have investigated college students' attitudes, perceptions and expectations of computer-based technology use in English Language learning in the Moroccan context. In this regard, The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was used as a framework to investigate the current state of English as foreign language (EFL) college students' attitudes, perceptions and expectations towards the use of ICT in English language learning (ELL). To this end, 207 undergraduate students (1st year) were randomly selected from the department of English at Moulay Ismail University, School of Arts and Humanities Meknes- Morocco, to respond to "ICT use in English learning" questionnaire. Our results revealed that the majority of students express positive attitudes towards the use of computer-based technology in the process of English language learning. Therefore most of them perceived that the usage of technology had a positive effect on English language learning. Additionally, they expected that ICT is used more often for teaching and learning at the department of English, because it helped them improve their English skills and made learning more enjoyable.

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the educational system has been one of the primary concerns of the Ministry of Higher Education in Morocco (e.g. Lawhati 2015, Injaz 2014). Despite the huge amount of money spent by the Moroccan government towards these new technologies, their implementation remains very limited, mainly, in English classrooms [1] ; [2]; [3]; [4]; [5] . In fact, unlimited number of empirical studies have examined and investigated factors, barriers and challenges that prevent high school English language teachers from using ICT in the classrooms, but very few studies have investigated University EFL students' attitudes, perceptions and expectations towards ICT in English Learning specifically in the Moroccan context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the attitudes , perceptions and expectations of Moroccan ESL college students' towards ICT use in English learning in the department of English at Moulay Ismail University, School of Arts and Humanities Meknes- Morocco.

Review of related literature

According to [6] ICT can be defined as “ a diverse set of technological tools and resource used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store and manage information” p. 1 . However, within the scope of the current study, “ICT specifically refers to computer-based technologies such as desktop, laptops, tablets, smartphones, software and internet-based technology including emails- websites, and social networking sites for the purpose of English teaching and learning” [7] p. 34

With this regard, [7] in their quantitative study examined the attitudes of 149 EFL university students towards the use of ICT in English language learning in the context of Vietnam. The findings revealed that most of the participants have positive attitudes regarding the use of ICT in the English classroom. Also, they expected that “ICT should be used more frequently in the classroom in order to maximize language learning and teaching” p. 32. Additionally, [8] investigated 316 Czech university students' attitude towards ICT based on gender, grade and residence. The findings revealed that male students and students living in town were more positive in their attitude compared to other respective groups. In a similar view, [5] examined the attitude of 140 third year-non English major students towards ICT and ICT adaptation in their English learning at Yongquan College, Tiyuan University of Technology. The study found that participants were generally receptive towards the use of ICT in English Language learning. As far as the incorporation of ICT in EFL classes is concerned, very few published research studies investigated Moroccan University students' attitudes, perceptions and expectations towards ICT use in education in general and English language learning in particular.

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So, the major aim of this work is to explore 'college students' attitudes, perceptions and expectations of computer technology use in the process of English language learning at School of Arts and Humanities, Meknes-Morocco.

Research Questions:

This study attempted to find an answer to the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the attitudes of Moroccan undergraduate students towards the use of advanced technology in English language learning?

RQ 2: How do first year students in the department of English perceive ICT in English language learning?

RQ 3: What are Moroccan EFL College students' expectations of ICT use in English learning?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The target population of this study is 1st year students who were enrolled in the department of English at Moulay Ismail University, School of Arts and Humanities, Meknes_ Morocco during the academic year 2015_2016. There were about 1200 students but only 350 learners were randomly selected to participate in our work. There were about 124 female and 83 male. Their ages were between 17 and 45 years old. They belong to different social classes as well as different regions of Morocco.

2.2. Instrument

After conducting a pilot study of 20 participants the researchers used an adaptive modified questionnaire of [9] to investigate first year students' attitudes, perceptions and expectations towards the use of Computer- based technology in the process of English Language Learning namely in the department of English at Moulay Ismail University, School of Arts and Humanities –Meknes- Morocco. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part recorded respondents' demographic information. The second part contained 32 items on a five point Likert scale (strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree) aimed to elicit students' attitudes (Items 10), perceptions (Items 13) and expectations (Items 10) of Moroccan undergraduate students towards the use of ICT in English learning. The participants were given half an hour, during the break time, to make their choices and returned the questionnaire.

2.3. Procedures and protocol

The researchers visited the selected students in the department of English, and administered around 350 questionnaires. But we received only 207. The data collection procedure took about 5 weeks from October 5 to November 2, 2015.

2.4. Data Analysis

The statistical SPSS software version 17 was employed to calculate the collected data. Descriptive statistics were used to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Results

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of Moroccan undergraduate students towards the use of advanced technology in English language learning?

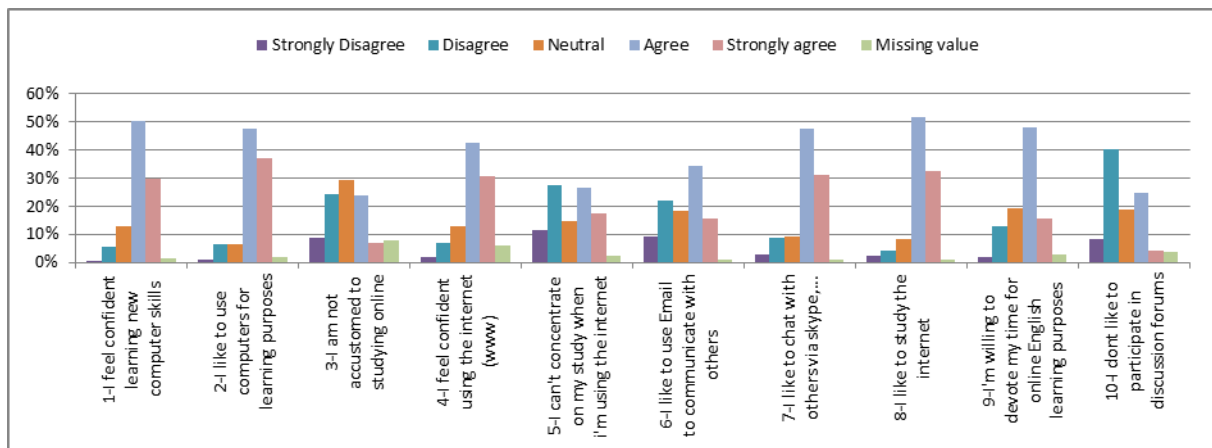


Fig.1: Students 'attitudes toward ICT

The obtained results from research question 1 revealed that 50.2 % of the participants feel confident learning new computer skills. Thus 47.3 % agree that they like to use computer -based technology for English language learning purposes. 34.3% of them prefer to use E-mail, Skype and WhatsApp to communicate with their friends as well as their teachers after classes. Therefore, 47. 8% of students are willing to devote their time for English learning in the department of English.

Research Question 2: How do first year students at the department of English perceive ICT in English language learning?

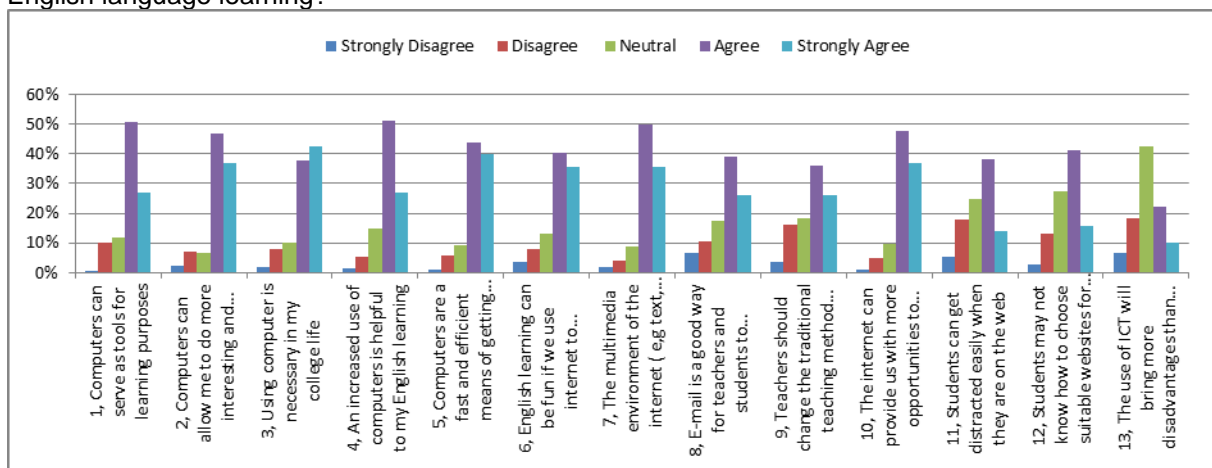


Fig.2: Students perceptions of ICT use in English learning

As far as students' perceptions of computer -based technology use for English Language purposes are concerned, a very large number of first year learners consider that the incorporation of ICT in the process of English language teaching, in the department of English, is very necessary, because computers allow the participants of this study to do more interesting and imaginative work (46, 9%). Thus, most of them reported that foreign language learning can be fun and more entertaining if the internet is used for communication in class (39, 1%). It's worth mentioning that more than half supported the idea that email is a good way for teachers and students to communicate after class. 36, 2% believed that teachers should change the traditional teaching methods and adopt computers as the main teaching tool, but 41, 1% of them have difficulty to choose suitable websites for their learning. 48.3% of respondents concluded that computers can serve as tools for learning purposes.

Research Question 3: What are Moroccan EFL College students' expectations of ICT use in English learning?

The obtained results from research question 3 showed that 47, 3% of respondents expected that ICT is used more often in the teaching learning process because it will help them improve their reading, speaking, writing and listening skills. 45, 9% of students hope that English teachers can use more up – to- date online materials in their teaching. Figure 3 illustrates students' expectations along with their percentages in more detail.

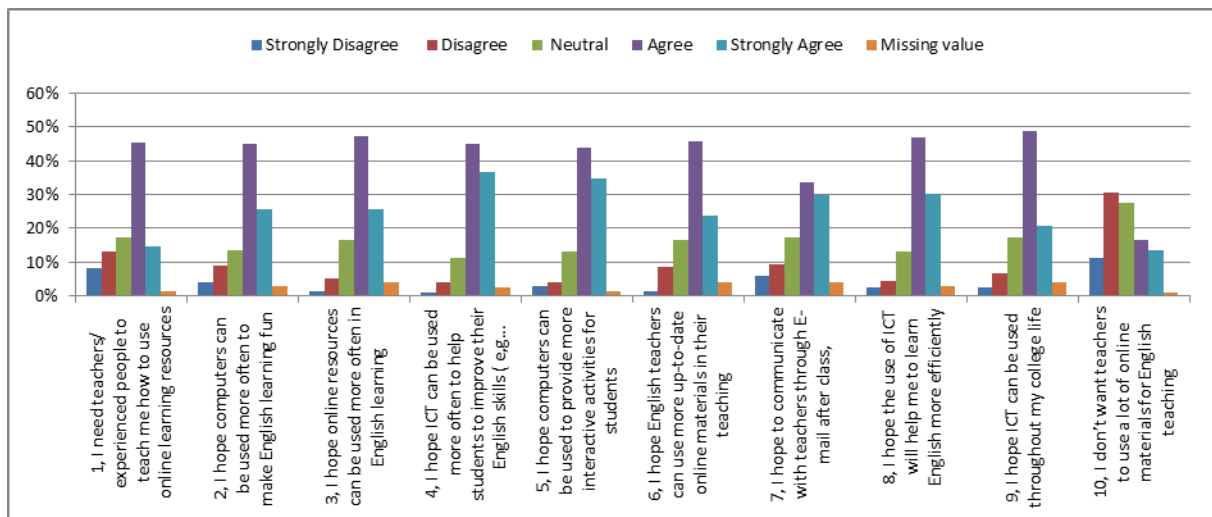


Fig.3: Students' expectations of ICT use in English learning

3.2. Discussion

Students' attitudes towards the use of ICT in English Language Learning

The findings from the students response on their' attitudes towards the use of ICT on English language learning showed that the majority of the respondent in the department of English at Moulay Ismail University ,mainly first year students, have a positive (51,7%) attitudes towards the use of technology in English learning. Similar results were reported by [7]; [5];[8]; [4]; and [10] in their published research studies.

Moroccan Undergraduate students' perceptions towards the use of ICT for English learning

The obtained results showed that the majority of participants perceived that the usage of ICT had a positive effect on English Language learning. Similar findings were confirmed and supported by [7].

Students' expectations towards ICT use in English Language learning

It's worth noting that a large number of participants expected that ICT is used more often for teaching and learning English. Thus more than half of learners want their English Language teachers to use a lot of online materials for English teaching. These results were similar to those seen in [1]; [2]; [4]; [5]; [7] and [11]

Conclusion

Taken together, our study revealed that the majority of students showed strong positive attitudes towards the benefits of technology to English language learning. Thus, most of them perceived that the usage of ICT had a positive effect on foreign language learning. Therefore, a large number of them hoped that English teachers change their traditional teaching methods and use more up- to- date online materials in their teaching in order to make English learning more enjoyable and entertaining. It's also worth mentioning that despite English teachers' positive attitudes towards the use of ICT in the process of teaching [12], its implementation remains very limited namely in the department of English. More research needs to be conducted on factors affecting Moroccan university teachers from using ICT in ELT classes.

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