An investigation of students’ attitudes to the ICT-based ELT classroom

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Proceedings of the 1st D4|Learning International Conference

Innovations in Digital Learning for Inclusion

Edited by

Elsebeth Korsgaard Sorensen,
Andras Szucs,
& Md. Saifuddin Khalid
ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is the proceedings of the 1st D4|Learning International Conference on Innovations in Digital Learning for Inclusion, and contains 34 peer-reviewed articles, of which 21 articles are accepted as full papers, 12 articles as short papers and 1 paper in the showcase and demonstration category. These articles present and discuss:

- New digital/educational practices
- New digital/educational environments
- New and innovative educational strategies
- Design of teaching/learning for inclusion
- Institutional policies with respect to the challenges of inclusion

The D4|Learning 2015 Conference was arranged in collaboration with Aalborg University (AAU), University College Nordjylland (UCN) and The European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN). The conference was held during 17-20 November 2015 at University College Nordjylland (UCN), Aalborg, Denmark.

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An investigation of students’ attitudes to the ICT-based ELT classroom

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The Open University, United Kingdom;

Iftekhar Khalid
Bangladesh Open University

The purpose of this study was to assess the attitude of students towards the ICT-enabled classroom. In a study of 113 high school students, an attitude scale was constructed and administered. The findings indicate a significant difference in the attitudes of Grade 9 students, who were found to be more in favour of and happier with ICT-based than normal classrooms on all of the tested items. No change was detected in these attitudes in relation to the type of school in which the participants studied.

Introduction

New information and communications technologies (ICT) and techniques have been introduced to English Language Teaching (ELT) throughout the world. In line with these developments, there has been extensive deployment of ICT in the Bangladeshi classroom in recent years (Chandan, 2014). High school students’ attitudes to different aspects of ICT as used for ELT purposes in Bangladesh, such as m-learning and to radio-, TV- and computer-mediated ELT, are therefore of significant interest. McGroarty (1996) characterised attitude as involving beliefs, emotional reactions and behavioural tendencies related to the object of the attitudes—in other words, the way someone thinks or behaves. Students’ attitudes towards the ICT-based classroom in Bangladesh may help to explain their success in learning English Language Learning (ELL) basics (reading, writing, listening and speaking), as such attitudes affect the rate of development and final proficiency achieved by ELT students elsewhere.

ICT was introduced to school education in Bangladesh by Government, NGOs and international agencies under the Digital Bangladesh scheme, Beginning in 2008, the aim was to ensure quality education in all the country’s schools. Implementation has been gradual; at present, some schools are selected for the programme and some are not. The opinions and observations of students reflect their experiences and can provide invaluable information about their experiences of the competitive opportunities offered by ICT in education. In this survey of high school students’ attitudes to the use of ICT, four FGDs for piloting the instruments of the baseline survey used a rating scale which was subsequently distributed to 113 of Grade 9 students at four schools—two in the capital city and two more rural schools. The survey sought to understand students’ attitudes to differences between ICT-based and non-ICT-based ELT classrooms.

Research objectives

The study aimed to investigate the attitudes of Grade 9 ELT learners to the ICT-enabled classroom (teacher-facilitated video). The study had two main objectives:

- To assess students’ attitudes to changes in the ELT classroom following deployment of ICT;
- To identify any statistically significant difference in attitude among these students based on the type of school in which they were studying.

It was hypothesized that the attitude of the target group to English would differ significantly because of the deployment of technology in the ELT classroom.
Research questions

The study aimed to answer the following questions.

- What are students’ general attitudes to the new technology-based education?
- What are the overall attitudes of ELT learners to the ICT-based classroom?
- Are there any differences between learners’ attitudes to the use of ICT in the classroom?

Methodology

Participants and procedure

The sample population comprised 113 Grade 9 students from four schools: two outside the capital city (one boys’ school and one girls’ school, characterised as rural) and two in capital city (again, one boys’ school and one girls’ school, characterised as urban). The participants were Grade 9 students. In each school, the researchers conducted classroom observations. As soon as teachers’ lectures had finished, after establishing a rapport, the scale (see Instrument below) was distributed to students. Students were randomly assigned to two groups: the Treatment Group (ELT using ICT), comprising 38 participants, and the Control Group (ELT without using ICT), comprising 75.

Instrument

The researchers collected the qualitative data from discussions with the learners; quantitative data was collected by means of a rating scale. This was based on the project entitled “Teaching English Language at Secondary Schools: Effective Integration of ICT to Enhance Teaching and Learning in Bangladeshi Classrooms” to assess the attitude of students to the content and method used for teacher-facilitated videos within an ICT environment. The scale was structured as a series of choices: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Disagree (4), and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was reviewed by two ELT experts and peer-reviewed by the researchers and two teachers from each school before being distributed to the study participants. A personal data sheet was also administered to collect data on familiarity and access to media and ICT.

Significance of the study

This study was undertaken for two reasons: First, it seems important to investigate the attitudes of ELT learners to ICT as a tool to help learners and teachers in mastering the basic skills of ELT and to empower English teachers to improve the quality of ELT teaching actions. That is, although ICT has several advantages for ELT in Bangladeshi classrooms in general and for rural schools in particular, attitudes may influence the methodology used for ELT teaching. Second, there has been no study to investigate attitudes to ELT, and so there is still a need to explore the respective advantages of constructivist and connectivist approaches in ELT. Attitude, in this context, has been defined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistent manner to a given object or situation. It is hoped that the findings of this study may be useful for decision-makers in Bangladesh in improving the quality of ELT in schools. These results can also help to bridge any existing gap between theory and practice in terms of teaching methodologies while adding to the growing body of literature in this area. The findings may also be of use to anyone interested in ELT, syllabus design or teaching methods and materials.

Results and discussion (rating scale)

In general, the current research investigated the effects of ELT technology use on student attitudes. One of the advantages commonly attributed to using computers in the classroom is that this engenders more positive student attitudes (Brasell, 1987; Brungardt & Zollman, 1995). Because computers can run all sorts of electronic media and can do so many new things so quickly and accurately, the use of computers in the classroom is believed to lead to more positive attitudes, and many students prefer using computers for further learning, reinforcing the connectivist approach. While the use of computer technology in the classroom may assist effective learning approaches such as constructivism and connectivism, there is little research to support such claims. The limited available research suggests that computers can lead to
more positive attitudes in some groups of students (especially males and younger students). Moore (2005) summarised about the positive impact of ICT on students’ learning as increasing students’ motivation to stay on-task and driving them to behave better and produce high quality work. Additionally, through ICT, students may learn more autonomously and complete more work at a faster pace. According to Osman and Ahmed (2003), for comprehensive teaching using ICT, teachers need to be convinced of the importance and benefit of its use in teaching and learning. Indeed, teachers should be given adequate training in how to use ICT tools effectively and efficiently. We will now consider how this aligns with students’ beliefs, emotional reactions and behavioural tendencies towards the use of ICT in the ELT classroom.

Student attitudes

Students were asked for their opinions on statements categorised as (a) Attitudes and feelings towards using English; (b) Attitudes towards m-learning; (c) Learners’ attitudes towards radio for English language lessons; (d) Learners’ attitudes towards English language lessons on TV; (e) Attitudes towards curriculum-linked video (including animation). The analysis sought to identify any differences in attitude towards ICT-aided ELT. Students’ attitudes to the modified classroom environment were measured in terms of mean and standard deviation; the results are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Attitudes and feelings about using English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>ICT-mediated</th>
<th>Non-ICT-mediated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get nervous and confused when I speak English</td>
<td>38 2.4 1.7</td>
<td>N 75 2.1 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I generally find trying to communicate in English frustrating</td>
<td>38 2.6 1.7</td>
<td>N 75 2.1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I speak in English, the fear of making grammatical</td>
<td>38 3.4 1.6</td>
<td>N 75 2.9 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>errors has a great influence on me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always feel that the other students speak English better</td>
<td>38 3.7 1.5</td>
<td>N 75 3.5 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The attitudes of students from ICT-aided classrooms (N = 38) and non-ICT-aided classrooms (N = 75) to new technology-aided classrooms were assessed. The students using ICT-mediated classrooms show a better mean attitude and feeling about using English as compared to students for whom ICT was not applied. This indicates that ICT-mediated classrooms enable students to make fewer grammatical errors and also increases their confidence when communicating.

Attitudes towards m-learning

As reported in the FGD reports, students use smartphones and tablets at home. The qualitative data also support the proposition that learners use mobile device for learning English, and they reported a liking for BBC Janala.

Table 2
Attitudes towards m-learning

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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>ICT-mediated</th>
<th>Non-ICT-mediated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A mobile device can help me to acquire more ideas in English learning.</td>
<td>38 3.7 1.6</td>
<td>N 75 4.8 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mobile device is helpful for my English learning.</td>
<td>37 3.6 1.6</td>
<td>74 4.5 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mobile device can enhance my desire to learn English.</td>
<td>37 3.3 1.7</td>
<td>75 4.2 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel bored using a mobile device for learning English.</td>
<td>37 2.4 1.3</td>
<td>75 2.1 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not good at using a mobile device.</td>
<td>36 2.1 1.2</td>
<td>75 2.2 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope to apply mobile devices in English learning activities.</td>
<td>36 3.8 1.7</td>
<td>75 4.2 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope to have a regular time to use a mobile device for learning English.</td>
<td>37 3.8 1.6</td>
<td>75 4.2 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use a mobile device independently without another’s help.</td>
<td>37 3.6 1.6</td>
<td>75 4.2 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is quite fun to use a mobile device for English learning.</td>
<td>37 3.6 1.5</td>
<td>75 4.4 1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I love to use mobile devices for my English exam preparation. 37 3.0 1.6 75 4.3 1.1
It saves time when I use mobile devices because I can learn English without space or time constraints. 37 3.4 1.7 75 4.2 1.2

Table 2 reveals that means and standard deviations of the treatment and control groups are almost the same. This suggests that m-learning for ELL has high potential in Bangladesh.

**Learners’ attitudes to radio for English language lessons**
In Bangladesh, radio is very commonly used for both school and non-formal education.

Table 3
**Attitudes to radio lessons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>ICT-mediated</th>
<th>Non-ICT-mediated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I listen regularly to Bangladesh Betar (National Radio).</td>
<td>38 2.4 1.5</td>
<td>75 2.8 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I listen regularly to a mobile-linked FM radio.</td>
<td>38 3.2 1.7</td>
<td>75 3.2 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I listen regularly to community radio (CR).</td>
<td>38 2.2 1.5</td>
<td>74 2.6 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I listen to web radio.</td>
<td>38 2.1 1.4</td>
<td>75 2.6 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio regularly broadcasts English language lessons for school learners.</td>
<td>38 3.4 1.7</td>
<td>72 3.4 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers recommend popular programmes such as ‘Shikharthir Ashor’ on Bangladesh Betar for my language skills.</td>
<td>38 4.3 1.3</td>
<td>74 3.7 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I listen to BOU radio broadcasts of English language programmes as well.</td>
<td>38 2.5 1.6</td>
<td>73 3.0 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through English radio programmes, I have the opportunity to be taught by famous teachers.</td>
<td>37 2.7 1.8</td>
<td>72 3.4 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio English lessons are helpful for language skills.</td>
<td>38 3.8 1.6</td>
<td>72 4.0 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use radio English lessons for my exam preparation.</td>
<td>38 2.7 1.6</td>
<td>72 2.7 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the use of radio for English teaching will increase in the near future.</td>
<td>37 3.5 1.7</td>
<td>75 4.2 1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows that both groups return almost the same mean values and standard deviations, indicating that attitudes towards radio for ELL are very positive.

**Learners’ attitude towards English language lessons on TV**
Bangladesh Open University uses TV for delivery of its ELT lessons for school programmes, and students’ opinions were positive.

Table 4
**Attitudes to TV lessons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>ICT-mediated</th>
<th>Non-ICT-mediated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I regularly watch Bangladesh Television (BTV) and other private channels.</td>
<td>37 3.4 1.7</td>
<td>75 4.0 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch BTV specifically for educational purposes.</td>
<td>37 2.7 1.5</td>
<td>74 3.8 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTV has school education programmes.</td>
<td>37 4.3 1.3</td>
<td>75 4.5 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTV regularly broadcasts English language lessons for school learners.</td>
<td>37 4.3 1.2</td>
<td>74 4.4 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers recommend some English language programmes for improving language skills.</td>
<td>37 4.6 1.0</td>
<td>74 4.4 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch BTV broadcasts of English language programmes.</td>
<td>37 3.4 1.6</td>
<td>73 4.2 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through English programmes on BTV, I have the opportunity to be taught by famous teachers.</td>
<td>37 3.9 1.6</td>
<td>75 4.0 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTV English lessons are helpful for language skills.</td>
<td>37 4.3 1.3</td>
<td>74 4.5 1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I believe the use of TV broadcast for teaching English language will increase in the near future.

Table 4 shows that the control group has more interest in TV programmes, as the mean value is slightly higher than that of the control group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes to classroom video</th>
<th>ICT-mediated</th>
<th>Non-ICT-mediated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-facilitated video in the classroom is a good use of technology for learning English.</td>
<td>36 4.6 1.0</td>
<td>74 4.5 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-facilitated video in the classroom would enhance my English learning.</td>
<td>36 4.6 1.0</td>
<td>74 4.5 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-facilitated video in the classroom will motivate me to learn English effectively.</td>
<td>36 4.7 0.7</td>
<td>73 4.6 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of teacher-facilitated video will be more effective as a learning tool with today’s students, as most of them use ICT such as mobile devices, computer, radio and TV. Pictures, diagrams and graphics in the teacher-facilitated video will help me to enhance English learning.</td>
<td>36 4.7 0.5</td>
<td>74 4.5 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-facilitated English video animations would address my needs and issues, including learning styles.</td>
<td>35 4.4 1.0</td>
<td>72 4.4 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-facilitated video animations will be user-friendly as they are to be used for English teaching. To be effective, teacher-facilitated video would apply principles of learning.</td>
<td>35 4.5 0.9</td>
<td>72 4.4 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that curriculum-linked video for English is a valuable use of ICT.</td>
<td>36 4.3 1.1</td>
<td>71 4.3 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I might be able to reuse the same video through a mobile memory card.</td>
<td>36 4.6 0.9</td>
<td>74 4.4 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I might be able to reuse the same video from the web if made as an Open Educational Resource (OER). The use of curriculum-linked video for teaching and learning English is likely to grow in the near future.</td>
<td>36 4.6 0.9</td>
<td>74 4.6 0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that the treatment group has the higher mean value and standard deviation, indicating that students support use of the curriculum-linked video including animation.

**Discussion**

According to the current policy, the ELT classroom is based on constructivist theory. A higher score indicates a relatively more constructivist learning environment (Taylor et al., 1996). Classroom observations indicated the use of participatory and group work in the Bangladesh classroom. As the mean score for ICT-based classroom students was greater than that of non-ICT-based students on the preferred form, it would seem that ICT-based classroom students show a relatively greater preference for constructivist learning environments.

The descriptive analysis showed that a majority of students favoured the new ICT-aided classroom and the change in classroom environment for ELT under education policy. The attitudes of I ICT-aided classroom students were more favourable to the new technology-aided approach. Based on the different types of schools in which these students study, attitude scores indicated no significant difference. ICT-based classroom students consistently preferred a more constructivist learning environment than non-ICT-based classroom students. While constructivist approaches may be valuable in this respect, they are not necessarily the only way to teach English, and constructivism does not serve as a unifying theory for pedagogy (Phillips, 2000). Our results show that ICT-mediated students in general have a better attitude to ELT classrooms than non-ICT-based classroom students with the exception of the difficulty component, for which no statistical significant differences were found between the two groups. In this situation, a connectivist approach represents an added benefit for ELL in Bangladeshi schools.
Conclusion

The information provided by participants in this study provides a basis for rethinking well-established strategies in reexamining the arguments for and against ICT-mediated ELT in high school among stakeholders (students and teachers), policy-makers and other actors in ELL development, such as NGOs and international development agencies working in Bangladesh. The study investigated similarities and differences in the perceptions and attitudes of students from two very different learning milieus—one ICT-based and the other non-ICT-based. Such comparisons can potentially generate new insights into ELT pedagogy and the role of non-cognitive sociocultural variables in teaching English to school students. In the future, to enhance student attitudes toward ELL, instructors will perhaps move away from primarily using lecture methods in favour of more constructivist approaches, using videos that can reduce anxiety in the ELT classroom. In general, Bangladeshi ELT instructors should encourage students to use ICT in solving English language problems.

References


Acknowledgement

This paper was developed from the baseline survey data for *Teaching English Language at Secondary Schools: Effective Integration of ICT to Enhance Teaching and Learning in Bangladeshi Classrooms*, a British Council-funded BOU-OU UK Strategic Partnership Project.
The EDEN Open Classroom 2015 Aalborg is the initiative of EDEN supported by the ERASMUS+ Programme of the European Union. The publications reflect the authors’ views, the EACEA and the European Commission are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information they contain.