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Technologies and Second Language: Nigerian Students' Adaptive Strategies to Cope With Language Barrier in Northern Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate how Nigerian students in Northern Cyprus cope with language barrier and increase interactions with people of the host community beyond the classroom via utilizing technological adaptive strategies. In order to complete this study, a descriptive design based on a survey conducted among 238 Nigerian students studying in a North Cyprus university was used. Result shows that mobile translation apps such as Google Translate, iVoice translator pro and iTranslate voice mobile were frequently used by Nigerian students more than other technological adaptive strategies. We also found that male students use ICT to cope with language barrier more than the females, and that social media was widely used, second to the translation assistant apps.

Keywords: ICT, second languages, international students, language barrier, smart phones, mobile translation apps.

The use of communicative technology as a strategy in coping with language barrier and increasing interaction beyond the classroom in second language milieu is an important and growing discussion in respect to foreign study and it generally highlights technology as a valuable tool that helps to increase interaction and blur socio-cultural differences.

Previous research in this area focuses on strategies that help students to increase interaction in the classroom but Flymann-matterson (1991) accedes that the introduction of coping strategies such as Immersion

Classroom, has been quite helpful for second language learners because communicative skills were seen to have developed to great extent overtime. However, these traditional methods may have catered for communication within the classroom but it hasn't provided students with communicative skills that are necessary to cope with language barrier and increase interactivity outside the classroom.

By taking into account the afore-discussed, it is important to state that international students spend more time outside the classroom more than they do inside. Tanaka (2007) claim that, "One of the most popular beliefs among language learners (and even language teachers) is that living in a country where the target language (L2) is used in daily life brings about a greater number of hours in which learners are exposed to the L2 outside the classroom" (p.36). This, therefore, suggests that interaction with shop attendants, taxi drivers, custom officers, receptionists, security guards and regular people, is more dominant in the everyday lives of international students. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the technological adaptive strategies used by Nigerian students to cope with language challenges that they encounter on a daily basis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Uses and gratification theory explains how individual media users' needs are gratified through specific communication technologies. The theory which originated in the 1970s as a reaction to traditional mass communication research stressing that audience members actively make choices, have been widely applied to newer technologies to explain the uses and functions of new media users. Ruggiero (2000) hints that, as new media continue to present media users with variety of media choices, gratification become even more important elements of audience analysis. He also adds that unlike traditional mass media, new media such as the Internet allow users to choose and direct their choices to their needs.

Application of Uses and Gratifications theory to Information Communication Technologies have enjoyed considerable scholarly attention in respect to mobile phone apps (Lin, Fang, & Hsu, 2014), mobile Internet (Chigona, Kamkwenda, & Saffia, 2008; Humphreys, Pape, & Karnowski, 2013), Social networking sites (Ezumah, 2013), Facebook usage (Spiliotopoulos & Oakley, 2013) and cellular phones (Leung & Wei, 2000). The relevance of the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory to ICT is its possession of at least three dimensions of data not commonly affiliated with traditional media: interactivity, demassification, and asynchroneity (Ruggiero, 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2009, UNESCO reported that there are over 2.5 million students pursuing an academic career outside of their home countries. By calculation, the number of international students will triple the number to around 7 million by 2020 (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). A similar round up reveals that, "The global population of students who move to another country to study continues to rise, reaching almost 5 million in 2014 – more than double the 2.1 million internationally mobile students in 2000 – with an annual increase of 10%. The OECD has projected that, with demographic changes, international student mobility is likely to reach 8 million students per year by 2025" (International Trends in Higher Education, 2015, p. 5).

Despite this massive influx of international students, many of them encounter numerous difficulties in the process of acquiring a degree in a foreign country (Banjong & Olson, 2016; Yeoh & Terry, 2013; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Russell, Doreen & Thomson, 2010). Amidst all problems faced, language difficulty happens to be one of the greatest academic challenges hindering easy study for international students (Yeoh & Terry 2013; Galloway & Jenkins 2005; Ţirban et al., 2012; Sawir, 2005). With this in mind, the review of literature provides an examination of researches on adaptive strategies to cope with language barrier and increase interaction between students and people of the host community, and ICT tools available to international students.

Types of Coping Strategies to Address Language Barrier
Considering how significant communication between non-native speakers and people of the host community is, it is significant to mention different adaptive strategies that predate the use of technology. A few authors have highlighted some adaptive strategies used by international students and how effective they are in coping with language barrier (Teriu, 2012; Elega, 2015). Teriu (2012) studied the use of pretense to cope with language barrier. She clearly described pretense as a face to face transactional strategy that is employed in communication between people of different cultures mainly caused by language impediments that occurs during discussions. She claims that pretending is an integrating face work that international students apply as a strategy due to concern for self-face, other-face and mutual face that is used both inside and outside the classroom.

Nonverbal communication is another strategy used by foreign students to cope with language barrier and it is basically the sharing of information through non-spoken symbol or non-voiced communication. It ranges from eye contact, silence, hand gestures, personal space, clothing, physical appearance and paralanguage etc. To highlight the importance,

Elega (2015) mentioned that international students adopt nonverbal cues to cope with language barrier and increase interaction between students and people of the host community. In his study, he found that the following cues were mostly used by students to cope with language barrier; eye contact, hand gestures, signs and symbols, touch, facial expressions and paralanguage.

These previous studies were helpful in providing insights into adaptive strategies that precedes the use of technology. However, no study has focused primarily on the use of ICT by international students to cope with language barrier and increase interaction in a second language milieu.

ICT Tools Available to Students

In recent times, advancements in ICT have brought an innovative perspective to all areas of the society (Dovedan, Seljan, & Vučković, 2002; Mattos, 2003). Technology has helped ameliorate language difficulties and it is considered to be one of the most important drivers of social and linguistic change in this digital age (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). A slew of authors have also highlighted the significance of technology in language learning (Hayta & Yaprak, 2013; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Bright, 2016; Chhabra, 2012, Kukulska-Hulme, 2009) and all contributors have made it known that it is a major facelift in language learning. Pim (2013) accedes that technology has the potentials to equip learners with the ability to interact with one another especially native language speakers and other learners. Technological resources and materials like laptops, cellphones, web-based resources and softwares such as Google Translate, have helped language learners to acquire the basic literacy skills of another language (Iacob, 2009).

Out of all technological materials and resources aforementioned, mobile phones have been highly noticeable among other wireless devices such as laptop, computers etc. They are cheap, portable and they are opening up new learning experiences because they allow learners to get through their day learning in the bus, outside or at work doing their part-time jobs. Many have said mobile phones are the most powerful communication tool of the 21st century (Rahimi & Mirib, 2014; Steel, 2012; Miangah & Nezarat, 2012).

The advanced smart phones such as iPhone, Android devices, and Windows Phones have proven to be very instrumental in respect to mobile assisted language learning. The mobile phone technology has been practically modified into a digital computer of medium size and they have been helpful in solving small screen size and low resolution problems that arose in the early attempts of mobile assisted language learning. The mobile phones now have large and clear screens with high resolution that allows

browsing through the on-screen features of the phones much easier (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

Aamri and Suleiman (2011) summed that, mobile phones have done two major things in respect to learning. First, it helps language learners to understand and develop their innate learning abilities and it also enhances language learner's literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, it can be used to stimulate individual and group learning experiences and also, it helps language learners to recognize areas where they need to improve on.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus; an island that houses internationally recognized universities with a large influx of Nigerian students annually. The first language of the part of Island studied is Turkish but in most of its universities, the language of instruction is English language. Therefore, interaction with people of the host community is a major problem for Nigerian students because of language differences.

In general, Nigerians are a major part of the global discussion on international student mobility. After Morocco, Nigeria is the second country in Africa with the most students studying outside their home country. Report shows that the total number of Nigerian students abroad in 2013 was 52,066, with Cyprus being the 18th country hosting Nigerian students on the list of over 110 countries (UNESCO, 2014). As the number of Nigerian students pursuing studies abroad continues to rise, fairly new studies have highlighted language barrier as a major challenge faced by Nigerian students studying in different parts of the world (Umar, Noon, & Abduallahi, 2013; Akedeiwei, et al., 2015; Banjong, 2015). It is important to say that these studies were helpful in reaffirming the fact that language barrier is a major albatross faced by Nigerian students abroad.

This research sought to empirically answer the following research questions: How do Nigerian students in Northern Cyprus cope with the language barrier and increase interactions with people of the host community beyond the classroom via utilizing technological adaptive strategies? Do male and female Nigerian students significantly differ on their level of utilizing technological adaptive strategies to cope with the language barrier and increase interactions with people of the host community in North Cyprus?

Participants

The research was carried out between October 2014 and January 2015. The study was conducted through a survey among Nigerian students in Eastern Mediterranean University and as at the time this study was carried out, the university had a total Nigerian students' population of 2327. An approximated 10% percent of the population was sampled (n=240).

Participants were contacted through self-administered questionnaires which were handed out to respondents to complete and return.

Male participants are 68.9% (164 students) and female 31.1% (74 students). For age groups, 60.1% are in 20-24 age bracket, 23.9% are in 15-19 age bracket, 13,9% are in 25-29 age bracket, 4% are 34 and above. 1.7% are in 30-34 age bracket. As for faculty, Nigerian students were densely populated in three faculties (Business and Economics=80, Communication and Media studies, Engineering=78). As for level of education, 89.1% (212 students) are undergraduate students, 9.7% (23) are masters' students and 1.3% (3 students) are doctoral students.

Data collection procedure

Data collection instrument for the study was a 60 item in-house questionnaire designed by the researcher to measure respondents' attitudes on the use of verbal communication, nonverbal communication and use of technological adaptive strategies to cope with language barrier in North Cyprus. Following the approval of an expert working in the field of communication studies, a pilot test was conducted with ten Turkish students in the faculty of Architecture at Eastern Mediterranean University. The final version of the survey was ready to be administered as an instrument of data gathering. The questionnaire was organized into 8 groups with series of statements about the aforesaid topics. For the fulfillment of the present study, only the group that contained items on the use of communicative technologies was considered. Items in this category are five and they sought to measure respondents' use of technological adaptive strategies to cope in North Cyprus. All items are presented on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). As earlier stated, 240 questionnaires were administered and two out of the returned questionnaires contained so many missing responses which makes them invalid. Survey response rate was 99.17%, which is relatively high.

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis is an approach of investigation that involves the conversion of numeric data forms into statistical analysis (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Descriptive statistics (Frequency and percentage statistics) were used to examine how Nigerian students in Northern Cyprus cope with the language barrier and increase interactions with people of the host community beyond the classroom via utilizing technological adaptive strategies. A cross-tabulation examination was done to examine how use of Google Translate differed by categorical background variables (e.g., gender, age and level of education). T test was conducted to understand if there is statistical significant difference between the Nigerian male and female students in respect to the use of Information Communication Technologies

as a strategy to cope with language barrier and increase interaction in North Cyprus.

RESULTS

A total of 238 questionnaires were achieved after the effort of data collection. Demographically, male respondents' outnumbered females, age group 20-24 numbered higher than other age groups. All faculties were evenly distributed except Engineering with 2 invalid questionnaires and Undergraduate students outnumbered students of other programs. Most students reported that they strongly agreed that they checked Google Translate to get the meaning of Turkish words inorder to cope with language barrier and increase interactions with people of the host community (51.7%; N=123). 26.1% (N=62) of the participants agreed to the same statement. 10.1% (N=24) of Nigerian students strongly disagreed with the use of Google Translate as an adaptive strategy, 8.0% (N=19) disagreed and 4.2% (N=10) are undecided.

In the analysis of respondents who use iVoice translator pro mobile application when language becomes an impediment, majority of the partcipants strongly agreed that they use iVoice translator pro mobile application to translate utterances to Turkish language when language becomes and impediment (27.7%; N=66). 24.4% (N=58) agreed. Participants who disagreed are 21.0% (N=50). 13.4% (N=32) strongly disagreed and also 13.4% (N=32) are undecided.

Foremost among participant's response to checking iTranslate voice mobile application to get the meaning of some Turkish utterances when language becomes a barrier in their day to day activity, are those who accedes that they agree to the use of the mobile translator (25.6%; N=61), those who strongly agreed followed next with (24.4%; N=58). Respondents who disagreed are 21.8% (N=52); (16.4%; N=39) strongly disagreed and 11.8% (N=28) are undecided if they use iTranslate voice mobile application to get the meaning of some Turkish words when language becomes a barrier.

Respondents that chat with friends who understands Turkish language through social media when language becomes an impediment are 25.2% (N=60) of them agreed that they chat with friends through social media to cope with laguage barrier, those who agreed are 23.5% (N=56). 22.3% (N=53) of the respondents dısagreed; 15.1% (N=36) strongly disagreed and finally 13.9% (N=33) are undecided.

Making Telephone calls to friends to help when language becomes a diffculty in Nigerian students everyday life in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus was tested and most of the participants indicated that they strongly agree to that (23.5%; N=56). 50% (N=21.0) of the participants agreed.

Respondents who disagreed are 20.6% (N=49), 18.5% (N=44) strongly disagreed and 16.4% (N=39) are undecided.

Result shows that the sum of respondents who agreed that they check Google Translate to get the meaning of some Turkish utterances when language becomes an impediment to their everyday communication are (77.8%; N=185). The sum of those who agreed that they that they use iVoice translator pro mobile application to get the meaning of some Turkish words when faced with language impediments are (52.1%; N=124). The sum of those who agreed that they check iTranslate voice mobile application are 50% (N=119). (48.7%; N=116) and 44.5% (N=106) are the sum of those that chat and make telephone calls respectively. Results however indicate that most Nigerian students use mobile translation apps (Google Translate iVoice translator pro mobile application and iTranslate voice mobile) as an adaptive strategy to increase interaction and cope with language barrier. We also found that social media was widely used, second only to the translation assistant apps.

Independent Samples Ttest Measuring Differentiations of Nigerian Students Use of ICT as a Coping Strategy

	f	*t*	*df*	*sig.*
I check Google Translate to get the meaning of some Turkish words	.037	-.425	236	.672
		-.431	145.815	
I check ivoice translator pro mobile application to get the meaning of some Turkish words	2.297	.062	236	.950
		.060	129.195	
I check itranslate voice mobile application to get the meaning of some Turkish words	,538	.157	236	.876
		.156	140.509	
I chat with my friends who understand Turkish to get some things done	,649	2.469	236	.014
		2.395	131.114	
I make telephone calls to friends who understands Turkish when am stuck.	9.036	1.335	236	.183
		1.250	121.279	

$p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$

Out of all the total participants (n= 238), 51.7% of students strongly agreed that they check Google Translate to get the meaning of some Turkish utterances when language becomes an impediment to their everyday communication. Cross-tabulation reveals that 54.1% of female students responded that they check Google Translate to get the meaning of some

Turkish words, compared with 50.6% of male students. Many more students between the age group of 20-24 strongly agreed that they check Google Translate to get the meaning of Turkish words, compared with 25% of students between the ages of 30-34. Far more master's students (60.9 %) strongly agreed that they check Google Translate to get the meanings of words, compared to 33.3% of PhD students. Independent sample T test was conducted to assess statistical significant difference between the mean scores of Nigerian male and female students.

Results shows that there was a significant difference in the scores for male students who chat with friends who understands Turkish to get some things done (M=3.35, SD=1.36) and female students who chat with friends who understands Turkish to get some things done (M=2.86, SD=1.47); t (236) =2.47, p = 014. Furthermore, group statistics box revealed that male students' mean values were assessed higher than those of female students so we can conclude that male participants use ICT to cope with language barrier and increase interaction more than the female students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the present study allow us to draw an inference that technological adaptive strategies are the new ways of coping with language barrier and increasing interaction between native and non-native speakers. Technological resources such as mobile translation apps and social media are found to be mostly used in this study because following the core statement of Uses and Gratification Theory, "A medium will be used more when the existing motives to use the medium leads to more satisfaction" (Theory Clusters, 2010., para. 4). The findings of this study corroborate with previous research findings. Lin and Deifell's (2013) study focused on the use and perception of online dictionaries by language learners learning Chinese, Arabic, Italian, French, Japanese, Russian, Italian, and Spanish in the United States. Result shows that Google Translate and Google search engine are the two mostly mentioned online assistant tools used across all languages.

The current study confirms that Google Translate is an important communication tool in second language milieus because result shows that majority of the students use it to cope with language barrier and increase interaction in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. Godwin-Jones (2011) argues that in addition to the regular text translation function, the language translation service also offers an interesting experimental feature that allows immediate conversation. Users translate a statement into the target language, and then it is said aloud. One's conversation partner can then speak in the target language and one after the other it continues as utterances are translated and read aloud.

Social media was widely used among the study participants, second only to the use of translation assistant apps. This recurrently highlights how social media has not only diffused our lives but has dominated it. Richards (2014) posits that; "Social media plays an important role in the daily lives of most people including language learners and can also be used to support language development" (p. 9). Blattner & Fiori (2009) also mentions that; "Facebook is a powerful learning tool that is not only built of the synchronous and asynchronous technologies that has transformed learning but has also extended the reach of those communicative tools" (pp. 2-3). Overall, it is evident that the current study reveals that Nigerian students in Northern Cyprus cope with the language barrier and increase interactions with people of the host community beyond the classroom via utilizing translation assistant and social media adaptive strategies.

IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

The result of this study reveals that mobile translation apps and social media are mostly used by Nigerian students in North Cyprus to cope with language barrier and increase interaction with the people of the host community. Prior studies have also indicated that technological adaptive strategies are extremely important for international students. Although these adaptive strategies have been described to be potentially beneficial, it is pertinent to say that the immediacy and accessibility of translation assistant apps and social media can potentially distract students from language learning thereby prompting them to communicate more with people from their own culture. Foreign students may be temporarily distracted. For example, students are more likely to use these technologies for instant language problem solving because they are more concerned about the social functions of these technologies over its educational functions (Deng & Tavares, 2015). Based on our findings, male students use ICT to cope with language barrier and increase interaction more than the female students. The addition of nonverbal adaptive strategies could significantly help increase interaction and even communication skills. Nonverbal styles of communication such as bodily movement are known to be generally helpful in the expression of a situation, as well as the intensity of such situation (Pan, 2014).

Future empirical studies might investigate gender differences in ICT tools and social media usage through interview or open ended survey questionnaire. Future studies might also consider an investigation of students' academic indicators like grade of Nigerian students and students from other countries who came to North Cyprus, and look for any discrepancies based on host language fluency or in- or out-of class student interaction towards academic goals (e.g. group work or pair work on a class projects). Future studies might also investigate the coping strategies that

native speakers in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus devise to communicate with international students in North Cyprus.

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