Teaching oral English through technology: Perceptions of teachers in Nigerian secondary schools

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Abstract

English Language learners in Nigeria mostly find Oral English difficult to understand but technology is now supportive. However, being a dynamic language, the English Language is constantly evolving and so are the technologies used in its teaching. This study, therefore, intends to re-examine teachers' current perceptions towards technology usage in teaching Oral English. The study was descriptive. The sample comprised 215 teachers to whom an instrument titled "Teachers' Current Perceptions of Teaching Oral English through Technology Questionnaire (TCPTOETQ)", was administered. Six research questions were formulated and answered using Mean, Standard Deviation, One-Way ANOVA, and t-test. The result showed that the teachers currently have positive perceptions towards the use of technologies in teaching Oral English. It was therefore recommended that stakeholders in education provide continuous training for English Language teachers for continuous adaptation to the changing landscapes of technology usage in teaching Oral English.

Keywords: English Teachers; Oral English; Perceptions Technology; Secondary Schools; Nigeria.

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1. Introduction

Communication cannot be excluded from human existence as man has communicated with one another right from the beginning, using various mediums. The issue of language needed to be taken very seriously because man must continuously communicate to live peacefully and also carry out his daily activities with his neighbors. Therefore, the existence of man and his development depend on language for communication (Babatunde, 2002). Over the years, language has remained and will remain a very vital tool through which humans communicate with one another. This is because language serves as a means of socialization (Egwuogu, 2002). It has therefore been noted that one of the major features of man is his ability to communicate information relating to his activities to others and this is done through either written or spoken language (Abudu, Lawal & Abiodun, 2020).

One language which has stood the test of the unification of man over many years is the English Language. The English Language happens to be a global language that is spoken in all nations of the world. It is a widely used means of communication either as the major language or as a means of official communication (second language) in others. Aside from being referred to as a language of global unification, the language has also enjoyed usage in business, education, interactional purposes, and so on (Akintunde & Angulu, 2015), due to its wide acceptance and usability. One important area of English language study which all learners or non-native speakers of the language need to learn effectively and use efficiently to be proficient in pronunciation is Oral English. This aspect of the English language is vital because it enhances the effective pronunciation of words and the speaking skills of the speaker.

In Nigeria, the English Language is a subject taught from primary school, through secondary schools to tertiary level of education. It is such an important subject that all pupils and students must take and pass since it is the official language of the country, and all citizens must be well-grounded in it – spoken and written. Atolagbe and Adelana (2020) stated that in Nigeria, grammar, essay writing, letter writing, comprehension, summary, and Oral English are the major aspects of English Language teaching and learning. According to Alufohai and Aziegbe (2016), for students to effectively learn the sounds and rhythms of a foreign language, they have to listen to good sounds in addition to samples of the new language. The need for proficiency in spoken English informed the Federal Government of Nigeria's decision in the 1980s, to implement a New National Curriculum on the English Language in Secondary Schools, because English Language teaching as Oral English was previously nonexistent in schools and was also made optional in the West African School Certificate (Jowitt, 1991). According to Rahman (2015), a common instruction for English language teaching was based on learning grammatical exercises, essay writing, lists of vocabulary, comprehension, and so on. In this wise, the objectives of the English language were based on the mastery of language structures, but not on communication or use. Consequently, students were exposed to the mechanics of the language, but not on usage.

The provision of effective instruction in oral English is particularly important for acquiring basic skills of the English Language, especially concerning usage. Because of this, all students studying the English language in secondary schools in Nigeria must learn Oral English, along with other aspects of the language. The need to learn Oral English bothers on enhancing effective communication skills because it is believed that students' abilities to express themselves clearly, coherently, and fluently in a speech depend on a good grasp of pronunciation, enunciation, stress placement, intonation, and other idiosyncratic features of speech (Abudu, Lawal & Abiodun, 2020). This, eventually, can only be achieved through effective teaching and learning of Oral English.

However, it has been observed that learning a foreign language, especially concerning Oral English, poses serious challenges to learners in Nigeria given the fact that they come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Olajide, 2010). Consequently, students learning the language as a second language frequently experience problems relating to oral proficiency which are evident in their inappropriate

pronunciations (phonemes) which is a result of being a new language or the interference of native language (Usma & Mustafa, 2014). Given the need for Standard English, learners needed a higher level of oral English proficiency. Because of this, it becomes germane for teachers of the English Language to embrace the use of technologies in ensuring that Oral English teaching and learning become seamless for both teachers and students in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are forms of technology utilized in the creation, storing, displaying, manipulating, and exchanging of information (Nguyen, Williams & Nguyen, 2012). Deployment of ICT for the teaching and learning of a foreign language has now become unavoidably part of modern classrooms. Thus, the integration of ICT into teaching assists in increasing learners' autonomy as they can use ICTs in customizing their learnings based on their individual needs, and this is in addition to the motivation they can derive using the facility (Chen, Zhang & Liu, 2014, Gleason, 2013; Yunus, 2013; Mwalongo, 2011; Mullamaa, 2010). Gone are the days when the teaching of language was limited to physical approach only. The 21st Century is an era in which teaching with the support of technology has developed immensely (Hubackova, Ruzickova, 2010). In a century where the role of English Language teachers is more of a facilitator of learning as against the traditional "dominating figure" and given the fact that the classroom is a complex environment where the instruction is given might not meet the needs of all learners in effectively learning Oral English, it becomes imperative to reexamine English Language teachers' current perceptions of technology utilization in Oral English instruction in secondary schools in Nigeria. Effective communication is one vital skill that every foreign language learner must master. However, improving the speaking skills of students, especially foreign language learners has always been of grave concern in Nigeria as shown by persistent poor performance in the English Language in terminal examinations.

Given the fact that technology and its application in education are dynamic, there is the need for further studies to find out secondary school teachers' current perceptions on the utilization of technology in Oral English teaching. This is essential to check if teachers' perceptions are positively flowing in the right direction based on the dynamism of ICTs' application in teaching and learning. Also, this study intends to fill the knowledge gap created by the very few studies bothering on the current perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of technology in teaching Oral English Language in Nigeria. Therefore, the objective of the study is to determine English Language teachers' perception towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools in Nigeria, with special reference to gender, school type, level of education, years of experience, and computer literacy level.

1.1. *Related research*

Kullberg (2011) compared English language teachers' and learners' perceptions towards the utilization of ICT in English language teaching and reported that learners displayed a more positive perspective to technology compared with teachers. According to Darasawang and Reinders (2010), learning a language using online facilities assists in promoting students' autonomy, increasing students' motivation, and allowing students to access a variety of authentic materials which are viable in making English learning more seamless. ICTs usage in teaching Oral English gives room for the use of a variety of rich contents, contexts, and instructional approaches, thus making English language learning flexible, interactive, and innovative (Çakici, 2016). Chen (2008) found that teachers need to continuously be aware of technological tools for learning language and how they are used to facilitate such learning. To work, teachers need to strike a balance between their time and computer time, as well as their roles and the roles of computers in their instructional duties. Language teachers need to be able to determine how software is used to support the teaching of language especially in situations where the language being learned requires students to spend a specific high amount of time in the multimedia language laboratory (Mahdi & Al-Dera, 2013)**.**

Studies have also reported on issues relating to technology and its integration by teachers (Park & Son, 2009; Becta, Chen, 2008; Hubbard, 2008; Egbert, Paulus & Nakamichi, 2002), and concluded that teachers have significant impacts on technology integration in language teaching and learning. However, factors such as teachers' gender (Todman 2000), age (Teo, 2008), and years of experience (Egbert, Paulus & Nakamichi 2002), in addition to some other factors have been identified as playing significant roles in their perceptions and use of technology in language teaching (Mahdi & Al-Dera, 2013). On gender, several reports abound. For instance, Bain and Rice (2006) reported that gender attitudes and perceptions toward computers are no longer significantly different, while Alrasheedi (2009) reported otherwise that gender influences teachers' perceptions and use of technologies.

Concerning education, Beekman and Rathswohl (2002) have reported that having a knowledge of ICT by teachers undoubtedly plays an essential role in their perceptions toward integrating ICT into language education. Therefore, teachers are expected to be aware of the operations of hardware, software, technology-based classrooms and how these are managed in teaching and learning (Sharp, 2005). In addition, Batane (2004) reported how old and new teachers perceived themselves to be inadequately prepared to utilize technologies in their classrooms, thereby necessitating most teachers to agree to the fact that they need additional training. Sandham (2001) cited by Alrasheedi (2009) concluded that to overcome this challenge, it becomes essential to train English language teachers at varying levels to improve their technology experience.

The use of ICT in teaching and learning has improved instructional delivery of the English Language. Altun (2015) reported that the use of ICT in language teaching assists in enhancing and facilitating the seamless learning of foreign languages. According to Altun (2015), some of the tools used in enhancing language learning included the Internet, smart boards, video games, computers, music players, and smartphones, among others. According to Alkamel and Chouthaiwale (2018), examples of ICT tools utilized in Oral English learning include non-web-based tools such as radio and television which offer cheap access to rich programs targeted at instructing non-native speakers about the English Language; films, which appeal to learners by heightening their interest, thereby increasing retention of the learned materials; language lab, which is a modern technological teaching aid, through which learners can listen to audios to understand the different accents; and overhead projectors, which allows captivating multimedia on Oral English learning to be projected to learners. On the other hand, web-based technologies for teaching Oral English are technology-based resources that provide opportunities to develop an interactive, affordable, learner-centered e-learning environment. Many web-based classes exist that offer lessons on Oral English to students in interactive ways. Some of these include YouTube and blogs, skype, Ipods, and many others (Alkamel & Chouthaiwale, 2018).

Researchers such as Yunus (2013), Hismanoglu (2012), Mwalongo (2011), and Garrett (2009) have reported that when technologies are properly inculcated into language instruction, the result is a successful teaching experience. Other studies on the utilization of ICT tools such as the Internet, computers, smartphones, and other digital technologies in language learning include the reports of authors such as Aremu and Sulymon (2012), Aremu (2014), Aremu (2011), Egbe (2009). Oni & Osunbade (2009), Oni (2007), Alabi (2005), and Durant and Green (2001). Kurniawan (2014) reported that many teachers encounter challenges about perceptions of ICT while Taiwo (2009) reported that the extent to which language teachers utilize ICT is dependent on the way they perceive the roles that technology plays in the language classroom.

2. **Materials and methods**

2.1. Participants

The study was descriptive because it examined the current perceptions of teachers of English Language towards the utilization of technology for Oral English instruction in secondary schools in Nigeria, involving two hundred and fifteen (215) English Language teachers who filled and returned the research instrument sent to them online. The respondent English teachers were randomly selected through distributing the research inurnment titled "Teachers' Current Perceptions of Teaching Oral English through Technology Questionnaire (TCPTOETQ)," (r = .86) to them on their online platforms using Google Forms.

2.2. *Data collection tool*

The research collected data using a questionnaire. The two hundred and fifteen (215) English Languages teachers sampled in the study were the ones who responded to the instrument during the opened window of its availability for several weeks. The instrument used was designed using Google Forms and contained 15 items. The instrument was sub-divided into two sections. Section 1 requested the demographic details of the respondents including gender, school type, educational qualifications, years of experience, and computer literacy level. Section 2 comprised 10 items bothering on perceptions of teachers towards the utilization of technology in Oral English teaching in secondary schools. The options provided in the instrument were based on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The instrument was closed-ended.

2.3. *Data analysis*

The data collected were analyzed using frequencies, Mean, Standard Deviations, One-Way ANOVA, and t-test at 0.05 alpha level.

3. Results

3.1. *What are the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools in Nigeria?*

Table 1: *Mean and Standard deviation on the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools in Nigeria*

Items	Mean	Std.	Remark
ICT tools are important for daily teaching and learning of Oral English.	3.58	.564	True
Oral English is better taught using ICT tools due to differences in the way teachers and students process and pronounce sounds.	3.56	.623	True
ICT tools usage help to increase students' knowledge of Oral English.	3.47	.715	True
ICT tools are more effective for teaching and learning Oral English than textbooks and other printed materials.	3.43	.699	True
ICT tools aid faster learning of Oral English.	3.48	.602	True
ICT tools are indispensable in the teaching and learning of speech work in the English Language.	3.14	.728	True
ICT tools make the learning of Oral English fun-filled for students.	3.53	.646	True
ICT tools make the teaching of Oral English easier for teachers.	3.56	.600	True
ICT tools can effectively handle all areas of Oral English without stress.	3.19	.759	True
Traditional methods of teaching are effective in teaching and learning Oral English	2.35	.692	False

Average Mean = 3.33   **Benchmark Mean = 2.5**

Table 1 shows that all the English Language teachers sampled in the study have positive perceptions toward the utilization of technologies in Oral English teaching in secondary schools. Attesting to this is the Average Mean of 3.33 which is greater than the benchmark means of 2.5. Individually, the result shows that the English Language teachers agreed that "ICT tools are important for daily teaching and

learning of Oral English (X = 3.58)", "Oral English is better taught using ICT tools due to differences in the way teachers and students process and pronounce sounds (X = 3.56)", "ICT tools usage help to increase students' knowledge of Oral English (X = 3.47)", "ICT tools are effective for teaching Oral English than textbooks and other printed materials (X = 3.43)", and that "ICT tools aid faster learning of Oral English (X = 3.48), ICT tools are indispensable for speech work in English Language (X = 3.14)". Also, the result shows that "ICT tools make the learning of Oral English fun-filled for students (X = 3.53)," "ICT tools make the teaching of Oral English easier for teachers (X = 3.56)," and that "ICT tools can effectively handle all areas of Oral English without stress (X = 3.19)." However, the teachers unanimously disagreed that "Traditional methods of teaching are effective in teaching and learning of Oral English (X = 2.35)."

3.2. *What are the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools based on gender?*

Table 2:*T-test result on the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools based on gender*

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	STD	t-cal	p-value	Remark
Perceptions of Teachers	**Male**	82	33.90	3.495			
	Female	133	32.89	4.888	1.640	.103	Not Sig.

Significant at p<0.05

The result in Table 2 (t-cal = 1.640 > P (.103) > 0.05) shows that, based on gender, male and female English Language teachers have the same positive perceptions towards the use of ICT in teaching Oral English in secondary schools. This shows that there is no difference in their perceptions towards the use of technologies in teaching Oral English.

3.3. *What are the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools based on school type?*
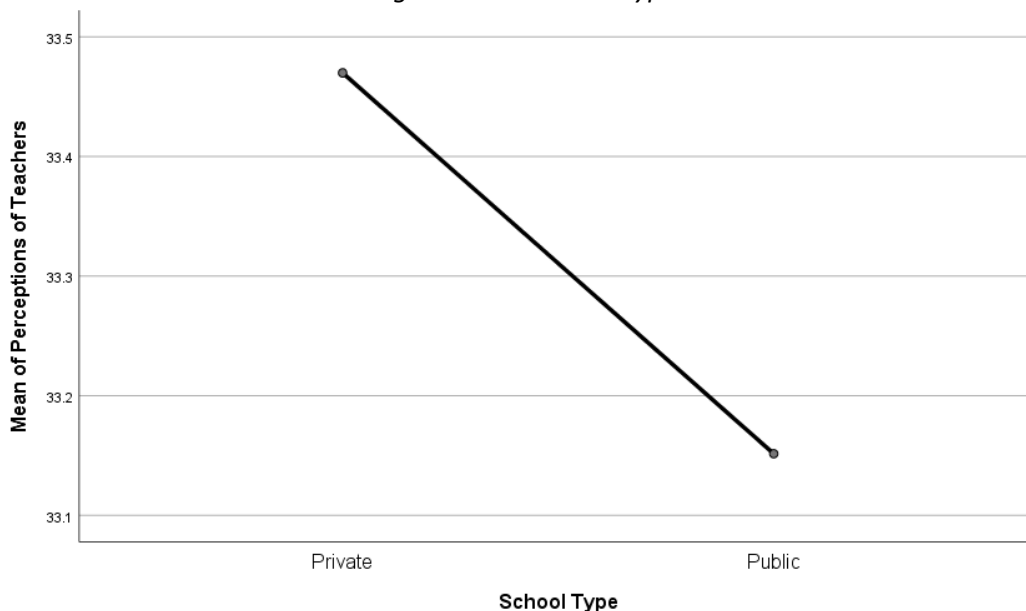
Table 3:*ANOVA result on the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools based on school type*

Perceptions of teachers	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.165	1	5.165	.263	.609
Within Groups	4189.644	213	19.670		
Total	4194.809	214			

Significant at p<0.05

Table 3 (F_{214} = .263 < P (.609) > 0.05) shows that, based on school type, there is no significant difference in the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICT in teaching Oral English in secondary schools. This shows English Language teachers in both public and private schools do not differ in their perceptions on using technologies in teaching Oral English.

Figure 1: *Mean plot showing no difference in the perceptions of English Language teachers towards ICT usage based on school type.*

3.4. What are the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools based on educational qualifications?

Table 4: *ANOVA results on the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools based on educational qualifications*

Perceptions of teachers	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	60.259	4	15.065	.765	.549
Within Groups	4134.551	210	19.688		
Total	4194.809	214			

Significant at p<0.05

The result in Table 4 (F214 = .765 > P (.549) > 0.05) reveals that, based on educational qualifications, the perceptions of English Language teachers did not differ on using technologies in teaching Oral English in secondary schools. This shows that, across educational qualifications, English Language teachers have positive perceptions of using technologies in teaching Oral English in secondary schools.
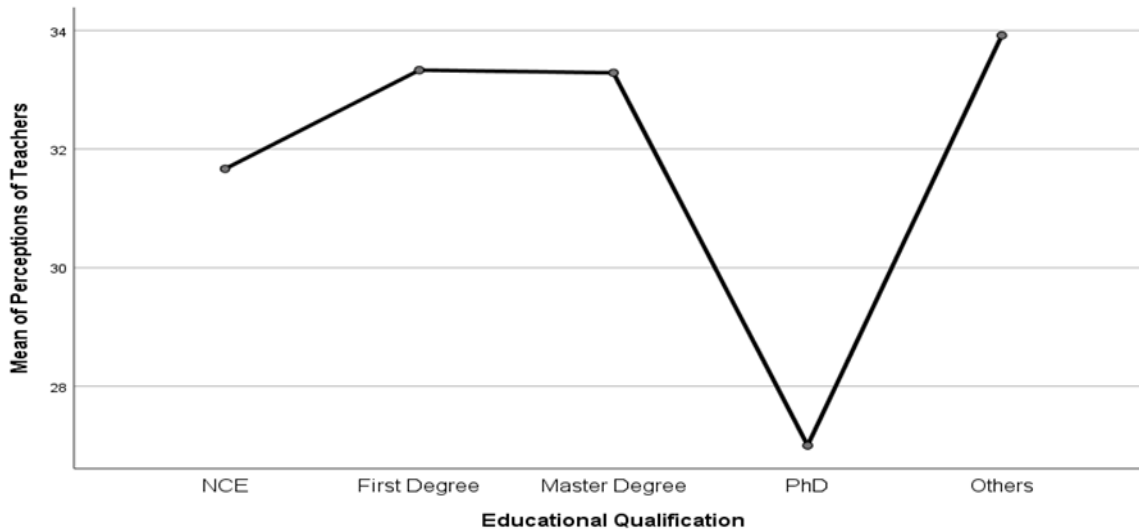
Figure 2:*Mean plot showing the perceptions of English Language teachers towards ICT usage based on educational qualification.*

3.5. What are the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools based on years of experience?

Table 5: *ANOVA results on the perceptions of English Language teachers towards the use of ICTs in teaching Oral English in secondary schools based on years of experience*

Perceptions of teachers	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	143.413	4	35.853	1.858	.119
Within Groups	4051.396	210	19.292		
Total	4194.809	214			

Significant at p<0.05

The result in Table 5 (F_{214} = 1.858 > P (.119) > 0.05) shows that, concerning years of experience, there exists no difference in teachers' perceptions towards using technologies in teaching Oral English in secondary schools. This connotes that, across years of experience, English Language teachers have positive perceptions of using technologies in teaching Oral English.

Figure 3: *Mean plot showing the perceptions of English Language teachers towards ICT usage based on years of experience.*
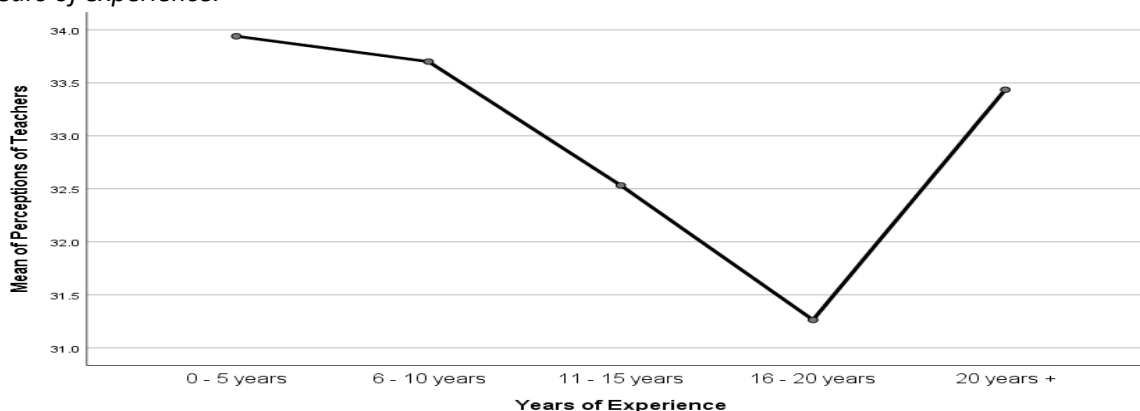
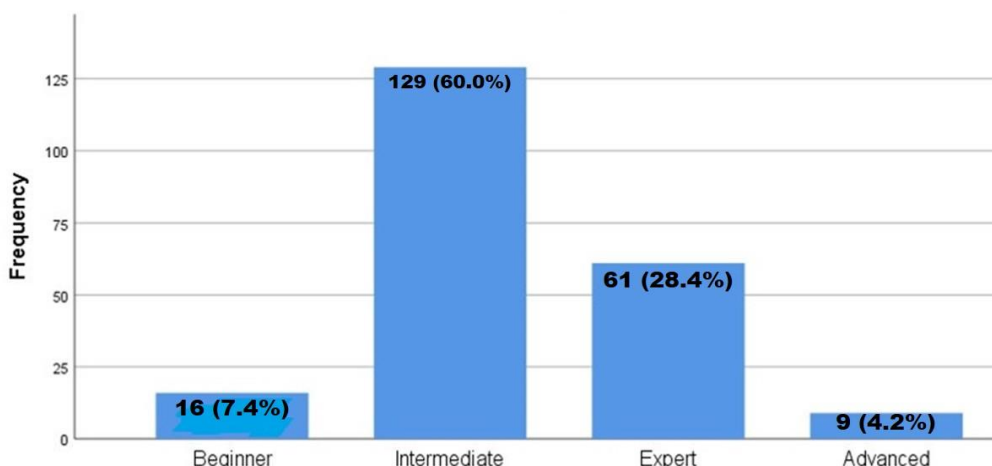*3.6. What is the ICT literacy level of the English Language teachers sampled in the study?*

Figure 4: *Distribution of English Language teachers by level of ICT literacy*

In Figure 4 above, the result shows that out of the 215 English Language teachers sampled in the study concerning their level of ICTs proficiency, 16 (7.4%) are beginners, 129 (60.0%) are at an intermediate level of proficiency, while 61 (28.4%) are experts' users of ICTs. Only 9 (4.2%) of the total English Language teachers are advanced users of ICTs. If the results for intermediate level of proficiency (129; 60.0%), and experts (61; 28.4%) are summed together, the result will be 190 participants which is 88.4% of 215. This reveals that the majority of the English Language teachers are proficient in the use of technologies in teaching.

4. **Discussion**

The findings from the study have shown that the English Language teachers sampled in the study generally and currently have positive dispositions towards the utilization of technologies Oral English teaching in secondary schools in Nigeria. The teachers opined that Oral English is better taught using ICT tools as a result of the differences in teachers' and students' pronunciation differences. They believe that technologies programmed to teach Oral English can be best used to pronounce words as they should be, thereby enhancing the teaching of the subject. Also, the teachers believe that technology usage is indispensable in the teaching and learning of speech work in the English Language as it makes the teaching and learning of Oral English fun-filled for students; easier for teachers, and effectively handle the components to be taught in Oral English without incurring any form of stress on the part of the teachers and their students. it should be interesting to note that the teachers unanimously agreed that the traditional methods of teaching are ineffective for Oral English teaching in secondary schools. This shows that the teachers believe so much in supporting their strategies with technology because the methods alone might not be sufficient in themselves because of the needs of the current Century. The findings support the position of Park and Son (2009), Becta and Chen (2008), Hubbard (2008), Egbert, Paulus, and Nakamichi (2002), who all reported that the position of teachers has significant impacts on technology integration in language teaching and learning.

Researchers including Yunus (2013), Hismanoglu (2012), Mwalongo (2011), and Garrett (2009) have reported that the proper integration and utilization of computer-assisted language learning and other ICT

gadgets into language teaching usually results in a successful pedagogical experience. According to Chen (2008), teachers are required to be continuously aware of technological gadgets for language learning, and how such tools are used to facilitate language learning in schools. Given this, English Language teachers need to strike a balance between their time and computer time, as well as their roles and the roles of computers in their instructional roles. Darasawang and Reinders (2010) reported that language learning using technology assists in promoting students' autonomy, increase motivation on the part of students, and also makes language learning flexible, interactive, and innovative (Çakici, 2016).

The finding of the study also showed that concerning gender, school type, educational qualifications, and years of experience, there exists no significant difference in the perceptions of English Language teachers towards using technologies in teaching Oral English in secondary schools. This connotes that, across these variables, English Language teachers have positive perceptions of using technologies in teaching Oral English. The roles of factors including teachers' gender (Todman 2000), age (Teo, 2008), and years of experience (Egbert, Paulus & Nakamichi 2002), have been reported on teachers' perceptions and utilization of technologies in teaching language (Mahdi & Al-Dera, 2013). On gender, several reports abound. Also, Bain and Rice (2006) have reported that gender does not influence teachers' perceptions towards technology, while Alrasheedi (2009) reported otherwise that gender influences teachers' perceptions and use of technologies. Regarding educational qualifications, Beekman and Rathswohl (2002) have reported that having a knowledge of technology by teachers plays an essential role in their perceptions toward integrating ICT into language education. This is against the finding of this study.

Finally, the result shows that the majority (190; 88.4% of 215) of the sampled teachers are proficient in the utilization for teaching Oral English. Altun (2015) the Internet, smart boards, video games, computers, music players, smartphones, among others, as some of the tools used by English Language teachers in enhancing the learning of language. Also, Alkamel and Chouthaiwale (2018) listed some technology tolls for language teaching to include non-web-based tools such as radio and television which offer cheap access to rich programs targeted at instructing non-native speakers about the English Language; films, which appeal to learners by heightening their interest, thereby increasing retention of the learned materials; language lab, which is a modern technological teaching aid, through which learners can listen to audios to understand the different accents; and overhead projectors, which allows captivating multimedia on Oral English learning to be projected to learners. On the other hand, web-based technologies for teaching Oral English are technology-based resources that provide opportunities to develop an interactive, affordable, learner-centered e-learning environment. Many web-based classes exist that offer lessons on Oral English to students in interactive ways. Some of these include YouTube and blogs, skype, Ipods, and many others (Alkamel & Chouthaiwale, 2018).

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that English Language teachers currently have positive perceptions towards the use of technology in the teaching and learning of Oral English in secondary schools in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that stakeholders in education in Nigeria should provide continuous training for English Language teachers to ensure that the teachers work in line with global best practices in using technologies to support the teaching and learning of Oral English.

Also, it was recommended that for continuous adaptation to the changing landscapes of technology usage in teaching Oral English, teachers should be given continuous exposure to trends in technology application in language teaching. This could be done in conjunction with Language Associations that are closer to their members.

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