THE USE OF ICT TOOLS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AUTONOMOUSLY

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Article Info	Abstract
	Over the past 40 years, there has been an increasing interest in learner autonomy. The present study was undertaken to examine the extent to which Burundians living in two major cities of the country use ICT tools and resources to improve their English autonomously. In doing so, the study first investigated the situations in which they need to use English and their current level of English regarding the different aspects. Adopting a descriptive research design, the study used a convenience sample of 239 subjects who were invited to respond to a questionnaire survey and participate in a two-day training on how to use ICT to learn English autonomously. The collected data were analysed using SPSS version 22. The findings indicated that participants still not exploit to the fullest the benefits of ICT to learn English autonomously. Indeed, 84.9% of the participants do not know what a podcast is and 66.1% of them report that they have no language learning applications on their smartphones. Besides, more than 60% of the participants have not yet tried to learn English using internet. Yet, they feel the need to use English in different situations reflecting a vast range of domains such as Medicine, Law, Economy, etc. Findings also showed that the majority of the participants have a weak or very weak level regarding the different language aspects. Given these findings, it can be concluded that there is a need to raise awareness of Burundians to use ICT tools to learn English by themselves.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 40 years, the concept of learner autonomy has gained increasing interst within the field of English Language Teaching and Learning (ELT/L). The idea of autonomous learning stemmed from the belief that language learning is not limited to the classroom, but can take place at any time and in any place, including the home and the community (Hyland, 2004). Becoming an autonomous learner is an ingredient of the lifelong learning process, a skill greatly needed in this globalised world and knowledge-driven economy. Thus, learning should not be regarded as something necessarily completed on leaving school (Lennon,2012); there is rather a constant need to improve one's knowledge, skills and competences. In that sense, fostering learner autonomy would be of great importance.

An attempt to address the issue of learner autonomy dates back to the 1970s but was fully articulates by Holec in the 1980s (Lennon, 2012). Holec tried to put the idea into practice through the creation of self-access centres where learners could make their choices from a pool of materials available in a self-study centre. The challenges of the self-study centres must have been how they could provide learners with a vast range of authentic

resources of different forms especially audios and video materials. This is because, back then, ICT tools were still in their infancy (ibid).

The advances in ICT helped address the challenge of authentic materials necessary for autonomous learning. These advances provided a vast range of digital tools and resources such as internet, online or electronic dictionaries, online videos, pronunciation correction tools, Youtube channels, podcasts, translation tools, e-books, language learning mobile applications, subtitled films, songs, lyrics etc. These tools and resources provide greater freedom and flexibility to learn at one's own pace and convenience (Ghasemi& Hashemi, 201) Learners can therefore select materials according to their learning needs, aims, styles, strategies and preferences (Richards, 2005). This means that ICT supports an individualised or personalised learning trajectory (Bailly,2010).

The emergence of novel pathways for language acquisition has sparked considerable scholarly interest and inquiry. These innovative approaches to language learning have garnered substantial attention within the academic community, reflecting their potential to revolutionize pedagogical practices and enhance language proficiency. In particular, the utilization of multimedia platforms like YouTube has emerged as a focal point of investigation, with numerous studies shedding light on their efficacy in enhancing specific language skills, such as listening comprehension. A multitude of studies conducted by various researchers have contributed to a growing body of evidence supporting the pedagogical value of YouTube videos in bolstering listening skills (Saputra & Fatimah, 2018; Chien, Huang & Huang, 2020; Tahmina, 2023; Hendrayasa, 2021; Qomariyah, Permana & Hidayatullah, 2021; Yaacob et al., 2021; among others).

To illustrate, Saputra and Fatimah's seminal investigation in 2018 examined the impact of using TED Talks and YouTube videos on extensive listening skills among students. Their findings not only underscored the significance of these multimedia resources but also demonstrated notable and transformative improvements in students' extensive listening abilities. The aforementioned studies collectively contribute to the burgeoning body of literature that underscores the pivotal role of YouTube and similar multimedia platforms in language education. These research endeavors substantiate the premise that multimedia resources can serve as potent tools for language instructors seeking to enhance their students' listening proficiency. Moreover, the diversity of studies and researchers in this domain further underscores the robustness of the evidence, reinforcing the relevance and significance of these innovative approaches to language learning within the academic discourse.

Although ICT tools and resources have facilitated autonomous language learning, they are still not primarily used for learning purposes in Burundi, one of the poorest countries in the world located in East Africa. The present study aims primarily at examining the extent to which Burundians use ICT tools and resources to improve their English autonomously. To do so, the study first investigated the situations in which they use/ need to use English and determined their level of English. It was therefore guided by these research questions: (1) In which situations do Burundians living in two major cities of Burundi feel the need to use English? (2) How do they evaluate themselves regarding the different language aspects? To what extent do they use ICT tools and resources to improve their English Autonomously?

The Concept of Learner Autonomy

The notion of learner autonomy has a number of labels in the literature on language learning and teaching. It is also referred to as 'learner independence', 'self-direction', 'autonomous learning', 'independence', 'independent learning', (Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). The definition of learner autonomy that is widely cited is that of Holec (1981). This scholar defines learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's learning (Holec, 1981, p. 3, as cited in Lengkanawati, 2016). For Richards (2012), learner autonomy is "the principle that

learners should take an increasing amount of responsibility for what they learn and how they learn it".

In these two definitions, there are key words that are worth paying attention to: "take charge of" and "responsibility". These two key words implies that in autonomous learning, learners are invited to take their own decisions regarding the learning process, that is, decisions as to what they learn and how they learn it. In this regard, learners rely less and less on teachers and become independent learners.

Some scholars have gone further with the definition of autonomous learning and have added some aspects. In addition to the dimension of ability, Littlewood (1997, as cited in Liu, Liu, & Tu, 2020) brings about that of willingness which refers to learners' motivation to take their own decision responsibly. For Dickinson (1987, as cited in ibid, p.3), "autonomous learning is not only just a kind of ability but also a sort of attitude". This notion of attitude fits well within one of the perspectives taken by Benson (1997) to talk about autonomy in learning: the psychological perceptive (as cited in Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). This psychological perspective emphases broader attitudes and cognitive abilities which enable the learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning.

Given the above definitions, it can be understood that autonomy is an attribute of learners (Benson, 2006) and is regarded as a form of sustainable learning skills for lifelong learning (Liu, Liu, Y., & Tu, 2020). It encompasses the abilities of learners to make decisions, to reflect critically and take independent action (Little, 1991). This makes the learning more personal and focused as it is based on the learners'needs and preferences (Richards,2012). Autonomy is therefore generally acknowledged as one of the features of successful learners.

ICT tools Used in Learning English Autonomously
Youtube

Launched in 2005, YouTube has become one of the most visited websites. Since then, it has been serving as a language learning resource platform. Being a video streaming, Youtube platform made it possible to access to a vast amount of language learning video materials of great importance. Learners are therefore exposed to authentic materials which enhance their motivation and cultural knowledge (Dizon, 2022). These video materials are of great importance in language learning. Indeed, compared with print, learners using video materials understand and remember (Swaffar &Vlatten,1997; Weyers,1999; Al-Seghayer,2001; Gardner,2006; as cited in Yang,2020). They are able to see the body language and obtain paralinguistic information which help them understand easily (York, 2011).

A cursory examination of the role of YouTube in language learning might lead one to conclude that its primary benefit lies solely in the improvement of listening skills. However, a more nuanced exploration reveals that this multimedia platform offers a multifaceted and comprehensive approach to language acquisition. Indeed, a growing body of research has substantiated the proposition that YouTube videos can significantly contribute to the enhancement of various language skills beyond listening comprehension. One noteworthy facet of YouTube's pedagogical utility is its capacity to facilitate the acquisition of incidental vocabulary. Researchers such as Candarli (2023) and Arndt & Woore (2018) have undertaken investigations that illuminate the positive impact of YouTube videos on learners' vocabulary acquisition. Their studies not only challenge the notion of YouTube's limited role but also underscore its potential as a valuable tool for expanding learners' lexical proficiency through exposure to rich and contextually relevant language content.

Furthermore, YouTube's influence extends to the development of speaking skills, as evidenced by research conducted by scholars like Wahyuni and Utami (2021). Their work delves into the ways in which YouTube can be harnessed to foster oral proficiency, offering empirical support for its role in promoting effective verbal communication. This aspect of

YouTube's pedagogical value underscores its versatility in addressing a wide spectrum of language competencies. Moreover, pronunciation, a critical component of language proficiency, has not been overlooked in the context of YouTube's educational potential. Al-Jarf's study (2022) delves into the impact of YouTube videos on pronunciation improvement, shedding light on how this platform can be instrumental in refining learners' articulation and phonetic accuracy. A comprehensive examination of the literature reveals that YouTube's role in language learning extends well beyond mere listening skill enhancement. It serves as a versatile and potent resource that can contribute to the development of various language competencies, including vocabulary acquisition, speaking proficiency, and pronunciation refinement. These studies collectively underline the multifaceted nature of YouTube's contribution to language education, challenging any superficial assessment of its pedagogical impact and emphasizing its relevance within the academic discourse on language acquisition.

Podcasts

An additional instrumental tool that holds the potential to facilitate autonomous English language learning is the podcast. A podcast, as defined by Cross (2014), represents an audio file disseminated through the internet, accessible for playback on a wide range of mobile devices and personal computers. The key attribute that distinguishes podcasts as a pedagogical resource is their inherent versatility and accessibility. One noteworthy aspect of podcasts, which adds to their appeal in language learning contexts, is their capacity to be not only streamed over the internet but also downloaded onto computers or mobile devices, as highlighted by Stanley (2006). This dual functionality of podcasts extends their utility beyond the confines of a continuous internet connection, rendering them more adaptable to diverse learning scenarios. Learners can download podcasts of interest, enabling them to engage with the content at their convenience, irrespective of internet availability. This feature significantly augments the flexibility and personalization potential of podcast-based language learning. The convergence of these factors underscores the pedagogical significance of podcasts as a resource for autonomous English language acquisition. Podcasts, due to their accessibility, portability, and capacity for offline use, offer learners the autonomy to tailor their learning experiences to their specific needs and preferences. This adaptability is particularly valuable in accommodating the varied schedules and learning styles of individual learners. Consequently, the incorporation of podcasts into language learning strategies presents an avenue for enhancing learner autonomy and personalization within the educational landscape.

The usefulness of podcast in language learning has attracted the attention of EFL scholars since its popularisation in 2005 (Sze, 2006). As outlined by Yaman (2016) and by Naidionova and Ponomarenko (2018), the following are some of benefits of podcast: (1) promotes personalised and independent learning; (2) omnipresent, that is, no time and place restriction; (3) enhances learner autonomy; (4) contributes to the development of listening and pronunciation skills; (5) supports other language skills; (6) provides limitless resources; (7) presents authentic topics at natural speed; (8) transcripts are available for some podcasts, and (9) most podcasts are free.

Cross (2014) offers a comprehensive elucidation of the multifaceted nature of podcasts in the realm of language learning. Podcasts, as expounded by Cross, encompass a rich spectrum of audio and audio-visual materials, which range from authentic to semi-authentic and non-authentic content. This diversity in content sources contributes significantly to their relevance in the domain of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy. Within the realm of ESL and EFL learning, it is particularly the semi-authentic and non-authentic podcasts that come to the forefront. These specialized podcasts are meticulously designed and curated with the specific aim of catering to English learners.

Stanley (2006) underscores the significance of these ESL/EFL podcasts by highlighting their distinctive features, which often include the provision of accompanying transcripts and supplementary exercises. These resources serve to scaffold the learning process, aiding students in comprehending and engaging with the podcast content effectively. This educational support enhances the accessibility and utility of ESL/EFL podcasts, thereby facilitating a more structured and beneficial language learning experience. Moreover, Istanto's research (2011) delves deeper into the multifaceted benefits of podcast integration in language education. Beyond the enhancement of listening skills and grammar proficiency, Istanto's findings shed light on an often-overlooked dimension of language learning facilitated by podcasts—cultural knowledge acquisition. Podcasts have the potential to immerse learners in the cultural nuances and real-world contexts of the target population, offering insights into the customs, idiomatic expressions, and sociocultural dimensions of the language being studied. This holistic approach to language learning not only fosters linguistic competence but also nurtures a deeper understanding and appreciation of the culture associated with the target language.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
In order to address the problem, this study adopted a quantitative approach and hence a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design asks the fundermental question of what is is happening rather than why it is happening (DeVaus, 2001), it can also include "when," "where," and "how" questions, but cannot answer "why" questions (Siedlecki, 2020). This type of research design was used to examine primarily the extent to which burundians use ICT tools and resources to improve their English. Researchers asked descriptive research questions to know the situations in which the participants use/will use the English language, their current level of the different language aspects. Data were mainly collected by means of a survey questionnaire.

Research Participants
The targeted population of this study were people living in urban ereas where internet connection can be more accessed than in other eareas of the country. Two cities, Bujumbura and Gitega, were selected as the study area since they are respectively the economic and political capitals of Burundi. Were eligible for the study those who have at least finished their high school studies and owned a smartphone or a computer. Those who were majoring in English Language were not eligible.

Convienience sampling was used as a sampling technique. In convenience sampling, respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability (Creswell & Creswell,2018). In total, 239 people were recruited. The participants were of different age, different level of study and different domains of study or work. To ensure that all the participants own (at least) a smartphone, they were recruited using WhatsApp announcement. The announcement invited people who wanted it to register for a 2-day training organised by the researchers and intended to teach them how to use ICT to learn English by themselves.

Data Collection Procedure
To collect the data, researchers used primarily a survey questionnaire.The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions in total: The first two questions investigated respectively the participants' domain of work/study and the situations in which they use (or would like to use) the English language. The other 7 questions asked participants to self-evaluate on a scale of 0 to 10 their knowledge of the pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking, listening, writing, reading and grammar. The last 6 questions investigated the participants' use of the ICT tools.

To increase the response rate, the participants were informed that they will be taught how to use ICT to improve their English by themselves for free. Besides, they were told that to be able to attend the training, they had to register by filling out an online questionnaire. The link to the questionnaire was sent via WhatsApp and email. For reasons of convenience, the questionnaire was translated in French to avoid any confusion on the part of the respondents. The questionnaire was completed while the participants were registering for the training. For ethical reseaons, participants were guaranteed that the collected data will only be used for research purposes.

The questionnaire data were completed by those from obervation. It was done during the two-day training. The researchers observed whether the participants were aware of the ICT tools they can use to use improve their level of English by themselves.

Data Analysis

In the process of conducting their research, the investigators adopted a meticulous and systematic approach to data analysis. To make sense of the collected data, the researchers employed descriptive statistical methods, specifically focusing on frequencies and percentages. This analytical framework allowed them to distill and summarize key patterns and trends within their dataset. For the quantitative inquiries posed in their study, the researchers undertook a coding process to systematically categorize and quantify the responses. This coding was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), specifically version 22, a widely recognized and rigorously validated software tool for quantitative data analysis. By leveraging SPSS, the researchers were able to perform a rigorous quantitative analysis, which is essential for extracting meaningful insights from numerical data.

To further streamline the analysis and facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the data, particularly in the context of scale-based questions, the researchers opted to convert these continuous measurements into categorical ones. This transformation allowed for a more intuitive interpretation of the findings. For example, a numerical scale spanning from 0 to 10 was recategorized into discrete categories such as "very weak" (0-2), "weak" (3-4), "average" (5-6), "good" (7-8), and "very good" (9-10). This categorization not only simplified the data but also provided a framework for discerning variations in respondents' perceptions or experiences across different levels of proficiency. Furthermore, in their quest for a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon, the researchers supplemented the questionnaire results with observations conducted during the course of their study.

This triangulation of data sources, combining self-reported responses with direct observations, enhanced the overall robustness of the research findings by offering a more holistic perspective on the subject under investigation. In essence, the researchers' data analysis approach was characterized by its methodical nature, utilizing both quantitative techniques and categorical conversions to draw meaningful inferences from the collected data. Additionally, the incorporation of observational data served to enrich their findings, lending depth and context to the overall research outcomes. This rigorous and multifaceted analytical framework underscores the researchers' commitment to a comprehensive and robust exploration of their research objectives.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings
Participants' Domains of Work/ Study and their Target Situations

The first research question was intended to know the situations in which Burundians living in two major cities of Burundi feel the need to use English. It therefore asked information about the study/work domains of the participants and the situations in which they use/will use English. In the questionnaire, questions related to this research question

were open-ended questions. The main domains and situations are summarised in the Table 1 below as was found in the results.

Table 1
Participants' main Sudy/Work Domains and the Situations where they Use English

Study/work domains	Situations
· Medicine	· Participating in international conferences
· Law	· Work meetings
· Economy	· Academic Study (abroad)
· Finance	· Teaching in Higher Education
· Management	· Job interview
· Accounting	· Consultancy
· Banking	· Business
· Higher Education	· Travelling
· NGO	· Etc.
· General	
· Etc.	

The Table 1 above shows that participants were from a vast range of domains especially Medicine, Law and Economy related domains. Their targeted situations were also varied. The situations that were recurrent among participants are those of participating in an international conference, using English for academic purposes, consultancy, job interview. A good number of participants also indicated that they need English for general purposes. These results show that the participants feel the need to learn English.

Participants' level of knowledge of the different language aspects
The second research question was intended to know the participants' level of knowledge of the different language aspects. As explained in the methodology section, the scale data were converted in categorical data by means of SPSS. The results are presented in the Table 2 below.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution Regarding Participants' Level of Knowledge of Different Language Aspects

Language Aspects	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Good	Very good	Total
1 Pronunciation	65/27.2%	77/32.2%	78/32.6%	16/6.7%	3/1.3%	239/100%
2 Vocabulary	64/26.8 %	98/41.0%	60/25.1%	16/6.7%	1/.4%	239/100%
3 Speaking	89/37.2%	94/39.3%	46/19.2%	9/3.8%	1/.4%	239/100%
4 Listening	81/33.9%	82/34.3%	64/26.8%	11/4.6%	1/.4%	239/100%
5 Reading	50/20.9%	73/30.5%	64/26.8%	47/19.7	5/2.1%	239/100%
6 Writing	64/26.8%	87/36.4%	60/25.1%	26/10.9/	2/.8%	239/100%
7 Grammar	79/33.1%	83/34.7%	69/28.9%	7/2.9%	1/.4%	239/100%

The results presented in Table 2 above shows that the majority of the participants evaluated themselves as having a weak or very weak level of knowledge in pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, writing and grammar. Only a very small percentage reported to have a very good knowledge in these language aspects. The participants' low level of these language aspects was also observed by the researchers during the training. For example, some of the participants, though having a university degree, could not even try to speak. Others had very limited vocabulary knowledge.These results justify the need for these participants to improve their English language.

Participants' Use of ICT Tools to Learn English
The third research question was concerned with investigating participants' use of ICT tools to learn English autonomously. This is the main research question of the

study.Participants   were first asked whether they already use the platform YouTube. The results are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 3
Participants' Responses to the Question of Whether They already Use YouTube Platform

Answer	Frequency	Percent
No	34	14.2%
Yes	205	85.8%
Total	239	100%

The results presented in Table 3 above show that 85,8% of the participants report that they already use Youtube. However, not many of them use this platform to learn English. In fact, during the two-day training, the researchers observed that participants were not aware that there are YouTube Channels or videos that can help them improve their English. When the researchers showed them the Youtube channels of the BBC and VOA , they were very surprised as if these resources were not there well before. Besides, on the question of whether they have tried to use internet to learn English by themselves, only 39.7% responded by Yes (see Table 4 below).

Table 4
Participants' Responses on Whether They have already Tried to Learn English by Themselves Using Internet

Answer	Frequency	Percent
No	144	60.3%
Yes	95	39.7%
Total	239	100%

Participants were also asked whether they know what is a podcast. The results presented in the Table 5 below indicate that 84.9% of them did not know what is a podcast. Similarly, they were asked whether they have applications on their smartphones to learn English. Only 33.9% responded by Yes (Table 6). This was also observed during the two-day trainig as none of the participants had applications like Diolingo, BBC Learning English , VOA Learning English, etc.

Table 5
Participants' Responses on their knowledge of Podcast

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
No	203	84.9%	84.9%
Yes	36	15.1%	15.1%
Total	239	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6
Participants' Responses on Whether they Have Language Learning Applications on their Smartphones

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
No	158	66.1%	66.1%
Yes	81	33.9%	33.9%
Total	239	100.0%	100.0%

Discussion
As this study primarily aimed at examining the extent to which Burundians use ICT tools and ressources to improve their English autonomously, The findings showed that the participants still do not exploit to the fullest the ICT tools and resources to improve their English. These results corroborated those of Aqsha's and Pei's (2009) study conducted in

Malaysia. Using a survey design, they concluded that ICT tools were not widely used when learning English. The results of the present study are also consistent with those of Tri and Nguyen (2014). These scholars conducted a study on the use of ICT in English language learning among EFL university students. Their findings indicated that the participants spent more time using ICT for private purposes than for autonomous English learning purposes.

The underutilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for English language learning purposes is a phenomenon observed in various educational contexts, and the specific reasons for this underuse often vary from one context to another. In the present study, one potential factor contributing to this underutilization is the apparent lack of awareness regarding how to harness ICT effectively for autonomous English language learning. While this study's findings are specific to its context, they resonate with broader research highlighting the importance of equipping learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to leverage ICT tools for language acquisition. A substantial body of literature, including studies by Dizon (2022), Yaman (2016), Naidionova, and Ponomarenko (2018), among others, has demonstrated the myriad benefits associated with the integration of ICT tools, such as YouTube, podcasts, and mobile applications, into language learning environments.

Those tools offer learners access to authentic and engaging content, opportunities for interactive learning, and the flexibility to tailor their learning experiences to their specific needs and interests. The potential of these resources to enhance language proficiency is well-documented and holds significant promise for English language learners (Ardndt & Woore, 2018; Bakla & Mehdiyev, 2022). Intriguingly, the participants in the current study were already using YouTube, albeit without fully realizing the wealth of English language learning channels available on the platform. Notably, renowned channels like BBC Learning English and VOA Learning English, which offer high-quality language learning content, often remained undiscovered by these learners. This revelation underscores the importance of not only introducing learners to ICT tools but also guiding them toward relevant, reputable, and pedagogically sound resources within these platforms. In light of these findings, it becomes evident that there is a compelling need to raise awareness among Burundians, and potentially learners in similar contexts, about the vast potential of ICT tools for autonomous English language learning (Lin, 2022; Asoodar et al., 2016). This awareness-raising initiative should encompass not only the availability of these tools but also guidance on how to effectively navigate and exploit them to enhance language skills. By bridging this awareness gap, educators and policymakers can empower learners to unlock the full pedagogical benefits of ICT tools, fostering greater autonomy and self-directed learning in English language acquisition.

The participants' relatively limited utilization of ICT tools for autonomous English language improvement presents an intriguing paradox when examined in conjunction with the outcomes of the first and second research questions. Beginning with the findings of the second research question, it becomes apparent that a substantial majority of the participants exhibited a level of proficiency in various language aspects, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, writing, and grammar, that could be categorized as weak or even very weak. Given this baseline proficiency level, one might reasonably expect participants to proactively seek out and leverage ICT tools and resources to augment their English language skills (Asoodar et al., 2016; McNamara et al., 2020). This apparent contradiction in participant behavior warrants a closer examination.

One plausible explanation for this paradoxical situation can be rooted in the unique linguistic context of Burundi within the framework of Kachru's (1986) Expanding Circle countries. In such linguistic contexts, English is not the native language, nor is it the predominant language of everyday communication (Hidayatullah & Haerazi, 2022). Instead,

English holds the status of a second or foreign language, and its use is relatively limited even among those individuals who possess some degree of proficiency in the language. In light of this contextual backdrop, it is conceivable that participants in this study may have encountered a motivational barrier when it comes to actively engaging with ICT tools for English language improvement. The limited opportunities for real-world English language use in Burundi's linguistic milieu may have contributed to a lack of perceived necessity or urgency in seeking out ICT resources for language enhancement.

This, in turn, could explain the underexploitation of available ICT tools observed among the participants, despite their demonstrably weak language skills (Asik et al, 2020; Gomez & Vicente, 2011). In summary, the participants' relatively modest engagement with ICT tools for autonomous English language development appears at odds with their identified language proficiency levels. This intriguing paradox can be attributed, in part, to the specific sociolinguistic context in which Burundi is situated, as described within Kachru's Expanding Circle framework. The scarcity of real-world English language use in such contexts may diminish the perceived relevance and motivation for actively utilizing ICT resources to improve language skills, shedding light on the unexpected disjunction between proficiency levels and technological engagement observed in this study.

In addressing the first research question, it is noteworthy that participants in the study articulated numerous scenarios in which they found themselves needing to utilize the English language. This revelation implies a practical and tangible demand for English language skills in their daily lives. In light of this finding, one would naturally anticipate a corresponding inclination among the participants to actively seek opportunities to enhance their proficiency in English. The recognition of this need for language acquisition resonates with a broader global trend, as expounded by Spolsky (2004, p. 91), who astutely observes that the global diffusion of the English language has evolved into a pivotal factor that warrants consideration in the language policies of nation-states. Spolsky's assertion underscores the undeniable reality that English has transcended its status as a mere lingua franca and has become a pervasive and influential force in the contemporary world.

In response to the inexorable global reach of English, countries and individuals alike are increasingly compelled to navigate its influence and adapt their language policies and language learning strategies accordingly. The recognition of English as a necessity is not confined to any particular region; rather, it is a sentiment reverberating across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. In this context, the participants' acknowledgement of their need to employ English underscores a broader imperative for language learning and proficiency, driven by the pragmatic demands of a rapidly globalizing world. The convergence of these factors serves as a compelling backdrop against which the study's findings can be understood, highlighting the intrinsic link between the participants' articulated need for English and the imperative to proactively enhance their language skills to navigate the multifaceted demands of the contemporary sociolinguistic landscape.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate primarily the extent to which Burundians living in two major cities of Burundi use of ICT to improve their English language by themselves. To do so, the researchers first examined the situations in which they need to use English and their current level of English regarding the different aspects. The findings indicated that the participants still under-use the ICT tools and ressources to learn English by themeselves. Indeed, 84.9% of the participants do not know what a podcast is and 66.1% of them report that they have no language learning applications on their smartphones. Besides, more than 60% of the participants have not yet tried to learn English using internet.

Yet, the results revealed that he majority of the participants have a weak or very weak level of the different language aspects and that they need English in different situations which reflect a vast range of domains such as Medicine, Law, Economy, etc. Given these findings, it seems reasonable to argue for the need for raising awareness of the use ICT tools to learn english autonomously. This can be done through a short training showing people how to make the best of ICT tools and resources to learn English by themselves. The present study may therefore proove significant to EFL teachers and learners in Burundi as it shows less travelled but important avenues for language learning.

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