



ICT-based English language instructions in rural and urban secondary schools: access, utilization, awareness, and challenges

Mebratu Mulatu¹ and Eshetu Mandefro²

^{1,2}Hawassa University, Hawassa,
Ethiopia

Corresponding email: mebratumulatu@gmail.com

Citation:

Mebratu, Mulatu and Eshetu, Mandefro. (2021). ICT-based English Language Instructions in Rural and Urban Secondary Schools: Access, Utilization, Awareness, and Challenges *Ethioinquiry Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 30-43

Article history:

Publication history: Received the revised version on 10/12/2021; Published online on 27 December 2021; Weblink: <https://journals.hu.edu.et/hu-journals/index.php/erjssh/>

Full length:

Original article

OPEN ACCESS

Abstract

This study investigates EFL teachers' use of ICT in English language instruction in rural and urban secondary schools in Sidama Regional State, Ethiopia. A descriptive survey design was employed in the course of the study. The data were gathered from 70 EFL teachers and 8 English language department heads that were selected randomly from 13 secondary schools. Among the secondary schools, 5 were rural and 8 were urban. The instruments employed were questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observation. The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative data were analyzed using the outputs (mean score and p-value) from the independent sample t-test. The qualitative data were analyzed by categorizing the data thematically. The findings of the study revealed that the scarcity of ICT tools was a serious challenge in both urban and rural secondary schools. However, the problem was more severe in rural secondary schools where there have been only a few/no computers and no computer labs at all. In addition, teachers in both urban and rural secondary schools have positive awareness/perceptions about the role of ICT in the EFL classroom. Nevertheless, English teachers in urban secondary schools have significantly better practice in the frequency of utilization of ICT than their rural counterparts. The challenges in ICT use were grouped as school-based and teacher-based factors. Among school-based challenges, the most common ones were the shortage of computers and accessories, absence/ frequent cuts of electricity, absence of computer laboratories, limited finance/resource, limited/no access to the internet, and absence of ICT policy, are the major ones which are common to schools in both settings. Similarly, EFL teachers' limited technical knowledge, failure to include ICT during lesson planning, and lack of interest due to overloaded paper works at schools, are the common teacher-related challenges in the schools.

Keywords: ICT, access, utilization, challenges, EFL, awareness

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, information and communication technology (ICT) is contributing much to the overall development of nations. Thus, the world has acknowledged its importance as a key component in enhancing economic growth, making better education accessible, enhancing democracy, and offering e-services to citizens. Considering this fact, various educational organizations around the world are being committed to improving the quality of education by supporting the teaching-learning process with ICT. This is because the use of ICT can improve education quality, expand learning opportunities and make education accessible (Olaleye et al., 2010).

Likewise, the government of Ethiopia has given top priority to the expansion of equitable, relevant, and quality education at all levels. However, its quality is not up to the desired level (MoE, 2008). To address the problem, a general education quality improvement package (GEQIP) was started in 2007. One of the main areas of intervention of GEQIP is the use of ICT in education, which focuses on continuous improvement of quality teaching and learning through targeted interventions that could bring about long-lasting change in the Ethiopian education system (MoE, 2008). Ministry of education, in its overall strategies, also stated, "... the use of ICT in secondary schools will be promoted and strengthened to improve educational quality by enhancing the pedagogical skills of teachers and also by enabling both students and teachers to effectively use electronic educational materials" (MoE, 2010). Supporting this view, several research reports also confirmed that the use of ICT in education provides opportunities for both teachers and students, to improve the quality of teaching and learning, motivate students and engage them in the learning process. Using ICT also provides effective ways of communication between students and teachers and rises new opportunities for learning by facilitating contextual, social, active, and reflective learning strategies (Fiseha, 2011; Abdul-Salaam et al., 2011; Ajayi et al., 2009; Ekundayo, 2007).

Despite the attempts made to improve the quality of teaching and learning by using ICT in Ethiopia, still, a considerable number of stakeholders claim that the role of ICT in secondary schools is not perceivable. Specifically, schools have been giving less or no attention to ICT. Current researchers' observation indicates that ICT is not a part of professional discussion among EFL teachers in most secondary schools. Some local and global studies which were conducted at the zonal and district level disclosed that the government has been purchasing the tools and distributing them to the secondary schools. They also revealed major challenges like shortage of computers, lack of internet facilities, lack of information for teachers to support e-learning, the inadequacy of accessories to maintain computers, high numbers of students per class, lack of suitable places for e-learning, shortage of skilled manpower (Fiseha, 2011; MoE, 2010; Hennessy et.al, 2010; Hare, 2007; Al-Otaibi, 2006; Abebe, 2004). However, as far as the investigators' knowledge is concerned, there was not any study on the extent to which available materials are being used in the teaching of English. Besides, frequency and status of practices were not studied by comparing the realities in secondary schools in urban areas viz-a-viz in rural contexts. Apart from this, in the earlier studies, the challenges were treated generally without considering schools in different contexts. Here, the challenges in both settings were separately studied. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to investigate the practice of EFL teachers in implementing ICT-supported English language instructions in rural and urban secondary schools.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

1.1.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the practice of EFL teachers in using ICT-supported English language instructions in rural and urban secondary schools.

1.1.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- check the awareness of EFL teachers on the role of ICT in developing the students' English language skills.
- assess the availability of ICT tools for the teaching and learning of English in study areas.
- examine the extent to which ICT facilities are used by teachers for teaching and learning English.
- identify the major challenges affecting the use of ICT tools in the teaching & learning of English.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Study Design

This study used a descriptive survey design to collect, process, analyze and discuss the data. This design was preferred for its strength in enabling the researchers to give detailed explanations of the data collected through different research tools. Moreover, as [Gay \(2009\)](#) states, a descriptive survey design enables the researchers to collect sufficient/adequate data/evidence that would enable them to answer the questions in-depth. Thus, the study was intended to investigate the existing realities in connection to applying ICT-supported English classroom instructions in the selected secondary schools.

2.2. Subjects, Sample Size, and Sampling Procedures

The schools and the districts in the Sidama Regional State are classified into three agro-ecological zones; these are Dega (Enset& Barely belt), Woyina Dega (Coffee belt), and Kolla (Maize belt). From the first two agro-ecological zones, 3 urban and 2 rural secondary schools, and from the last one, 2 urban and 1 rural were selected using a simple random sampling method. Thus, the data were gathered from 13 secondary schools. Among them, 5 schools were from rural and 8 schools were from the urban context. To select the schools, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed. First, the schools were stratified into two groups: rural and urban. Then, simple random sampling was used to select the secondary schools. The population of the study was secondary EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers and English Language Department heads.

Regarding the subjects of the study, the total number of EFL teachers to be selected was decided based on the following sampling techniques adopted from [Yemane \(1967\)](#).

By using Cochran's sample size determination as

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}, \text{ where}$$

n = is sample population, N = is the total target population, e = is sample error (at 5%)

$$n = \frac{846}{1 + 846(0.1)^2} = 89$$

Then, 70 EFL teachers were selected proportionally from the 13 schools. Thus, 37 EFL teachers from urban and 33 from rural schools were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Similarly, applying the same technique, 3 and 5 English Language Department heads from rural and urban secondary schools respectively were included.

2.3. Data Gathering Instruments

In this study, three data gathering tools, namely questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and observation were employed. A questionnaire was developed as the main research instrument, administered, and data were collected from English teachers who were teaching in 39 urban and 35 rural schools. The questionnaire was prepared in the English language and administered to the selected teachers with the assumption that they do not have a problem in understanding and responding to each item. The items were designed in close-ended form having five-point Likert scale values. Specifically, for frequency measurement, the items have 'always', 'frequently', 'sometimes', 'rarely', and 'never' options. For themes such as availability of the ICT facilities and challenges in applying them, the Likert scales "strongly agree", "agree", "undecided", "disagree" and "strongly disagree" were used.

Semi-structured interview items were prepared for the interviewees to gather in-depth data about the practices of using ICT in EFL classrooms. The items were related to those items in the questionnaire as the aim was to triangulate the data collected through the questionnaire. Correspondingly, the researchers interviewed 7 urban and 8 rural secondary school secondary schools EFL teachers.

The last data gathering tool was observation. First, a checklist that contained the classroom activities expected to be observed was designed. It had two columns, of which one included the activities to be observed and the rest blank spaces to narrate the observed points. In addition, EFL teachers' utilization of information and communication technologies was observed and notes were taken from 3 urban and 2 rural EFL classes. Each class was observed twice for 40 minutes from 16 January to 26 February 2020.

2.4. Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed. To analyze the quantitative data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were computed depending on the nature of the basic questions. Descriptive analyses such as mean score and standard deviation were used to analyze and interpret the findings. Moreover, inferential

statistics such as p-value was computed to examine the level of difference between urban and rural secondary schools. Cronbach Alpha was also computed to see the extent to which the items in the questionnaire were reliable. Accordingly, the value was 0.78, which disclosed that the items were reliable. The statistical method used to compare the schools in the two settings was an independent samples t-test. This was used to check whether there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups of respondents.

Unlike the quantitative data, the data collected through interviews and observation were analyzed, narrated, and organized thematically by sorting out major themes. Regarding the interview, live quotations from the respondents were used to substantiate the textual analysis. Again, notes which were taken during observation were carefully examined to see if they converge with the results obtained through other tools.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results and discussions based on the variables and themes stated in the specific objectives. The objectives are: teachers' awareness, access or availability of ICT tools, purpose, and frequency of utilization, and the most common challenges that existed in practice.

3.1. Availability of ICT Instruments

Table 1: Availability of ICT Tools in Schools

Availability	School setting	Mean	SD	P-value
There is a well-organized computer laboratory in my school for students.	Rural	1.50	0.99	0.00
	Urban	2.72	1.27	
There is a well-organized computer laboratory in my school for teachers.	Rural	1.24	0.72	0.00
	Urban	2.11	1.1	
All computers in student's computer laboratory are functional.	Rural	1.47	0.99	0.00
	Urban	2.4	1.06	
There are enough computer accessories in my school for maintenance.	Rural	1.52	1.11	0.07
	Urban	2.01	1.02	
There is an internet connection in my school.	Rural	1.72	1.18	0.91
	Urban	1.70	1.02	
All department offices in my school are connected to the internet.	Rural	1.27	0.75	0.52
	Urban	1.61	0.98	
All computers in the teacher's laboratory are connected by the internet in my school.	Rural	1.29	0.80	0.46
	Urban	1.75	0.98	
All computers in the student's laboratory are connected to the internet in my school.	Rural	1.49	1.02	0.06
	Urban	1.60	0.86	
There are enough tape recorders to teach lessons by audio.	Rural	1.21	0.77	0.00
	Urban	1.95	1.02	
There are radio cassettes to teach recorded lessons in different subjects.	Rural	1.14	0.57	0.00
	Urban	1.96	0.96	
My school has educational software for teaching different subjects.	Rural	1.52	1.07	0.001
	Urban	2.10	1.02	

In the above table, the respondents in the two categories were asked about the extent of availability of ICT instruments that support the teaching/learning of the English language. As the mean value for all items ranges from 1.0 to 2.5, the ICT tools are scarce in both urban and rural secondary schools. However, when we compare the ICT use at schools in both settings, there was an observable difference between the urban and rural secondary schools in experiencing the application of ICT. Concerning the availability of internet connections, in classrooms and computer laboratories and the availability of accessories for maintenance, both settings experienced almost the same type of challenges as the p-values are greater than 0.05. Nevertheless, urban secondary schools were significantly better than that of their rural counterparts concerning the availability of computers, radio cassettes, and audio players (p-value is less than 0.05).

In line with this, the interview conducted with an EFL teacher (T2U) in one of the urban secondary schools said, “In my school, though there are some computers, it is difficult to get an internet connection. Thus, I don’t access varieties of activities to my students. What I often do is that I use tape recorders to play cassettes so that my students can get natural experience.” On the other hand, an EEL teacher (T4R) from a rural secondary school stated: “The only ICT tool available in my class is the plasma TV which works when there is electricity. But, in most cases, it doesn’t work.”

Apart from this, the observation report revealed that though there were many ICT tools in the stores (which do not work) in both urban and rural secondary schools; those in rural schools are too many and the number of currently working tools is very few.

The data generated through both tools indicate that ICT tools are scarce in both urban and rural secondary schools. Nevertheless, rural secondary schools are experiencing considerably severe challenges. The result concedes with the findings of [Odhiambo \(2015\)](#), which revealed that the majority of the schools had limited internet facilities, which were hardly available and adequate while only a few schools had available and adequate internet facilities. Others did not have internet facilities. The same was also confirmed by [Yambo \(2012\)](#). He stated that materials /tools like TV, printers, Film projectors are hardly available in most of the secondary schools in Kenya. He added that the majority of the schools reported that they had no cassette recorders, and only a few schools indicated that cassette recorders were available and inadequate. On the other hand, in line with the current findings, [Sarfo \(2011\)](#) underscores that ICT tools are more scarce in rural schools than the ones in the urban setting. This scenario also has been typically common in secondary schools in the study area.

3.2. Teachers’ Awareness in Using ICT for EFL Instruction

Table 2: EFL Teachers’ Awareness in Using ICT

Teachers’ Awareness Items	School setting	Mean	SD	P-Value
ICT improves the teaching-learning process.	Rural	3.6557	1.47066	0.06
	Urban	4.0476	1.01678	
ICT promotes an independent language learning approach.	Rural	3.2787	1.27973	0.02
	Urban	3.7262	1.14441	

ICT facilitates the engagement of students to learn more.	Rural	3.2787	1.35562	0.00
	Urban	3.9762	1.09738	
ICT motivates students to learn a language naturally.	Rural	3.5082	1.28612	0.02
	Urban	3.9524	1.12908	
ICT arouses students' interest to learn language more.	Rural	3.0984	1.20699	0.00
	Urban	3.7738	1.17557	
It is difficult to integrate ICT into pedagogical experiences in the English language teaching context.	Rural	2.9180	1.14448	0.21
	Urban	3.1667	1.21073	
ICT improves English language learning differently.	Rural	3.5246	1.24642	0.07
	Urban	3.8929	1.21256	
ICT's contribution to learning the English language is very much low.	Rural	2.5574	1.36045	0.74
	Urban	2.4881	1.22714	
ICT brought additional load/burden on EFL teachers.	Rural	2.4918	1.39789	0.94
	Urban	2.4762	1.31237	
ICT is not important to develop the English language skills of learners.	Rural	1.7049	1.06996	0.51
	Urban	1.8214	1.03156	
Students who use ICT frequently do not perform well in class.	Rural	1.7541	.94262	0.19
	Urban	1.9643	.96251	
I do not want to use ICT for instructional purposes.	Rural	1.8361	1.09819	0.77
	Urban	1.7857	.99482	

Table 2 shows the extent of EFL teachers' awareness in using ICT tools for English language teaching purposes. In addition, their awareness was categorized into two settings: rural and urban. Accordingly, most of the teachers had an acceptable (positive) level of awareness on the role of ICT in improving the teaching-learning process, independent language learning approach, the engagement of students to learn more, natural way of language learning, students' interest to learn language more and English language learning differently as the average mean value ranges from 3.00 to 4.00, which is positive. When we compare the awareness difference based on the settings, there is a significant difference between the urban and rural secondary school teachers, that is, urban secondary school English teachers are more aware of the benefits of ICT in teaching English than that of the rural ones. In all cases, except improving the teaching-learning process and learning the English language differently in which the p-value is 0.06 and 0.07, urban secondary school teachers' awareness is by far better than that of the rural ones.

Likewise, the data from the interview indicates that all secondary school EFL teachers had awareness of the role of ICT, but the extent is somehow stronger in the case of urban secondary schools EFL teachers. For example, in the interview, one urban secondary school EFL teacher (T4U) forwarded his/her opinion as follows: "I took training on the role of ICT in supporting students' English language learning. And, I believe that it adds a variety to the teaching of language and motivates students. I even feel that ICT bridges my weaknesses. Using ICT creates an opportunity for students to have a real setting of language use." Similarly, a rural secondary school EFL teacher (T1R) said, "I think ICT helps students' language learning in some ways as I can see from a plasma TV. But, I can't specifically mention the areas/skills which are influenced by ICT-based English language instruction."

On the other hand, for items like 'It is difficult to integrate ICT into pedagogical experiences in the English language teaching context', 'ICT's contribution to learning the English language is very much low', 'ICT brought additional load/burden on EFL teachers', 'ICT is not important to develop English language skills of learners', 'Students who use ICT frequently do not perform well in class' and 'I do not want to use ICT for instructional purpose', the respondents' mean scores, which range from 1.0 to 2.4 revealed that they do not agree at all. This means that their awareness of the role of ICT in English language learning is quite positive. Even, there are only insignificant differences between EFL teachers of the two settings: rural and urban secondary schools.

Regarding this, [Rahimi \(2011\)](#) discloses that teachers' awareness of technology is among the most frequently studied technology-related variable in ICT use literature because it is generally assumed that positive computer attitudes foster computer integration in the classroom. Yet, [Yusuf \(2018\)](#), in line with the finding, revealed that EFL teachers do believe that ICT supports their teaching and learning processes in the ELT classrooms. As evidence, EFL teachers reported that compared to printed books, ICT is more interesting. The students do not feel bored when learning English. However, the depth of their understanding/awareness varies slightly in the case of urban and rural secondary school EFL teachers which favour those in the urban setting.

3.3. Frequency of Utilization

Table 3: EFL Teachers' Frequency of Utilization of ICT in Classroom

Items on Frequency of ICT Utilization	S c h o o l Setting	Mean	SD	P-Value
I am using a computer to process all data about my student and my work.	Rural	1.42	0.76	0.00
	Urban	1.92	0.86	
I am using laptops for teaching in an English classroom.	Rural	1.27	0.6	0.94
	Urban	1.28	0.66	
I am developing tasks and activities for my students to make my work more effective and easy.	Rural	1.42	0.74	0.006
	Urban	1.85	1.0	
I am using a projector to present my lesson in the classroom.	Rural	1.36	0.73	0.51
	Urban	1.44	0.71	
I am using the internet in my school to update my subject to teach.	Rural	1.37	0.66	0.11
	Urban	1.58	0.85	
I am using the internet in my school to get information about the world.	Rural	1.27	0.87	0.04
	Urban	1.78	0.94	
I am using the internet in my school to share my teaching experience with others.	Rural	1.8	0.9	0.78
	Urban	1.76	0.87	
Students in my school are using the internet for educational purposes.	Rural	1.21	0.75	0.02
	Urban	1.77	0.84	
I am using a tape recorder to teach audio lessons recorded by cassettes/CD.	Rural	1.26	0.44	0.004
	Urban	1.59	0.79	
I am using television to teach visual lessons recorded by video devices.	Rural	1.32	0.62	0.14
	Urban	1.5	0.75	

I use different educational software to teach my subject.	Rural	1.39	0.66	0.14
	Urban	1.58	0.83	

In the above table, the statistical output of the respondents in the mean column ranges from 1.0 to 1.92. This shows that the extent of using the available ICT facilities for the teaching/learning of the English language is very low. However, when the extent of utilization is compared between the urban and rural schools, in most cases, like using laptops for teaching in English classroom, using a projector to present a lesson in the classroom, using the internet in school to update the subject to teach and using videos and other visual aids, there are no significant differences between the respondents in the two settings as the p-value in each case is greater than 0.05. On the other hand, the frequency of utilization in the urban secondary schools is significantly better than that of the rural ones in using a computer to process all data about the teaching-learning process, developing tasks and activities for students, using the internet in schools to get information about the world, using the internet for educational purpose and using a tape recorder to teach audio lessons recorded by cassettes/CD as their p-values are 0.00, 0.006, 0.04, 0.02 and 0.004 respectively.

This is also supported by the teachers' interviews. For example, an EFL teacher (T3U) said, "I use ICT tools to support my lessons when I feel that my students are bored of the usual way. Most commonly, I use tape recorders, flash/ CD/ DVD players. In addition, I sometimes browse the internet to find additional activities for my students. I don't use projector or LCD as the school has no such tools."

The results indirectly agree with that of [Azmi \(2017\)](#) which states that the availability of computers at the workplace, especially computer rooms and availability of internet, significantly determines (positively affects) EFL teachers' frequency of using ICT in the classroom. This means EFL teachers in the urban secondary schools who have better access to computers and the internet, use ICT frequently in English classrooms.

3.4. Challenges to Use ICT in Teaching EFL

3.4.1. School-based Factors

Table 4: School-based Factors Affecting ICT Use

Items on School-based Factors	School Setting	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value
Shortage of computers in the school	Rural	4.06	1.12	0.42
	Urban	3.89	1.38	
Shortage of computers in the students' computer laboratory	Rural	3.63	1.23	0.77
	Urban	3.7	1.36	
Lack of finance to buy ICT facilities by the school	Rural	3.72	.968	0.51
	Urban	3.64	1.34	
Absence of financial support from government to buy ICT facilities to school	Rural	3.85	1.43	0.09
	Urban	3.42	1.57	
Absence of support from NGOs and donors to provide ICT tools	Rural	3.59	1.1	0.30
	Urban	3.8	1.39	

Absence of training offered to teachers on the use of ICT in education by the school	Rural	4.0	1.19	0.20
	Urban	3.78	1.38	
Lack of well-furnished laboratory rooms in the school	Rural	3.11	1.53	0.75
	Urban	3.55	1.40	
Absence of school-based ICT policy	Rural	3.55	1.28	0.44
	Urban	3.72	1.33	
Intermittent disruption of electricity	Rural	3.98	1.33	0.008
	Urban	3.32	1.53	
Absence of internet connection in the school	Rural	4.31	1.13	0.003
	Urban	3.63	1.48	
Absence of computer accessories for maintenance	Rural	4.37	1.18	0.001
	Urban	3.58	1.48	
Lack of maintenance to ICT facilities in school	Rural	4.0	1.23	0.00
	Urban	3.2	1.36	
Absence of instructional software in different subject areas	Rural	4.0	1.3	0.001
	Urban	3.35	1.23	

In table 4, the mean value ranges from 3 to 4 in all factors regardless of the setting differences. This means all the listed factors have been contributing negatively to the practice of ICT-based EFL instruction. Nevertheless, when we see their contributions, specifically, school-based factors like shortage of computers, absence of training offered to EFL teachers, absence of internet connection, lack of maintenance on ICT facilities, and absence of instructional software in different subject areas are the leading contributors to hamper the practice since their mean value hits 4.0. In addition, when we see the influence in the urban and the rural settings, except in intermittent disruption of electricity, absence of internet connection and shortage of maintenance accessories and teaching software which have been dominantly affecting the rural secondary schools (p-value less than 0.05), the rest are common problems in the two settings as there are no statistically significant differences observed (p-value is greater than 0.05).

In the interview, one of the EFL teachers (T1U) from the urban secondary school said,

I want to support my lesson with ICT, but it is difficult in practice. For example, the computers in the lab don't accommodate all students. Most of the computers, radio cassette players don't work due to technical problems. Also, the shortage of maintenance personnel and accessories are a serious problem. Even to use the available ones, frequent power interruption is a serious challenge as there is no alternative power source.

Similarly, another teacher (T6R) from one rural secondary school stated the following:

In my school, computers and tape recorders are not available to students. They are being used at the office for administration and entertainment purposes. We don't have computer labs. But, we occasionally use tape recorders to let students listen centrally broadcast services whenever power is available. Above all, many ICT tools that don't work may be due to certain technical problems. However, the school doesn't give any attention to fixing/maintaining them, rather than looking for new tools to come.

Likewise, the data from the school observation depict that the schools are not giving attention to ICT-based English language instruction as many tools don't work, availability of only a few

computers in labs (10 to 20), lack of technical staff, lack of accessories and lack of ICT tools, except plasma, in some secondary schools.

Therefore, both urban and rural secondary schools were trapped by school-based factors that hamper the practices of applying ICT in teaching the English language. However, the extent of the problem is much more serious in rural secondary schools, especially where there is intermittent disruption of electricity, absence of internet connection, and shortage of computers in students' lab, maintenance accessories, and teaching software.

Concerning the school-related factors, [Senabulya \(2016\)](#) and [Aduwa-Ogiegbaen \(2005\)](#) pointed out that it is a very big challenge to many rural students and schools as they cannot afford to own computers as their counterparts in urban schools, which has created a digital divide among the rural and urban students. Specifically, though the challenges are common in both settings, rural school students suffer much with unstable or completely no power supply, poor computer supply, limited/no access and connectivity to the internet, and no access to language learning software.

3.5. Teacher-related Factors

Table 5: Teacher-related Challenges which Affect Use of ICT

Teacher-related Factors	School Setting	Mean	SD	P-Value
Lack of awareness on the use of ICT in the language classroom	Rural	3.44	1.55	0.84
	Urban	3.39	1.28	
Lack of planning to use ICT facilities in EFL classroom	Rural	2.98	1.24	0.69
	Urban	3.0	1.39	
Lack of interest by teachers to use ICT facilities	Rural	3.18	1.25	0.64
	Urban	3.28	1.44	
Lack of technical assistants in school	Rural	3.21	1.55	0.73
	Urban	3.13	1.32	

Table 5 shows the extent of teacher-related factors in influencing the practice of EFL instruction through ICT-based materials. Accordingly, the mean value in the table is above 2.5 for all factors listed. This indicates that the listed factors (awareness, planning, teachers' interest, and absence of technical assistant) were affecting negatively the practice of ICT-based EFL instruction. On the other hand, when the factors were compared in settings, they hampered the practice in both settings almost equally as the p-value is greater than 0.05, which shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the groups.

During the interview, an EFL teacher (T3R) from a rural secondary school said,

“As a language teacher, I haven't included ICT materials in my lesson plan to support my classroom instruction as they are time-consuming to deliver and plan. I often use them to improve my English language, but not interested to bring them to class because I'm very busy with other paper-based activities. One thing that I want to add is that my technical knowledge is very low in the area.”

Thus, it is possible to infer that teacher-related challenges such as low awareness of ICT-supported language instruction, inability to include ICT use in a lesson plan, low interest,

and absence of technical assistant are affecting negatively the practice of supporting English language lessons through ICT.

Likewise, recent studies agree with the teacher-related finding stated above. Yesuf (2018) states that many EFL teachers use much of their time at school to complete the paper works. Particularly, this becomes even harder when classes comprise large numbers of students. The other challenge which affects the ICT use was EFL teachers' lack of technical knowledge. In support of this, Tezci (2009) states that more skilled teachers in terms of computer and internet applications tended to use ICT tools more frequently in their teaching. In the same way, Niederhauser and Stoddart (2001) and Alazzam, Bakar, Hamzah, and Asimiran (2012) concluded that teachers face the same challenges and perceptions to use ICT in the classroom regardless of their demographic variability (gender, qualification, experience, and age).

4. CONCLUSIONS

As ICT is becoming a growing concern to improve the quality of education. Similarly, the current study focused on investigating the practices of urban and rural secondary school EFL teachers in supporting their English language instructions using ICT. Availability of ICT tools should be at front before bringing the discourse of practices. Accordingly, scarcity of ICT tools is common both in urban and rural secondary schools. However, the problem is more severe in the rural secondary schools where there were very few/no computers and computer labs at all. In addition, in most of the rural secondary schools, the only ICT tool available for students was the plasma TV, which does not work most of the time due to frequent power cuts. Regarding EFL teachers' awareness of using ICT, teachers in both urban and rural secondary schools had positive awareness/perceptions. Nevertheless, when it comes to the frequency of utilization, EFL teachers in urban secondary schools had significantly better performance than that of their rural counterparts. This can be associated with the relative advantage of having better access to ICT tools. The challenges were grouped as school-based and teacher-based factors. Among school-based challenges, the most common to schools in both settings were a shortage of computers and accessories, absence/frequent disruptions of electricity, absence of computer laboratories, limited finance/resource, limited/no access to the internet, and absence of ICT policy. Similarly, EFL teachers' limited technical knowledge, failure to include ICT during lesson planning, lack of interest, and overloaded paper works at schools are common teacher-related challenges in urban and rural secondary schools.

Based on the findings, it is suggested that the provision of ICT tools to schools in both settings, especially to those in the rural areas, plays a key role to motivate the EFL teachers to use them. In addition, ICT should be a part of both pre-service and in-service training (continuous professional development).

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No conflict of interest was reported.

6. FUNDING INFORMATION

No fund was received

7. REFERENCES:

- Abebe Feleke (2004) Key Issues in the Implementation and Integration of ICT in Education System of the Developing Countries. *Addis Ababa*, Ethiopia: Educational Media Agency.
- Abdul-Salaam, Aminat, O. (2018). "Assessment of Secondary School Teachers Use of ICT in Oyo State." *JournalPlus Education*, 8(1)
- Aduwa-Ogiegbaen, S. E., & Iyamu, E. O. S. (2005). "Using Information and Communication Technology in Secondary Schools: Problems and Prospects." *Educational Technology & Society*, 8 (1), 104 -112.
- Alazzam, A. O., Bakar, A. R., Hamzah, R., & Asimiran, S. (2012). "Effects of Demographic Characteristics, Educational Background, and Supporting Factors on ICT Readiness of Technical and Vocational Teachers in Malaysia." *International Education Studies*, 5(6), 229-243.
- Al- Otaibi, N. (2006). *E-learning Impediments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Muthah University: MU Press.
- Ajayi, I. (2009). "Towards Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology for Teaching in Nigerian Colleges of Education." *Asian J. Inf. Technol.* 7(5): 210 – 214.
- Azmi, N. (2018). "Factors Influencing the Frequency of ICT Use in the EFL Classroom." *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.2 (4). Retrieved on December 2, 2020
- Ekundayo H.T. (2007). *Funding Initiatives in University Education in Nigeria: Access, Equity and Quality in Higher Education*. Ibadan: National Association for Education Administration and Planning (NAEAP) Publications.
- Fisseha Mikre (2011). "The Roles of Information Communication Technologies in Education." *Ethiopia. J. Educ. & Sc.* 6 (2).
- Gay, L. (2002). *Education Research Competencies for Analysis and Application* (4th Edition). New York: Macmillan Publishers.
- Hare, H. (2007). *Survey of ICT and Education in Africa: Ethiopia Country Report (ICT in Education in Ethiopia)*. www.infodev.org
- Hennessy, S. *et al*, (2010). *Developing the Use of Information and Communication Technology to Enhance Teaching and Learning in East African Schools: Review of the Literature*. Aga Khan University. *Nairobi, Kenya*.
- MOE (2011). *Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Program ESDP IV*. *Addis Ababa*, Ethiopia.
- MOE (2010) *School Improvement Program Guidelines: Improving the Quality of Education and Students' Results for All Children at Primary and Secondary Schools*. A. A, Ethiopia.
- MOE (2008) *General Education Quality Improvement Package*. *Addis Ababa*, Ethiopia
- MOE (1994). *Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia: Education and Training Policy*. *Addis Ababa*, Ethiopia.
- Niederhauser, D. S., & Stoddart, T. (2001). "Teachers' Instructional Perspectives and Use of Educational Software." *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 15-31.
- Odhiambo, S. *and Onyango*, Y. (2015). "Examining Availability of ICT Tools for Use in Enhancing Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County, Homa-bay County, Kenya." *Journal of Social Sciences Research*, Vol .7, No.2
- OlayemiandOmotayo, (2010). "ICT Adoption and Effective Secondary School Administration in Ekiti-State." *European Journal of Educational Studies*.4(1).
- Rahimi, M and Yadollahi, S. (2011) "ICT Use in EFL Classes: A Focus on EFL Teachers' Characteristics". *World Journal of English Language*: Vol.1 (2).
- Ssenabulya, J . (2016). *ICT Training to Rural Schools: Bridging the Gap*. Uganda:

-
- Nakaseke Rural Youth Sustainable Livelihoods Initiatives: URL: <http://oasis.col.org/handle/115992501>
- Tezci, E. (2009). "Teachers' Effect on ICT Use in Education: The Turkey Sample." *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 1285-1294. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.228>
- Sarfo, F, and et al. (2011). "Technology and Gender Equity: Rural and Urban Students' Attitudes towards Information and Communication Technology." *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, Vol. 3(6).
- Yambo, J.M.O. (2012) *Determinants of KCSE Examination Performance in SDA Sponsored Schools: A Key to Academic Promotion to the Next Level of Learning*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis* (2nd Ed.) New York: Harper and Row.
- Yusuf, Y. (2018). "Perceptions and Barriers to ICT Use among English Teachers in Indonesia." *Teaching English with Technology*, 18(1)