TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN A DESKTOP VIDEOCONFERENCING ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore how language instructors teach with a synchronous multimodal setup (Skype). It reports on findings from research which evaluated how teachers use technologies to enable them to work in distance learning contexts. A total of 124 teachers (86 female and 38 male), offering online private lessons, were asked to complete a survey in which they were asked to describe the advantages and disadvantages of Skype, as well as to enumerate functions they consider are missing in this tool. They were also invited to share their opinions about most efficient models of language learning and teaching. The results show Skype is, on the whole, judged by teachers as a valuable tool in the context of distance language learning. Its use in teaching, nevertheless, has some limitations, which stem from various factors, such as IT infrastructure weaknesses (e.g. interrupted connections), lack of some functions (e.g. supervising the content of the learner's screen) or the specific nature of contact with the interlocutor (the lack of a possibility to interact in a common space).

Keywords*:* CALL; distance learning; Skype; private tuition

1. Introduction

Characterized by Godwin-Jones as "the people's telephone" (2005), Skype is a freeware communication tool which enables voice conversations and provides the opportunity to see one's interlocutor by means of a webcam. A microphone and speakers are the minimum requirements to ensure a successful connection; however, the use of headphones seems to be the best way to eliminate any echo which may impede the quality of communication. Additional functionalities of this software include text chat that can be used when disturbances during voice conversation occur, and screen sharing capability, which is particularly useful in the educational context. Since its release in 2003, the popularity of Skype has been constantly growing, particularly on mobile devices. Equally, the use of Skype in educational contexts has been expanding as numerous lessons and online conferences take place by means of this application (Develotte *et al.*, 2010).

As some researchers have pointed out, programs such as Skype can "[…] facilitate a partnership between L2 learners and native/expert speakers of the target language" (Tian &

Wang, 2010: 181). Taking into account the possibility of barrier-free communication with people all over the world, numerous authors consider it to be a perfect tool promoting intercultural exchanges (O'Dowd, 2000, Taillefer & Munoz-Luna, 2014). Skype is also popular among teachers conducting private foreign language lessons. The possibility of reaching a broad range of clients as well as time- and money-saving properties encourage more and more language educators to make videoconferencing an integral part of their professional practice.

The paper's structure is the following. After a brief review of the benefits and drawbacks of using Skype in distance language learning, the author discusses and summarizes the findings of previous studies which guided his conceptualization of the current project. Then, the author describes the study conducted with Polish language teachers using Skype in their work.

2. Literature review

The advantages of using Skype as an educational tool were most accurately described by Hashemi & Azizinezhad (2011), who draw attention to such its characteristics as comfort of use (resulting from the fact that each user has a personal presentation screen), total focus on the content presented on the learner's computer, complete privacy, abundance of tools permitting sharing and reusing of lesson content (audio recording, chat history) as well as the availability of multiple and parallel communication channels (Hashemi & Azizinezhad, 2011). The authors concentrate on the possibility of reaching people coming from diverse economic, ethnic and cultural groups, and state that "CMC offers superior chances for interaction and improvement to students in an EFL setting where native speakers are few and far between" (Hashemi & Azizinezhad, 2011: 51).

The implementation of videoconferencing in education has been discussed in various publications, where the authors described their pedagogical experiences (Wang, 2004 & 2006; Jauregi & Bañados, 2008; Lee, 2007), and reflected on an optimum way of designing exercises most suitable for this context (Wang, 2007). In spite of the undeniable advantages of Skype-like tools, some aspects of using them in educational contexts may sometimes prove to be difficult, as, for instance, both the teacher and the learner have to function in two spaces at the same time: in the virtual space which is visible on the computer monitor, as well as in the real space, where one can access various educational materials such as dictionaries, student's books, notes, etc. As a consequence, the teacher is forced to integrate and perform various activities of a different nature simultaneously, such as moderating the conversation,

monitoring himself/herself and the learner, controlling the tools and managing the resources (Develotte *et al.*, 2010). Synchronous online teaching also imposes the necessity of adapting communicative skills, such as the use of appropriate body language, to the nature of the new medium (Licoppe & Relieu, 2007). In this context, it is not surprising that some teachers may see videoconferencing as an unsatisfactory alternative to face-to-face communication, the transmission being usually restricted to a close-up shot of the interlocutor, which does not enable speakers to perceive important elements that usually significantly shape interaction, such as dress code or body language (Zähner *et al.*, 2000; Lamy & Hampel, 2007).

Characteristic features of oral communication by means of Skype-like VoIP (Voice over the Internet Protocol) services are particularly interesting to investigate, as this aspect has direct influence on the quality of interaction in foreign language classes. In spite of the fact that, at first glance, videoconferencing seems to be similar to traditional face-to-face communication, in fact, in numerous respects, there are fundamental differences between these two types of interaction. The *presence at a distance* phenomenon was already described in 1999 by Weissberg, who states that "[it] do[es] not reproduce the performances we usually accomplish [but rather] invents another realm of perception […]" (Weissberg, 1999: 14). In this context, activities such as speaking, seeing and listening become different to those experienced in face-to-face life. In his 2004 paper, Jones emphasizes this point, stating that "what makes communicating with new technologies different from face-to-face communication is […] the different sets of 'mutual monitoring possibilities' that these technologies make available, the different ways in which they allow us to be present to one another and to be aware of other people's presence" (2004: 23). An additional difference is that in computer-assisted communication, oral and body language can be used along with a wide range of different media (pictures, video recordings etc.) enabling interlocutors to change the way they create meaning (Hampel & Stickler, 2012).

Finally, technical obstacles encountered while working by means of Skype-like VoIP applications also have to be mentioned. These include interrupted connections and various distractions (Oviatt *et al.*, 2004). Communication is hardly ever uninterrupted: micro-gaps, which constitute a particularly unfavourable phenomenon in the context of foreign language learning, occur frequently (Ruhleder & Jordan, 2001). Taking these factors into account is important since, as Eakin remarks, "(…) frustration with the functionality of a web-based tool has the potential to damage the pacing of a lesson and student's interest levels" (2012: 20). Nevertheless, some authors point out that this kind of inconvenience can, paradoxically, force users to increase the frequency of their contributions (Goodfellow *et al.*, 1996) and, therefore,

deepen oral exchanges (O'Dowd, 2006). As one can notice, the teacher certainly has to face an important task of tailoring his methods of work to the characteristic features of the medium in order to be able to fully exploit its potential.

When analysing the implementation of VoIP tools in foreign language teaching, several possible focal aspects must be considered, including: user opinions (both students' and teachers') about this work mode; the characteristic features of distance learning (a comparison of the course of a lesson with interactions that take place in real-life contexts), or, finally, the effectiveness of this teaching approach. The research conducted by the author of this paper focused on the first of these issues, namely, the way educators perceive the usefulness of Skype in their work. The use of videoconferencing in the context of private foreign language lessons constitutes a particularly important aspect, especially when one takes into consideration the background of the study which was conducted in Poland, where private lessons are the norm (Putkiewicz 2005). To the knowledge of the author, opinions of teachers using Skype in this particular context have not been yet described and analyzed in any publication. Therefore, the present study aims to fill an important gap in research related to the use of videoconferencing in language learning.

3. The study

3.1. Research aims, participants and design

In order to study teachers' opinions, a survey created by means of *Google forms* was used. Teachers of English, German and French, working in various schools in Poland, whose contact data were familiar to the author of the present study, were invited to take part in the survey. As they were asked to disseminate the survey further, it is not possible to calculate the exact response rate, because the actual number of people informed about the questionnaire is not known. The link to the survey was also sent to a total of 973 teachers who post on the website www.e-korepetycje.net, and who explicitly stated in their announcements that they offer online private lessons. Data were collected in March and April 2015. In total, 124 subjects completed the survey, 86 females and 38 males. Full descriptive statistics are presented later in this section.

The survey consisted of 29 items. Six opening questions related to basic personal information, such as gender, age, languages taught, the type of school they work at, the length of their professional experience, and the time during which they had offered online private lessons via Skype. The following five items were focused on a detailed description of work with Skype specific to every teacher, such as the context of teaching (individuals, pairs or

groups consisting of multiple members), software used together with Skype (e-mail, blogs etc.), hardware used to enhance Skype functions, the frequency of webcam usage and the assessment of its usefulness. The three items were open-ended questions, where the participants were asked to describe the advantages and disadvantages of Skype as well as to list functions they consider missing from this piece of software. In order to conclude their reflection, the subjects were invited to assess the overall usefulness of Skype in foreign language teaching on a scale of 1 to 10. The remaining 14 items were statements with five-point Likert-scale response markers ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5), concerning the participants' opinions about the most efficient models of language learning and teaching as well as their convictions with relation to their technical and pedagogical competences. Data were analysed with Statistica version 8 and SPSS version 22.

3.2. Results

Basic data referring to the sample are presented in Table 1 and in Figures 1 and 2 below. As it can be seen, teachers taking part in the survey differed considerably from one another as far as their age and length of professional experience are concerned. Interestingly, there was no significant relationship between the length of experience a particular teacher had in using Skype in their work and the length of their professional experience in general ($r=0.17$, $p=0.06$), indicating that some experienced teachers have started using new technologies only quite recently. Most of the participants (39%) declared that they taught more than one foreign language. As can be observed in Figure 2, for the majority of these teachers conducting private lessons constituted additional work. Only 19% of the participants said that they did not work at any school at the moment the study was conducted. Most worked at private language schools (58%), upper (45%) and lower secondary schools (35%), and they often worked in two or more institutions (57%).

Table 1. Participant characteristics

	M	**Min**	**Max**	**SD**
Age	30.81	21.00	55.00	8.42
Length of professional experience in teaching	7.87	1.00	23.00	5.82
Length of teaching experience using Skype	2.35	1.00	8.00	1.54

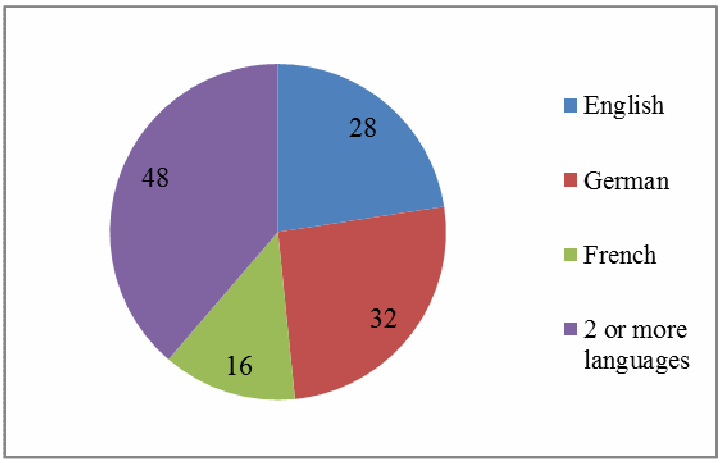

Figure 1. Languages taught by the participants of the study

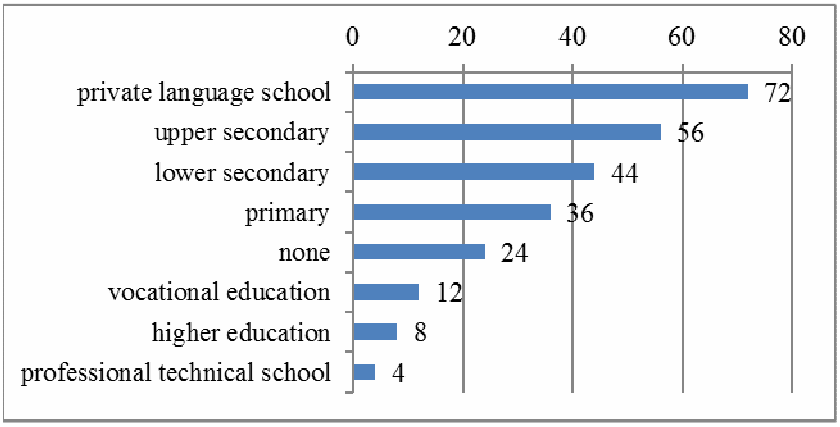

Figure 2. Institutional background of the participants

When it comes to the teachers' opinions, the usefulness of Skype as well as the capabilities of this tool were rated quite high by the participants (M=8.67, ranked on the ten point scale, SD=1.58); only in 8 cases was this rank found to be lower than or equal to 10. A one-way ANOVA showed no statistically significant differences between the opinions expressed by the teachers of particular languages: $F(3, 120)=1.79$, $p=0.15$.

A significant majority (100 teachers) were found to use Skype to give individual classes, 20 participants also used it to conduct lessons for pairs and only 4 sometimes organised lessons for more than 2 learners at once. The participants' answers regarding the use of the webcam are also interesting: 8 participants claimed they never used the webcam, 104 teachers used it from time to time and only 64 said they always used it in their online lessons.

As far as additional software used in distance learning is concerned, the teachers taking part in the study indicated e-mail as the most important tool enabling them to communicate with learners (e.g. negotiating the date of a meeting) and to provide them with

all kinds of materials. Other Internet tools were used with a significantly lower frequency: usually, the teachers did not create interactive exercises or quizzes, nor did they record or share video materials or make use of learning management systems (see Figure 3 for details).

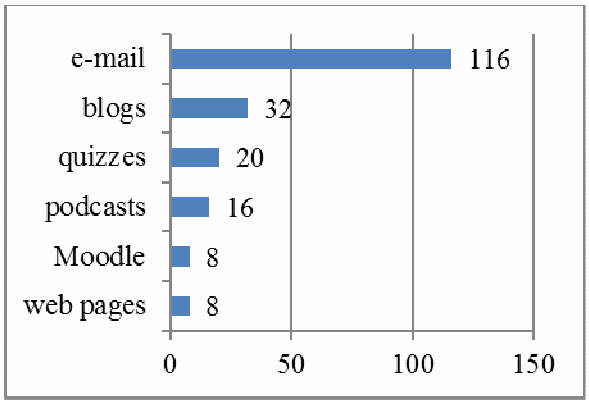

Figure 3. Tools used in distance learning by the participants of the study

Similar conclusions can be drawn when analysing the participants' responses to the question about the equipment used to enhance the potential of online lessons. The majority of the teachers (96) did not respond to this question at all, while the rest pointed out the most basic equipment, such as headphones, microphone or webcam. Only 2 people mentioned using a Figureics tablet, which is a useful tool that enables capture and transmission of handwritten data. As a result, one might suggest that the extent to which the teachers implement new technologies which have the potential to significantly enhance their work is quite limited.

A more detailed description of pedagogical experiences provided by the study participants in response to the three open-ended questions sheds more light on the nature of foreign language teaching via Skype. As indicated by the teachers, the benefits of using this type of software, such as saving time (67), saving money (55), or the possibility to get in touch with a greater number of clients who live, for instance, in small towns or abroad (19) are consistent with what one would expect. As far as the disadvantages of Skype are concerned, the majority of the subjects (71) mentioned technical problems, such as interrupted connections or insufficient audio or video quality. This problem is particularly serious in the case of communication in a foreign language, where every disturbance has a negative influence on the lesson quality. The second most frequently mentioned disadvantage, indicated by 60 teachers, was the lack of direct contact with the learner. 11 participants reported various problems with the environment, such as the lesson being disturbed by other

people present in a room, or by intrusive outside noises. Finally, 7 teachers complained about limited interaction with the learner. As teachers and pupils do not share a common space, some basic elements of non-verbal communication (e.g. pointing at particular objects) are eliminated. Due to this fact, as three of the participants stressed, it is not possible to conduct some kinds of exercises (e.g. those containing kinaesthetic elements) with the youngest learners.

Interestingly enough, only 8% of the participants suggested additional functions they would like to have integrated with Skype. These suggestions comprised call recording (7), speech recognition enabling teachers and students to easily obtain the transcript of a lesson (3), improved document sharing (3), payment integration (2) and control of the learners' screen (1). Some of these functions, such as, for instance, call recording, can be introduced by means of third-party plugins; others have not been implemented simply because Skype was not designed with a view to being utilised for distance learning. Finally, one has to underline that four participants indicated the growing popularity of Google Plus: a tool that does not require to be installed on the computer hard drive and which, according to the interviewees, offers higher quality of conversation. This indicates that, in the near future, Skype may inevitably face competition from other programs.

Next the participants' responses to Likert-scale questions were analyzed. In order to explore the underlying dimensions of all the items, factor analysis was used. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy of the analysis (KMO=0.61) and all KMO values for individual items were ≥0.54, which is above the acceptable limit of 0.50. Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (91)=972.37, $p<0.001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for principal component analysis. A PCA with orthogonal rotation (varimax) was conducted. Four components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 65.88% of the variance, which is a good result when the relatively small size of the sample is taken into consideration. Loadings of all the features are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of factor analysis

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
1) New technologies allow for more effective teaching of foreign languages than traditional methods.	**-0.65**	0.03	0.07	0.01
2) Distance teaching is more comfortable than direct face-to-face communication.	**-0.67**	0.20	0.10	-0.19
3) Face-to-face communication is the most effective form of contact with the student. Skype should be used only when this is not possible.	**0.75**	0.01	0.06	-0.29

4) Distance learning cannot fully replace direct face-to-face contact with a student.	**0.75**	0.08	0.27	-0.05
5) When learning a foreign language direct face-to-face contact with a student is the best solution.	**0.84**	0.04	-0.08	-0.11
6) I think I am a good teacher.	0.15	**0.79**	-0.03	0.22
7) I think that my students are satisfied with my teaching.	0.01	**0.91**	0.11	-0.15
8) My classes are interesting.	-0.13	**0.86**	0.05	0.25
9) I think that sooner or later new technologies will replace human teachers.	-0.20	-0.23	**0.72**	0.12
10) It is not possible to teach foreign languages well without using new technologies.	0.24	0.06	**0.62**	-0.25
11) I try to develop my IT skills in order to become a better teacher.	0.03	0.21	**0.68**	0.23
12) I try to introduce various innovations aimed at improving the quality of distance learning.	0.11	0.34	**0.79**	0.04
13) I can solve the technical problems that arise in the course of computer-assisted learning.	0.04	0.08	0.01	**0.91**
14) I am proficient in new technologies.	-0.27	0.10	0.09	**0.83**
Cronbach's α	0.79	0.84	0.73	0.85

Notes. Loadings above 0.6 are highlighted in bold.

The first factor (items 1-5) relates to the participants' conviction that direct face-to-face communication is an essential component of a successful teaching process and cannot be fully replaced by distance-bridging technologies. The second factor (items 6-8) reflects the participants' beliefs about being a good teacher. The third factor (items 9-12) reflects the participants' innovative attitudes and their conviction that incorporating new technologies into language teaching is useful. Finally, the fourth factor (items 11-12) corresponds to participants' self-perceived level of IT competence. The four factors are also not highly correlated with one another (the only significant correlation occurs between Factor 1 and Factor 4 ($r=-0.19$, $p<0.05$)), which demonstrates that they should be considered independent. In every case, the value of Cronbach's α was >0.7, indicating that each factor refers to a single unidimensional construct.

Further analysis examined correlation between selected variables. The principal aim was to assess to what extent the teachers' opinions about Skype are influenced by such factors as gender, age or length of professional experience. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Summary of selected correlations

	How do you assess the usefulness of Skype in your work and capabilities of this tool?	**Factor 1 (conviction that direct face-to-face communication is an essential component of a successful teaching process)**	**Factor 2 (beliefs about being a good teacher)**	**Factor 3 (innovative attitudes)**	**Factor 4 (self-perceived level of IT competence)**
Gender	-0.21*	0.53***	0.08	0.22*	-0.12
Age	0.16	-0.17	-0.13	0.12	-0.33***
How long have you been teaching?	-0.01	0.01	0.28**	0.05	-0.22*
How long have you been teaching with Skype?	0.18*	-0.17	-0.16	-0.01	-0.33***
How do you assess the usefulness of Skype in your work and capabilities of this tool?	1.00	-0.38***	-0.12	-0.24**	-0.06
Factor 1	-0.38***	1.00	-0.01	0.05	-0.19*
Factor 2	-0.12	-0.01	1.00	0.14	0.17
Factor 3	-0.24**	0.05	0.13	1.00	0.08
Factor 4	-0.06	-0.19*	0.17	0.08	1.00

Notes. Correlations marked with * were significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

Correlations marked with ** were significant at the $p<0.01$ level.

Correlations marked with *** were significant at the $p<0.001$ level.

Female participants were coded as '1', male participants as '0'.

As presented above, the teachers' opinions on the usefulness of Skype in language learning correlated significantly with four variables: gender, the length of teaching experience using Skype, and Factors 1 and 3. The first correlation ($r=-0.21$) indicates that male participants rated the usefulness of Skype higher than female teachers. This tendency is confirmed by the correlation between gender and Factor 1 ($r=0.53$), which indicates a clear relationship between gender and the conviction that direct face-to-face communication is an essential component of a successful teaching process. A t-test confirmed that female teachers are more attached to traditional ways of working with learners which they prefer to distance learning ($M_{female}=2.71$, $M_{male}=1.84$, $t(122)=6.86$, $p<0.001$). The second significant correlation with the length of teaching experience using Skype ($r=0.18$) suggests that the participants' opinion on the usefulness of this program increases with time, but this trend is not a particularly strong one. The third correlation, with Factor 1 ($r=-0.38$), indicates that people who prefer direct contact with the learner rate their pedagogical experiences with Skype-mediated teaching lower. The fourth correlation with Factor 3 indicates the fact that people

who are more open to innovations and more inclined to believe that it is beneficial to incorporate new technologies into language teaching rate Skype's potential lower than others.

As far as the remaining significant correlations are concerned, the correlation between the length of professional experience and Factor 2 (r=0.28) indicates that teachers who have been performing their job longer than others are much more self-confident as far as their competences are concerned. The three remaining significant correlations, which occur between Factor 4 and participant age (r=-0.33), the length of professional experience (r=-0.22), and the length of professional experience in using Skype (r=-0.33) indicate that the older and more experienced study participants displayed lower self-perceived levels of IT competence. Finally, it is important to underline that participant age and length of teaching experience did not significantly influence their assessment of Skype.

The final stage of the analysis tested the overall effectiveness of the predictors through multiple regression analysis. The strongest correlation coefficient among the predictors occurred between gender and Factor 1 (r=0.53). However, as the absence of large correlations between the predictors does not necessarily rule out multicollinearity, additional diagnostics (VIF and tolerance statistics) were conducted. The values obtained (VIF values ranging from 1.12 to 1.96, tolerance values ranging from 0.51 to 0.89) showed that multicollinearity was not an issue of concern. Therefore, linear regression was conducted using the eight variables previously mentioned (gender, age, length of professional experience, length of professional experience using Skype, Factors 1-4) as independent variables and participants' opinions on the usefulness of Skype in distance learning as the dependent variable. This yielded a significant model, $F(7, 116)=4.81$, $p<0.001$, $r=0.47$, $r^2=0.23$. Detailed data are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of multiple regression analysis

Item	β	SE	B	t	p
Factor 1	-0.93	0.25	-0.38	-3.66	<0.001
Factor 3	-0.92	0.34	-0.23	-2.71	<0.01

Notes. Estimated Constant Term is -13.50, ß is unstandardized Beta, SE is standard error, B is standardized Beta

As presented above, two variables, Factor 1 (participants' conviction that direct face-to-face communication is an essential component of a successful teaching process) and Factor 3 (participants' innovative attitudes), made a significant independent contribution to the explained variance. The remaining six variables were not significant predictors. The analysis

confirmed the key roles of Factor 1 and Factor 3 in building participants' opinion on the usefulness of Skype in foreign language distance learning.

4. Discussion

As it was discovered, most of the participants declared that they teach more than one foreign language. This is increasingly common nowadays when teachers need to have wider competences, as well show higher versatility and adaptability to meet the demands of the job market. What is also interesting is that most of them work in two or more institutions. This kind of situation may be caused by the relatively low remuneration in the Polish educational sector, which forces teachers to look for additional sources of income.

In the author's opinion, the most intriguing finding is the fact that female language teachers appear to be more convinced than males that computer-mediated learning cannot replace direct contact with the learner. The issue of the relationship between gender and learner attitudes to distance learning has already been investigated in several studies which mainly concentrated on such phenomena as users' patterns of interaction, perception of social status, relationship building, forms of participation, and level of satisfaction, among others (Rovai & Baker, 2005, Johnson, 2011, González-Gómez *et al.*, 2012). Their findings suggest distinctive differences in the way members of both sexes engage in this particular form of educational experience. The study described in this paper clearly shows that these differences are also discernable in teachers.

The correlation analysis between the teachers' opinions on the usefulness of Skype in language learning and Factor 3 (reflecting participants' innovative attitudes) leads to another surprising conclusion. It highlights the fact that people who are more open to innovation and more inclined to believe that it is beneficial to incorporate new technologies into language teaching rate Skype's potential lower than others. This conclusion may appear to run counter to expectations, as logically one would assume that it would be this group of people who would perceive Skype in a more positive light than others. However, regression analysis confirms that for each unit increase in level of conviction concerning the positive impact of innovations in language teaching, participants showed a 0.92 decrease in opinion on the usefulness of Skype in distance language learning, whereas, intuitively, one would tend to assume the opposite. It could be hypothesized that this tendency was in some way influenced by the significant relationship between gender and Factor 3 ($r=0.22$). However, a Sobel/Aroian test showed that gender has no mediation effect in the relationship between the two variables ($Z=-1.63$, $p=0.10$). The negative beta value of Factor 3 may stem from the fact

that participants who perceive themselves to be more innovative and more open to the idea of making new media an integral part of the classroom experience at the same time show more awareness of the weaknesses of Skype, such as lack of direct contact with the learner or technical limitations.

Finally, having analyzed the teachers' opinions about the usefulness of Skype in conducting private language lessons, one can conclude that many people still consider presence at a distance to be radically different (in a negative sense) from physical presence. In fact, not fewer than 60 teachers taking part in the research considered the lack of direct contact with the learner as a negative aspect of videoconferencing. Answers provided to the questions relating to the use of webcam are also interesting. They demonstrate that visual contact between the teacher and their learner, which constitutes a particularly important component of face-to-face communication in traditional classroom settings, does not seem to be necessary while conducting online lessons. However, one has to take into consideration the fact that teachers refrain from using the webcam not only as a result of their preferences; it frequently stems from insufficient bandwidth.

5. Conclusions

As shown by the study, Skype is, on the whole, judged by teachers as a valuable tool in distance language learning. Its use in teaching, nevertheless, appears to have some limitations, which stem from various factors, such as weaknesses in the IT infrastructure (e.g. interrupted connections), lack of some functions (e.g. supervising the content of the learner's screen) or the specific nature of contact with the interlocutor (the lack of possibility of interaction in a common space). A considerable number of the critical opinions expressed by the participants of the study may be considered as referring to distance learning in general, where every single user is confined to their individual workplace. Most likely this is the argument which explains why even if Skype allows multiple simultaneous conversations it appears to be considered as a tool best suited to individual lessons, rather than group teaching. Conducting classes by means of a VoIP service for a larger number of participants is problematic as far as management is concerned (it may be difficult to, for instance, control discipline) as well as due to technical issues (e.g. learners' voices superimposing on one another may impede communication within the group). On the other hand, it should be underlined that some problems can be eliminated by the use of appropriate software and hardware (plugins, extensions, Figureics tablet, etc.). However, the fact that many teachers do not seem to be aware of the existence of, or willing to use, tools which could help them improve the quality

of their work is problematic. The need for constant self-improvement as far as CALL is concerned and the ability to find and implement new solutions is clear in this case.

This study provided the opportunity to determine only some of the factors which influence language teachers' opinions about Skype. Overall, the study presents Skype as a tool which is used relatively universally in online foreign language teaching rather than being reserved for only a small group of people who are fluent in technology or represent the *digital native* generation.

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