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FROM THE EDITOR

by **Jarosław Krajka**
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The use of computer technology in language learning and teaching crosses national borders and helps language teachers solve classroom problems in all parts of the globe. Be it at primary, middle school or university level, in Japan, the Czech Republic, Jordan, Turkey or Ireland, technology-assisted teaching helps increase the effectiveness of language instruction, foster learners' motivation, as well as build up teachers' confidence, to name just a few benefits.

It is interesting to see how practical, classroom-based, research reported in the articles published in this issue of *Teaching English with Technology* naturally informs practitioners of the affordances of selected applications of computer technology in language instruction. We are happy to open up our Journal as the publishing venue for highly practical pieces well grounded in the classroom practice.

To start with, Lenka Kučírková and Martina Jarkovská in their paper "E-Learning in Business English Course – Results of the Questionnaire Survey" show quite a positive view of ESP students' perceptions of participation in e-learning, in particular, appreciating the effect of this mode of instruction on development of separate skills.

The next article, "The Application of Technology in Teaching Grammar to EFL Learners: The Role of Animated Sitcoms" by Zari Saeedi and Aso Biri from Iran addresses the question of how to use an English animated situation comedy (sitcom) as an authentic type of multimedia to teach a particular grammatical structure, namely conditional sentences. The study also aimed at investigating the learners' attitudes toward this approach to grammar instruction, pointing at the effectiveness of using the sitcom in teaching conditional sentences.

Based in the context of university education in Japan, Gilbert Dizon examines the efficacy of using Quizlet, a popular online study tool, to develop L2 English vocabulary. The results of the pre- and post-tests revealed that the learners were able to make statistically significant gains. Moreover, a questionnaire administered by the researcher indicated that the students had positive perceptions of Quizlet to study L2 vocabulary.

Another pair of authors from Iran, Meisam Mirzaee and Sajjad Gharibeh Gharibeh, analyse the role that personality characteristics of learners may play in technology-assisted classes. In particular, the study determined university students' introvert/extrovert personality types and examined their perception/ attitudes towards web-based language learning. The qualitative results indicated most of the participants considered internal, external, and psychological factors associated with the Internet use to be motivating, exciting, and stimulating.

"Examining the Effectiveness of Digital Video Recordings on Oral Performance of EFL Learners" by Nazlınur Göktürk reports the results of an action-based study aiming at examining whether digital video recordings would contribute to the enhancement of EFL learners' oral fluency skills. The paper also summarises the learners' perceptions of the use of digital video recordings in a speaking class. As was proved by the researcher, the utilization of digital video recordings may not only bolster the learners' self-confidence, but also encourage them to take risks with the target language.

In the next contribution, Ewa Kilar-Magdziarz from Ireland addresses the novel topic of BYOD classes (Bring Your Own Device), showing how to enhance a syllabus for Intermediate students of English and how to implement any syllabus changes. Furthermore, the impact of the changes introduced by BYOD teaching on the staff members and learners is analysed in the paper.

Finally, Ghaleb A. Rabab'ah, Bayan B. Rabab'ah and Nour A. Suleiman analyse the effect of modern technologies, and in particular Instant Messaging, on the language production of Jordanian students' writing output. The authors come to the conclusion that Instant Messaging language appears in students' writing, and teachers have reservations towards its use by their students in their writing. Teachers should raise students' awareness of this issue to help them effectively control and enhance the influence of Instant Messaging on their academic writing.

I wish you good reading!

E-LEARNING IN BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE – RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

by **Lenka Kučírková**

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Abstract

The paper reflects the real needs and priorities within foreign language teaching at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CULS), which include the reduction of the lecturer´s direct teaching load and the use of modern ICT technologies within e-learning courses offered to students of all forms of studies. For the purposes of the research, the e-learning Business English course was developed. The objective of the research was to find out students´ opinion on e-learning based on the frequencies of their responses and on their qualitative signs. The research was conducted in accordance with the long-term aim of the CULS Prague, as well as in accordance with the language policy of the European Union, with the national policy of language education and with the long-term aims of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic.

Key Words*:* action research, e-learning, qualitative sign, questionnaire survey

1. Introduction

The topic of the paper reflects the real needs and stipulated priorities within foreign language teaching at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, which include the reduction of the number of contact hours connected with the use of modern ICT technologies. For the purposes of the research, the e-learning Business English course was developed. The paper is a follow-up to previous studies by Kučírková, Kučera and Vostrá Vydrová (2014) and Kučera and Kučírková (2015). It contains a review of literature focused on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) e-learning and related linguistic theories, and relevant theories of learning, particularly constructivism and behaviourism. In addition to the questionnaire research, the methodology of questionnaire pre-research is included. Finally, the findings of the actual questionnaire research are presented and discussed.

The study used the methodology of ‘action research’. It refers to the classroom investigation initiated by researchers, i.e., teachers, who look critically at their own practice

with the purpose of improving their teaching and the quality of education (Blázquez, 2007). It connects received knowledge based upon practical professional experience with experiential knowledge via a continuous process of reflection. Action research engages practitioners in a critical and reflective attitude toward their work. In this approach, teachers - action researchers - collaborate to produce their own development of knowledge about teaching with technology (Laurillard, 2008) and try to answer questions related to an aspect of their professional practice. This means that they collect and analyse data, reflect on what they discover and then apply it in their practice. Bailey (2001) points out that research which can be called 'action research' denotes a particular approach to collecting and interpreting data that involves a set of reiterated procedures for teachers (researchers) to conduct research in their own settings.

Action research is often categorized as qualitative research, however, the positioning of it is more complex. Researchers such as McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2003) point out that it is a misconception that quantitative procedures are not applicable within it and that researchers cannot use statistics in action research. McKay (2006) and Burns (2010) also argue that data collection instruments from both qualitative and quantitative research can be used in action research. An effective use of a quantitative action research design is also illustrated in the study by O´Gara (2008), in which the author evaluated the impact of drama methods on children´s learning of verb tenses. The results provided statistically reliable evidence for the effectiveness of teaching tenses through drama. The viability of using either or both quantitative and qualitative research methods to conduct action research was suggested.

2. Literature review

2.1 ESP e-learning and related linguistics theories

The present ESP language course derives its linguistic input particularly from the theory of language register analysis and functional description of language with the input of philosophy and speech acts. They are not exclusive but complementary and each has its place in the course. The researchers' aim was to produce the syllabus which would place high priority on the lexical features students may encounter in their ESP (business and economic) studies and in future jobs, as well as on the language functions applicable in particular business situations.

The concept of special (specific) language register analysis was one of the phases in the development of ESP in the 1960s and early 1970s. It was based on the principle that one

kind of ESP constitutes a specific register different from that of another kind of ESP – e.g. English of Electrical Engineering vs. English of Biology (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Bell (1981) determines register as "a kind of sub-language or limited language described by correlating the linguistic forms in appropriate texts with situational variables". The whole language is then made up of a collection of registers (Bell, 1981). Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 30) define register as "the kind of language associated with a specific context, such as an area of knowledge (legal English; social English; medical English; business English; scientific English etc.), or an area of use (technical manuals, academic texts, business meetings, advertisements, doctor - patient communication etc.)." The aim of register analysis is to identify the grammatical and lexical features of registers.

New ideas emerged in the study of language at the same time as the demand for English for Specific Purposes was growing. Traditionally, the aim of linguistics was to describe grammar, and the new studies focused on the ways in which language is actually used in real communication. However, language does not exist for its own sake and it can be looked at from the point of view of function, that is, what people do with it. Functions are concerned with social behaviour and represent the intention of a speaker or writer, for example, promising, threatening, classifying, identifying, reporting etc. (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

At the beginning of the 20th century structuralism was replaced by functionalism. Linguists were interested in the functional style, they examined the development of language as the development of the system and abandoned the study of isolated language features development (Mathesius, 1961). The functional view of language began to have its influence on language teaching in the 1970s with a move from language syllabi organised on structural grounds to those organised on functional criteria. It was connected with the Council of Europe´s efforts to establish some kind of equivalence in the syllabi for learning various languages and with the establishment of analytical philosophy that became a dominant tendency with the so called "turn to the language". John L. Austin (1911-1960) became a key personality among Oxford philosophers who founded school of "philosophy of ordinary language" (Peregrin, 2005). Philosophy became involved in the nature of language and philosophers turned their attention towards the analysis of language, a process that had a substantial impact on linguistics in the 1960s with Austin´s *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) and Searle´s *Speech Acts* (1969). The functional approach provides students not only with the linguistic knowledge which permits them to create grammatical sentences (linguistic competence), but also the social knowledge and skill which permit them to produce and

understand socially appropriate utterances (communicative competence – Bell, 1981). Philosophers provided insights which have proved to be of value to linguists. For instance, Sager, Dungworth and McDonald (1980: 87) define a special text unit as "the product of a special speech act characterised by a certain kind of unity of topic, reference and syntactic cohesion and by a conventional form which organises the content of the message according to the particular intentions pursued." They state that intentions with which we use the language arise from the voluntary nature of language and that these intentions are part of human behaviour and are determined by the circumstances which surround speech acts. They define a speech act as "the result of the convergence of a speaker (or writer), a listener (or reader) and a topic (an area of reference), at a particular time and place in a specific situation" (Sager, Dungworth and McDonald, 1980: 22).

Every ESP course should be relevant to learners' needs, which is why the theory of language based on registers and functions creates the basis of the course of Business English in this study. The researchers' aim was to produce the syllabus which would give high priority to lexical features students are supposed to meet in their ESP (business and economic) studies and in future jobs, as well as to the language functions in particular business situations.

2.2 Relevant theory of learning

Theories of learning provide the theoretical basis for language teaching methodology. E-learning methodology can be considered an innovation in the teaching of ESP in higher education. Nowadays, ESP instruction is very often implemented through e-learning and ESP e-learning methodology should reflect the underlying concepts and activities of the disciplines and professions it serves. The online course of Business English proves that ESP e-learning methodology is specific and a more traditional language methodology and content methodology in isolation are not sufficient for effective ESP e-learning. In our ESP e-learning methodology we consider language and content learning equally important. The lessons are based on thematic economic units with the use of content (subject-matter: economics, accountancy, management etc.) for language practice. Language is taught through subject-matter texts and through various activities for mastering the specific language as well. Students have to master the language items and also gain the basic knowledge of subject-matter in the unit. In ESP e-learning subject-matter is a means for learning specialist language and at the same time the basic notions of students' disciplines and professions.

The relevant theory of learning implied by the activities in the present course and providing the bases for ESP e-learning methodology is behaviourism supplemented by the

researchers' own teaching experience. The psychology of the Behaviourist School – Pavlov, Thorndike, Hull and Skinner (in Bell, 1981) – provided the model of learning based on behaviourism. Since language is a human activity, it was believed that learning a language was achieved on the basis of a stimulus – response chains (Bell, 1981). Behaviourism as the theory of learning posits that learning is a mechanical process of habit formation and proceeds by means of the frequent reinforcement of a stimulus – response sequence (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The basic exercise technique widely used in ESP is pattern practice, particularly in the form of language drills. Frequent repetition is essential to effective learning and all errors must be immediately corrected. Thus, behaviourism can provide the theoretical underpinning of ESP e-learning. The computer provides the stimulus, the learner has to do as directed, i.e., provides the response, and finally, the computer gives feedback and reinforces the response. Providing feedback is connected with e-learning activities and it can be executed by both agents, the computer and the teacher. Timely provision of feedback is a key to success in Computer-Mediated Communication. "Online learning activities accompanied by the provision of feedback represent tools for structuring the process of e-learning" (Černá, 2005: 61).

At the same time, constructivist learning theories can also underpin technology-enhanced learning (TEL). The constructivist view of teaching and learning is associated with the work of John Dewey (in Garrison and Anderson, 2003), who identified two principles that have become implemented in contemporary e-learning. One is interaction through which ideas are communicated and knowledge is constructed and confirmed. The second principle is continuity which goes to the importance of creating the foundation for future learning. It means that e-learning must provide experience that ensures continuity for new learning experience (Garrison and Anderson, 2003). The same reference to constructivism as to the learning theory that underpins the methodology of learning online is found in the book Language Learning Online: towards best practice. Constructivist ideas underpinning TEL have been broadly embraced by Laurillard (e.g. 1978, 1982, 1995). According to Laurillard et al. (2011), teachers need to optimise the use of digital technologies in order to achieve effective learning. The constructivist approach requires learners to take responsibility for their own learning, either individually or collaboratively. Knowledge is seen as something that must be constructed (Nesi, 2011).

The newly developed e-learning Business English course embraces both of the abovementioned principles. Through its interactive tasks it communicates ideas and firms and constructs knowledge, allowing for immediate feedback upon one's achievement and multiple

attempts at answers while practising one's skills. By addressing key language issues, developing major language skills and concentrating on topics that transcend to other fields of study as well as real-life experience, the course provides continuity and foundation for further learning.

2.3. E-learning course description

The innovative course has a topical syllabus that reflects the students´ main fields of studies and their departments. At the same time, the syllabus is also functional as far as writing and business context is concerned (personnel management, marketing etc.). The course is focused on the development of business and economic terminology, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing and the work with up-to-date authentic audio-visual materials. Online study support for Business English is in the form of a 14-module course in the Moodle LMS with the following module structure:

a) lead-in;
b) keywords and definitions;
c) specialist material – reading/audio-visual;
d) various activities;
e) resources.

The content of the course is the following:

a) a specialist text intended for reading comprehension practice;
b) interactive HotPotatoes exercises intended for students' vocabulary practice such as fill-in-the-gaps, multiple-choice, true/false, matching;
c) online submission of written assignments (translations, letters) in some modules;
d) other additional activities – listening, videos;
e) tests for training purposes with limited or unlimited number of possibilities, or a credit test with just one try and a time limit.

The course focuses on the issues of business and economics as well as on the English language used in business. It should provide students with a useful guide or tool on how to communicate about business in English.

The course focuses on the development of listening, reading and writing skills, translation as the fifth skill and vocabulary development, because these skills are important for the studies and professions (listening to lectures, note taking, writing business letters, reports, reading specialist texts etc.). The development of the knowledge of grammar was not in the foreground of the course, as the students had already acquired a sufficient command of

English grammar appropriate for B1 level within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The development of vocabulary that can be applied in business and economics was of primary importance. By learning and practising specialist vocabulary the students receive guidance as a key to performing other activities like speaking, reading, writing and listening.

3. The study

3.1 The aim of the questionnaire study

The aim of the questionnaire was to discover the opinions of students on the effectiveness of e-learning as far as language skills and vocabulary are concerned in comparison with face-to-face instruction, and on the implementation of the e-learning course for distance students based on the frequencies of their responses and on the qualitative signs (year of study, field of study). Questionnaire is used as a research instrument to collect data on phenomena which cannot be observed, such as attitudes, self-concepts etc. and to obtain information about the research subjects (Seliger and Shohamy, 1990: 172).

3.2 Participants

The population is represented by students of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague within the bachelor studies who went through placement tests and were characterised by the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The research sample of 107 students was represented by those full-time B1 students who enrolled into the subject of Business English.

3.3 Research instrument - questionnaire

Questionnaires are used to collect data on phenomena which cannot be observed, such as attitudes, motivation etc. and to obtain information about the research subjects, such as age, years of studying the language etc. (Seliger and Shohamy, 1990).

Questionnaires were distributed in Czech to ensure that the questions would be properly understood by students and answered correctly. The validity of the findings was supposed to be strengthened in this way. Anonymity was assured when filling in the questionnaires, so the students tended to share information with the teacher more easily. They are supposed to bring true and accurate responses. Anonymity and high response rate also heightened the validity of findings. Before the study proper research started, pre-research had been conducted. It served the purpose of verifying whether the questions in the questionnaire

were clear and whether the students understood everything and could answer without problems.

We used a non-standardised structured questionnaire that was composed of 11 Likert scale questions with a high degree of explicitness (Gavora, 2000; Rory O'Brien, 1998) requiring the subjects to select among a number of alternatives, and one open question.

The questionnaire asked about the information connected with:

1. Gender
2. Field of Study
3. Year of Study
4. Participation in the e-learning course

Then the questions that offered a choice from several possibilities a) "yes", b) "rather yes", c) "rather not", d) "no", e) "I do not know" followed:

5. Do you think that the inclusion of the ESP e-learning course is proper?
6. Do you think that the lessons of ESP within the e-learning course can be of the same effectiveness as the face-to-face lessons?
7. Do you think that the reading skill development within the e-learning course can be of the same effectiveness as the face-to-face lessons?
8. Do you think that the listening skill development within the e-learning course can be of the same effectiveness as the face-to-face lessons?
9. Do you think that the writing skill development within the e-learning course can be of the same effectiveness as the face-to-face lessons?
10. Do you think that the translation skill development within the e-learning course can be of the same effectiveness as the face-to-face lessons?
11. Do you think that the vocabulary skill development within the e-learning course can be of the same effectiveness as the face-to-face lessons?
12. Comment.

The questionnaire was concluded with the open question (12) that was intended for the respondents to evaluate the course, write their comments and also recommendations for future implications as the course in the Moodle LMS can be freely updated. This type of open question was not used any more as its interpretation requires more complex analysis.

In order to check the appropriateness and a proper structure of questionnaires for the actual questionnaire research within the study proper, questionnaires in the paper form were also distributed among the students during the last lesson in the year preceding the actual research. The students were given questionnaires in which they could express their views on

the appropriateness of the inclusion of e-learning into the lessons of English for Specific Purposes (Business English) within distance studies and the effectiveness of e-learning as far as language skills (with the exclusion of speaking) and vocabulary were concerned. 40 questionnaires in the pre-research and 94 in the final research were distributed. Such a significant difference in number was caused by a lower number of students taking part in the pre-research, which was performed one year prior to the research. Fewer students enrolled in the course in the year preceding the actual research.

Based on the pre-research, some activities that were required by students in questionnaires were added into the e-course in Moodle, particularly several listening and writing activities. The structure of the questionnaire for the final research was also slightly modified (Kučírková, Kučera and Vostrá Vydrová, 2012).

Questionnaires in the paper form were distributed among the students during the last lesson in the winter term 2012/2013. No problems with low response rate appeared as all questionnaires were collected personally and the return rate was 93%. In seven questionnaires, the students did not respond to some questions and, therefore, these questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. The data collected in the questionnaires were quantified into the table and then processed quantitatively by means of statistics.

Anonymous questionnaires, in accordance with ethical considerations in collecting research data ensured that confidentiality of the research data would be maintained (Seliger and Shohamy, 1990).

3.4 Findings

The findings of the first five questionnaire items were as follows: there were 51 males (58.6%) and 36 females (41.4%) among the respondents. As far as fields of study are concerned, the most highly-represented specified field was that of Business and Administration with 23 students (26.4%), followed by Economics and Management field of study with 19 students (21.8%). Trade and Business with Machinery was represented by 17 students (19.6%). “Others” (not specified field of study) was selected by 28 students (32.2%). 68 respondents (78.2%) were students in their first year of studies, only 7 respondents (8%) were in their second year of studies and 12 respondents (13.8%) were in their third year of studies. 47 respondents took part in the e-learning course, while 40 did not. The responses were equally required from all respondents-participants of the research, irrespective of the fact whether they belonged to the experimental group (participating in e-learning) or the control group.

In the other six questions of the questionnaire, based on the opinions of students, the objective was to determine whether or not the development of single skills and vocabulary by using the e-learning online course could be as effective as the face-to-face instruction. The choice of the responses was "Yes, rather yes, no, rather no, do not know". The frequency of single responses is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of responses.

	Yes	Rather yes	Do not know	Rather no	No
Overall effectiveness of e-learning course	6 (6.9%)	38 (43.7%)	1 (1.1%)	31 (35.6%)	11 (12.6%)
Reading with comprehension	11 (12.6%)	34 (39.1%)	1 (1.1.0%)	31 (35.6%)	10 (11.5%)
Listening with comprehension	22 (25.3%)	38 (43.7%)	3 (3.4%)	15 (17.2%)	9 (10.3%)
Writing	24 (27.6%)	44 (50.6%)	4 (4.6%)	10 (11.5%)	5 (5.7%)
Translation	28 (32.2%)	33 (37.9%)	2 (2.3%)	17 (19.5%)	7 (8.0%)
Vocabulary	36 (41.4%)	24 (27.6%)	6 (6.9%)	17 (19.5%)	4 (4.6%)

71 respondents (81.6%) thought that the inclusion of e-learning into the ESP lessons for distance students was proper, while only 3 respondents thought that it was improper (3.4%).The remaining 13 respondents (15%) did not know.

Most responses proved that there was no statistically significant difference in the relationship between gender, field of study and year of study, participation in the e-learning course and perceived usefulness of the course as presented by Kučera and Kučírková (2015).

As regards gender, a statistically significant difference was found only in item (question) 11, which asked if the development of vocabulary within the e-learning online course could be as effective as face-to-face instruction. 34 (39.1%) males and 26 (29.9%) females answered "Yes" or "Rather Yes"; 12 (13.8%) males and 9 (10.3%) females responded "No" or "Rather no"; 5 (5.8%) males and 1 (1.2%) females responded "Do not know". More males than females believed in the efficiency of e-learning in the development of the vocabulary. It may be assumed that this was caused by the nature of males, who are more technically-oriented and prefer Information and Communication Technologies to the face-to-face method. The P-value was 0.03532, i.e., lower than the significance level of 0.05. The analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in responses between

males and females. The contingent coefficient, which determines the dependence strength, is 0.3011162. The value of the coefficient is not high, the dependence strength between variables (response to item 11 and gender) is not high either; it is of a medium strength.

Table 2. Questionnaire item p-values in relation to gender

Questionnaire item	P-value
No. 5	0.65113
No. 6	0.29795
No. 7	0.51013
No. 8	0.09850
No. 9	0.12098
No. 10	0.50343
No. 11	0.03532

In all other items, there were no statistically significant differences between the responses of students and their gender, as evidenced in Table 2. It may be assumed that the variable of gender did not have much influence on the students' perceptions of e-learning.

As for the field of study, statistically significant differences among the responses of students within individual fields of study did not appear at all. The P-values were higher than the significance level of 0.05. It may be concluded on the basis of the questionnaire analysis that the field of study was not a variable that could influence the students' perceptions. Most students of all fields of study had confidence in the inclusion of e-learning into distance studies (71 = 81.6%) and more than half of the students believed in the effectiveness of the development of the skills and vocabulary in all questions (from 44 to 68 in case of single questions). Table 3 shows the p-values of the questionnaire items in relation to the field of study.

Table 3. Questionnaire item p-values in relation to the field of study.

Questionnaire item	P-value
No. 5	0.34400
No. 6	0.99202
No. 7	0.88563
No. 8	0.71492
No. 9	0.93617

No. 10	0.15651
No. 11	0.05180

When the responses of students of different years of study were compared and statistically analysed, there was no statistically significant difference between the year of study of the students and the responses to questions 5-11. All the p-values were higher than the significance level of 0.05. The year of study did not influence the opinions of the students on the effectiveness of e-learning in the skills and the vocabulary in the research. The p-values of the questionnaire items in relation to the year of study are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Questionnaire item p-values in dependence on the year of study.

Questionnaire item	**P-value**
No. 5	0.28419
No. 6	0.84221
No. 7	0.97364
No. 8	0.59257
No. 9	0.72488
No.10	0.59926
No.11	0.28449

Statistically significant differences in the responses to question 5 and 6 were found between the students who participated in the e-learning course and those who did not. Out of those who completed the course 42 respondents (89.4%) thought that the inclusion of e-learning into the ESP for distance students was proper, 3 participants (6.4%) felt that it was improper and one student (2.1%) did not know. Out of those who did not take part in the e-learning course 29 participants (72.5%) thought that the inclusion of e-learning into the distance studies was proper, 3 respondents (7.5%) thought that it was improper, and 13 students (32.5%) did not know. P-value was 0.04628, lower than the significance level. It indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in responses to question 5 about the inclusion of e-learning to distance studies between those who participated in the e-learning course and those who did not. It was also discovered that there was a statistically significant difference in responses to question 6 and participation in the e-learning course. P-value was 0.03815. 29 students who participated in the e-learning course (61.7%) and 15 students who did not participate in the course (37.5%) responded “Yes” and “Rather yes”, 17 students who participated (36.2%) and 25 who did not participate in the course (62.5%)

responded “Rather no” and “No”(Kučera and Kučírková, 2015). Table 5 shows p-values of the questionnaire items in relation to the participation in the e-learning course.

Table 5. Questionnaire item p-values in dependence on the participation in the e-learning course.

Questionnaire item	P-value
No. 5	0.04628
No. 6	0.03815
No. 7	0.10966
No. 8	0.33778
No. 9	0.13193
No. 10	0.31291
No. 11	0.88110

4. Discussion

To summarise, these statistically significant differences in responses to questions 5 and 6 are supposed to be caused by the personal experience of the students who took part in the e-learning course and who could better judge this question and, on the other hand, by the lack of experience of those who did not take part in the course. Most students who took part in the course supported the inclusion of the e-learning course in the distance studies and thought that the studies through the e-learning method could be as effective as through the face-to-face method. In the other items (7-11) there were no statistically significant differences in responses between those students who participated in the e-learning course and those who did not as p-values were higher than the significance level. The students who participated in the e-learning course as members of the experimental group were definitely for the inclusion of e-learning into regular classes and considered it as efficient and fruitful as opposed to face-to face instruction. In contrast, the students who belonged to the control group and lacked direct experience with e-learning suggested that e-learning might be good for practising individual skills but when it came to the inclusion of e-learning into classes or learning, they were much less certain than those with the experience.

Our research was based on the questionnaire analysis of students’ opinions on the e-learning method, its effectiveness and its inclusion into the distance studies. Similarly, Pop et al. (2009) conducted their research with the use of a computer-based course assessment questionnaire. The results indicated that even though the students’ motivation had increased and they had expressed positive views on the course, they had not been prepared to be fully autonomous and study through the pure online course. Learning ESP within Moodle LMS

was also the main topic of the research paper by Pavlíková and Pekařová (2010), in which they introduced Moodle language courses, various types of e-learning materials for students – Moodle resources and activities - and their experience with the Moodle LMS as well. They point out positive evaluation by the students. Nevertheless, this study did not conduct any questionnaire research related to this field.

5. Conclusion

The opinions of the students as to whether or not the effectiveness of the e-learning course and the face-to-face instruction was the same were influenced by the participation in the e-learning course. The results indicate that in most cases negative views on the overall effectiveness of the e-learning course were expressed by those students who did not take part in the e-learning course. On the other hand, as far as the positive attitude to the effectiveness of e-learning is concerned, the number of students who took part in the e-learning online course prevailed. The findings in opinions on the development of single skills show the students' positive attitude towards e-learning.

The findings from the students' questionnaires were also very important as they expressed their views on the effectiveness of the e-learning course and its inclusion into distance studies. Most of the students who participated in the e-learning course assessed it positively and thought that it could be included in the distance studies programmes.

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THE APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING GRAMMAR TO EFL LEARNERS: THE ROLE OF ANIMATED SITCOMS

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Abstract
Building upon previous research into the effectiveness of using videos for language teaching purposes, this study utilized an English animated situation comedy (sitcom) as an authentic type of multimedia to teach a particular grammatical structure, namely conditional sentences. This study also aimed at investigating the learners' attitudes toward this approach to grammar instruction. To achieve these purposes, 34 participants were selected and divided into two groups. In the control group (N=17) conditional sentences were taught through the explicit way of teaching grammar whereas the participants of the experimental group (N=17) learned about the conditional sentences through exposure to the animated sitcom. The results pointed to the effectiveness of using the aforementioned animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences. Moreover, students showed a positive attitude to the animated sitcom as well as its use in teaching conditional sentences. The findings of this study have implications for L2 learners, encouraging them to change their view of grammar and looking at it from a more communicative perspective.
Keywords: multimedia; animated sitcom; grammar; grammar teaching; EFL learners

1. Introduction

Traditionally, it was a widely held assumption that grammar is equated with meaningless and decontextualized forms which were isolated from use. The emergence of Communicative Language Teaching approaches contributed to this myth and caused grammar to be more pushed out of the language learning scene. The proponents of CLT approaches made grammar instruction to be viewed as unhelpful and unnecessary. However, recent studies (Ellis, 1997; Ellis, 2008; Schmidt, 1990) in second language acquisition research have led to, as Nassaji

and Fotos (2004) put it, a resurgence of grammar teaching. They state the rationale for the reconsideration of grammar as a necessary component of language instruction is as follows:

1. The hypothesis that language can be learned without some degree of consciousness has been found theoretically problematic. According to Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis conscious attention is a necessary condition to understand every aspect of L2 acquisition.
2. Another reason for the renewed interest in L2 grammar instruction comes from Pienemann's (1984) teachability hypothesis, which suggests that L2 learners pass through developmental sequences. This was supported by Lightbown (2000), who states that grammar instruction will be effective if it coincides with the learner's readiness to move to the next developmental stage of language proficiency.
3. Some research (Mitchell, 2000; Swain, 1985) refers to the inadequacy of teaching approaches focusing primarily on meaning without taking grammar into account as well as evidence for the positive effect of grammar instruction, indicating that grammar instruction has a significant impact on accuracy as well as language learning.

Despite its significance in language learning, grammar has tended to be problematic, demanding and even demotivating for both learners and teachers. In addition to decontextualization which is argued to be one of the major issues regarding the teaching and presentation of grammar, in most of the cases the grammar taught in the classroom is not successfully transferred to its actual use in the outside world, i.e. students might know a great deal of grammatical rules and structures, but this does not necessarily guarantee their capability in practically using them.

In relation to these shortcomings of effective grammar teaching, Larsen-Freeman (2003) states that "grammar teaching will be effective and useful when learners have also opportunities to encounter, process and use instructed forms in their various form-meaning relationships so that the forms become a part of their interlanguage behavior" (p. 53). In line with this view, Spada (1997) adds that when learners are confronted with communicative exposure to grammar points learned through formal instruction, their awareness of the forms as well as their accuracy in the use of the forms will improve and become longer-standing. Consequently, it is safe to suggest that grammar should be taught communicatively in the context where it actually happens in order to be effective. One of the ways to fulfill this goal is to use authentic audiovisual materials in teaching grammar.

Using videos which are a multidimensional text containing both visual and audio content would be very effective. Regarding the positive effect of these materials, Harmer (2001) mentions two reasons why video can add a special dimension to the language learning experience. First, by seeing language in use learners' comprehension will be greatly enhanced since meanings and moods are often conveyed through visual clues. Second, videos offer students opportunities to look at situations far beyond their classroom, thus raising their cultural awareness. Celce-Murcia (2002) suggests that using media in the classroom serves as an important motivator. It also lends authenticity to the classroom situation and exposes students to multiple input sources.

More importantly, authentic videos help students learn the language features in their real context. By creating a contextualized situation for presenting and practicing language forms, not only do language learners see how effectively and practically grammar points taught in the classroom are used in real life but also their negative perceptions and attitudes toward grammar will change. This is likely to result in students looking at grammar from a far more positive and practical perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1. Multimedia in language learning

There is no gainsaying the fact that technology has considerably affected our lives and brought about numerous changes in the past few decades. Language teaching/learning is one of the areas that have been feeling the impact of the changes afforded by technology. As Chapelle (2007) points it out, not only are these changes going to lessen, but also technology will continue to influence every aspect of the lives of language learners, including their formal as well as informal language learning experiences.

One of the aspects of the new technologies that have become prevalent in language learning contexts is the use of audiovisual materials. The ubiquity of audiovisual materials has never been more obvious than it is nowadays for the new generation of language learners (McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012). In today's world, which is filled with audiovisual programs, language learners and teachers are lucky enough to have access to a virtually unlimited storehouse of authentic language materials such as movies, series, cartoons, music videos, documentaries, etc. which they can exploit for the purposes of language learning. These materials have helped learners as well as teachers to make classroom language learning more effective and efficient than it used to be (Tschirner, 2001). However, the following questions arise at this point: Why has the use of multimedia and audiovisual materials in language

learning contexts earned so much interest in the recent years? What factors have contributed to the appeal of using these materials for language learning purposes?

One of the factors that has been mentioned throughout the literature in favor of the use of videos is the difference they make when compared with printed materials such as textbooks and dictionaries. According to McNulty and Lazarevic (2012), unlike printed materials, videos provide learners with the chance to see and hear simultaneous communication, speakers' gestures, facial expressions and other paralinguistic features. which can lead to improving second language learning.

Another factor relates to the kind of language that audiovisual materials supply language learners with. Baltova (1999) sees the value of videos in their recreating real-life experiences of language. In line with the same view, Shrosbree (2008) contends that videos expose learners to the language in its real context, drawing their attention to speakers' body language and other visual aids which enhance comprehension.

It has been argued that videos have a positive effect on learners' attitudes toward the target language and culture. Tschirner (2001) discussed that through providing a contextualized and situated version of language in which verbal and non-verbal features are observed and by allowing learners to perceive the target language speakers in their real cultural contexts, videos contribute to the learners' favorable attitudes towards the target language.

One of the notable advantages of multimedia is the multimodality that they provide. According to Guichon and Mc Lornan (2008), multimodality assists learners to process sensory information in diverse semiotic codes. It also helps them comprehend information via different channels. Multimodality is supported by Mayor's (2001) theory of multimedia learning, which presupposes that multimedia materials result in better learning outcomes since they provide learners with multiple channels of delivery.

2.2. Empirical findings on the effect of using videos

A large number of studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of multimedia on different aspects of language learning, revealing the fact that learners profit from exposure to authentic multimedia. Washang (2004) carried out a study to investigate the effect of English movies on Iranian students' development of idiomatic expressions. The results pointed to better performance of the experimental group. Yuksel (2009) reported that watching movie clips had a positive impact on learners' vocabulary knowledge. He attributed this

improvement to the contextual clues that movies can provide for learners and thus concluded that movies have the potential to facilitate incidental vocabulary learning.

Karakas and Saricoban (2012) sought to determine the impact of watching subtitled cartoons on incidental vocabulary learning through conducting a study with 42 first grade ELT students. However, the findings of their study did not support the assumption that the subtitle group would outperform the non-subtitle group.

More relevant to the current research is the study carried out by Ilin, Kutlu and Kutluay (2013), who aimed at investigating the effect of videos on teaching grammar in an ESP grammar class. The results revealed the positive impact of videos on teaching grammar. It was also found that the usage of videos motivated students to take part in the lessons as well as to learn grammar.

Another relevant study is the classroom-based research conducted by Mohammad (2013). She explored the effectiveness of subtitled videos on grammar learning. In this study she made use of the noticing hypothesis in order to investigate the effect of using enhanced subtitles and input flooding of a specific grammatical structure, the Past Perfect form, on learning. The findings of this study showed that students had a positive attitude toward this approach to teaching grammar. It also helped them better understand the context in which a particular grammatical structure was used.

Although there is a large body of research on the effect of audiovisual materials in second language teaching and learning, not so many studies have yet investigated their effectiveness in grammar instruction. Using authentic videos in grammar teaching and learning is an interesting and motivating way to add a communicative sense to the classroom. By doing so, foreign and second language learners' passive command of grammatical knowledge can be lowered to a great extent. They also wake up to the fact that grammar is an essential component of successful language learning, which cannot be taken for granted.

The current study used animated sitcoms to try to overcome the abovementioned problems regarding grammar instruction in an EFL context. To this end, the following questions were formulated:

1. Does using animated sitcom have any significant effect on students' learning of conditional sentences?
2. What are the students' attitudes toward using animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences?

3. The study

3.1. The aim of the research

The major purpose of this study was to make grammar instruction more communicative and interesting for EFL learners by utilizing an English animated sitcom entitled *The Looney Tunes Show* in a grammar class. This study also aimed at sheding light on the effectiveness of grammar in language learning to Iranian EFL learners, encouraging them to change their view of grammar to perceive it as one of the beneficial linguistic resources at their disposal. Furthermore, the current study attempted to determine the students' attitudes toward using animated sitcoms in an EFL grammar class.

3.2. Participants

To accomplish the purpose of the present study 34 English language learners from two institutional contexts (First Institute: Gheshm language institute in Ardebil, and Second Institute: Sharif language center in Tehran) were selected using the "convenience sampling" technique (Dornyei, 2007, p.98). A total of 23 EFL learners studying English at the first language institute were assigned to the control group. These students were all male, bilingual in Turkish and Persian, with their age ranging from 14 to 17. Based on the placement policy of the language institute, the selected participants were considered to be at the intermediate level of proficiency. However, in order to be assured of their language level, Nelson English Language proficiency test was administered. The results of this proficiency test helped the researchers to exclude 6 students who did not meet the required proficiency level. The remaining 17 students were selected to participate in the control group.

The participants of the experimental group were selected from the second language institute. Twenty one language learners, including both male and female and ranging in age from 14 to 18, participated in the study. These learners had enrolled in an intermediate English language course. The aforementioned proficiency test was administered in order to assure the researchers of the proficiency level of the participants. The results allowed the researchers to discard 4 students who were not within the required proficiency level. As a result, 17 students (five females and twelve males) took part in the experimental group of this study.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. *The Looney Tunes Show*

The main instrument of this study was the popular English animated sitcom, namely, "*The Looney Tunes Show*" which premiered May 3, 2011 on Cartoon Network. Three seasons of this animation have been produced and aired so far. The decision to use this animated sitcom was based on its popularity and attractiveness to English learners. Twelve episodes of this animated sitcom were shown to the participants during a six-session treatment. To help them better understand the content, the episodes were played with English subtitles (see Appendix for sample screenshots).

3.3.2. Nelson English Language Test

Prior to the treatment, a proficiency test, namely Nelson English Language Test 200 A, devised for the intermediate level, was employed in order to assure the researchers of the homogeneity of the groups. The Nelson test for the intermediate level contained 50 items, 14 of which were cloze tests and the other 36 were multiple-choice items.

3.3.3. The pretest and the posttest

After determining the homogeneity of the two classes involved in the Nelson English Language Test, a pretest consisted of 30 multiple choice items which tested conditional sentences was administered in order to determine the participants' initial knowledge of the specified aspect of grammar. The pretest was extracted from Rezaei (2009). In his study, Rezaei conducted item analysis, discarded and modified the poor and incompatible items. The reliability index of the pretest was reported to be .78.

After the six-session treatment, a posttest of 30 multiple-choice items was given to students of both classes in an attempt to measure their gained grammatical knowledge and compare the two different approaches of teaching grammar, i.e. the traditional approach and the one which used the animated sitcom. Similarly to the pretest, the items for the posttest were also extracted from Rezaei (2009).

3.3.4. The interview session

At the final stage of the study, the participants of the experimental group attended an interview session so as to inform the researchers of their attitudes toward using animated sitcoms in grammar teaching. The interview session was recorded and the students' responses to the questions regarding the use of the animated sitcom were transcribed to determine their attitude. In order to help students better understand the questions and avoid any misunderstanding, they were also asked in Persian. It is to be noted that one of the

researchers, other than the participants' teachers, took charge of the interview session. The participants responded to the following questions:

1. Do you have past experiences of watching videos in the class? If so, for what purpose?
2. Did you like the idea of watching authentic videos (like the one used in this study) in teaching grammar?
3. Did you like the animated sitcom *The Looney Tunes Show* used in the class?
4. What did you like/dislike about the use of animated sitcom in the class?
5. Was the use of animated sitcom effective in learning conditional sentences?
6. Do you like to watch videos (like the one used in this study) again in the future to learn grammar?

3.4. Design and procedure

This study employed a pretest/posttest design and was concerned with learning one specific grammar construction i.e. conditional sentences. It aimed at comparing the performance of two groups of learners exposed to two different approaches of teaching conditional sentences. The data collection of this study took place in five stages.

3.4.1. Stage 1

A total of 44 EFL learners from two institutional contexts who had signed up for intermediate English courses were selected to take part in this study. In order to assure the researchers of the homogeneity of the participants as well as to exclude those who were not within the required proficiency level for this study, Nelson English Language Test was administered. The results led the researchers to exclude 10 students. The remaining 34 students, divided into control (N=17) and experimental groups (N=17), constituted the main participants of the current study.

Table 3.1. The results of the Nelson English Language Test.

Groups	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Control	23	26	42	36.40	4.12
Experimental	21	29	43	37.28	3.53

3.4.2. Stage 2

At the second stage of the study, participants of both groups were required to take a pretest. The pretest, consisted of 30 items, intended to determine the participants' initial knowledge of the conditional sentences.

3.4.3. Stage 3

Participants attending the control group (without video) were exposed to explicit instruction. The teacher devoted 20 minutes of the class time to teaching conditional sentences. The teaching of grammar in this group was done deductively: the teacher explained conditional sentences to the students and provided them with a number of examples. Afterwards, students were required to practice using conditional sentences. It needs to be mentioned that each type of conditional sentences was taught in two sessions. The grammar instruction used for the control group lasted for 6 sessions, extending over a period of two weeks.

On the other hand, the participants of the experimental group (with video) were exposed to a different approach towards teaching grammar. In this group, conditional sentences were taught by utilizing an animated sitcom entitled *The Looney Tunes Show*. During the treatment which lasted for 6 sessions (a period of two weeks), the participants of this group watched 12 episodes of the specified sitcom. In order to make comprehension of the animated sitcom easier and to make the targeted conditional sentences more tangible for the participants, it was shown with English subtitles. Every time a conditional sentence was used by one of the characters in the sitcom, the teacher paused and replayed it, trying to draw the participants' attention to that particular conditional sentence. This was followed by having students practice and produce sentences using conditionals. This routine was repeated after the emergence of every conditional sentence. In order to avoid overwhelming students with an abundance of unfamiliar information on the one hand, and so as to help them focus more on the conditional sentences on the other hand, the researcher, inspired by Swaffar and Vlatten (1997), decided not to play the entire episodes. Instead, shorter segments of each episode were shown to the students.

It is important to point out that this way of teaching grammar was in line with two theories – Focus on Form (Long, 2000) and Consciousness-raising (Ellis, 2008; Thornbury, 1999). Both of these approaches refer to any attempt which directs learners' attention to the formal properties of the target language. This study provided students with authentic and contextualized instances of the use of conditional sentences through exposing them to an authentic type of multimedia in their class. By doing so, the attention of the participants of the experimental group was drawn to the conditional sentences.

3.4.4. Stage 4

After the treatment, the participants in both groups sat the posttest. This posttest was administered for two purposes: first, to assess the participants' knowledge of conditional sentences as a result of the treatment. Second, since the groups involved in this study were exposed to different approaches towards grammar teaching, the posttest aimed at comparing their performance regarding the learning of conditional sentences. It was supposed to indicate whether there was any statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental one.

3.4.5. Stage 5

At the final stage of the study, the participants of the experimental group who were exposed to *The Looney Tunes Show* in their class attended an interview session during they were asked to respond to a number of questions regarding their attitudes toward using the animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences.

3.5. Findings

In order to answer the first research question of this study *"Does using animated sitcom have any significant effect on students' learning of conditional sentences?"* the descriptive statistics of the performance of both control and experimental groups in the pre-test as well as the post-test were computed (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Descriptive statistics of the performance of control and experimental groups.

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test	
		M	SD	M	SD
Control	17	16.82	1.74	17	1.5
Experimental	17	17.41	1.54	18.17	1.59

The mean score of the participants of the control group in the pretest was 16.8 and it increased to 17 in the posttest. On the other hand, the participants of the experimental group to whom conditional sentences were taught with an animated sitcom scored a mean of 17.41 in their pretest, which increased to 18.17 in the posttest. It is important to point out that the maximum number of the scores was 30. Since the descriptive statistics only cannot help one decide whether the treatment has been effective and whether the differences between the

mean scores of the control group and experimental group are statistically significant, a paired-samples t-test as well as an independent sample t-test were computed. The results of these two tests are reported in Table 3.3 and Table 3.4.

Table 3.3. Paired-samples t-test results for both groups.

	Df	T	*Sig.*
Control	16	1.37	.18
Experimental	16	3.49	.003

As demonstrated in Table 3.1 demonstrates, the participants of the experimental group improved from a mean score of 17.41 in their pretest to a mean score of 18.17 in their posttest, i.e. they underwent a mean difference of .76. The results reported in Table 3.3 indicate that this difference in mean scores from the pretest to the posttest is statistically significant (p= .003). The participants of the control group experienced a slight increase from the pretest to the posttest, but this improvement, as reported in Table 3.3, was not statistically significant (p=.18).

Table 3.4. Independent sample t-test results for pre-test and post-test.

	Df	T	*F*	*Sig.*
Pre-test	32	1.43	.32	.30
Post-test	32	2.21	.01	.03

Furthermore, as demonstrated in Table 3.2, there was a mean difference of .59 between the performance of the control and experimental groups in the pretest. However, this difference was found to be non-significant (p= .30). Regarding the performance of the participating groups in the posttest, a mean difference of 1.17 was reported, which turned out to be statistically significant (p= .03 – see Table 3.4).

In order to answer the second research question, the students' attitudes regarding the use of the animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences were surveyed during an interview session. The participants of the experimental group who were exposed to the animated sitcom attended this interview session and provided their responses to the related questions. The first question of the interview dealt with the students' past experiences of using videos and aimed at determining the purposes for which they had used videos in their English classes. The responses to this question showed that the majority of the students

(N=11) were familiar with using videos. The purposes varied from using videos for clarifying some particular grammar points to using them in teaching vocabulary items and listening activities.

The next three questions aimed at eliciting the students' attitudes toward using *The Looney Tunes Show* in this study. The second question of the interview was *'Did you like the idea of using authentic videos (like the one used in this study) in teaching grammar?'* 15 interviewees responded affirmatively to this question, reporting that they liked using the animated sitcom in their class. Below is one of the interviewees' opinions:

> *Yes. In my opinion it was useful for learning grammar and vocabulary because we saw their use in real contexts.*

However, two of the interviewees did not hold the same view and regarded the use of authentic videos for grammar instruction as a waste of class time. The high frequency of positive responses to this question indicates that students are aware of the benefits that authentic videos can bring for them such as giving them the opportunities to see various grammar constructions and vocabulary items in context.

Another question related to the participants' views of the animated sitcom was *'Did you like the animated sitcom used in this study?'* All but one interviewees expressed their positive attitudes toward *The Looney Tunes Show*, viewing it as fun, entertaining, and useful for language learning purposes. In responding to this question two of the participants said:

> *Yes I liked it very much. It was good. It was fun and it helped me improve some English skills.*
> *Yes I liked it because it was useful and it was a new way to teach grammar.*

In addition, one of the students who were interested in the idea of using animated sitcoms suggested that there are other good animated sitcoms, such as *Kungfu Panda*, which can be used in English classes.

The final question that attempted to determine the students' views about the animated sitcom was *'What did you like/dislike about the use of the animated sitcom in the class?'* The answers to this question varied to some extent. Although the participants generally liked the use of the animated sitcom and agreed upon its effectiveness for grammar learning, some of

the participants expressed concerns with regard to utilizing these materials in class. Two of the students believed that the characters were speaking very fast, which made it difficult for them to understand what was happening. It was for this reason that the animated sitcom was shown with English subtitles so that the students would find it easier to understand. Moreover, some other students suggested that the episodes which were shown be short. This indicates that students do not want to be overwhelmed by a multitude of irrelevant information in the input and like to concentrate more on those parts of the input they are going to learn about.

The fifth question of the interview was *'Was the use of the animated sitcom effective in learning conditional sentences?'* Nearly all the students (N=15) perceived the exposure to the animated sitcom as useful and effective in learning conditional sentences, and suggested that the same approach shoud also be used to teach other grammatical structures.

The final question of the interview focused on determining whether the students would like to use animated sitcoms and other authentic videos to learn grammar in the future. Overall, students demonstrated a favorable attitude to using such authentic videos in their future English learning programs. This suggests that students were satisfied with the grammar learning experience that they experienced in this study. Below are the responses of two of the students.

> *Yes. This method of teaching grammar was helpful in associating what we learnt traditionally, like what we learnt in our schools, to an authentic learning. Watching native speakers using conditional sentences made me motivated and helped me in better grasping the subject.*
>
> *Yes, I think watching native people using grammar can be very helpful for us to learn practical grammar not just to learn it for passing our tests.*

4. Discussion

4.1. The use of the animated sitcom in learning conditional sentences

As regards the first research question, *"Does using animated sitcom have any significant effect on students' learning of conditional sentences?"*, the results of the posttest suggest that the overall learning of the conditional sentences by the participants of the experimental group improved significantly (p= .003) and they showed a gain in knowledge as a result of being exposed to the animated sitcom employed in this study. In addition, the results indicate that

the participants of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group in the posttest, i.e. the difference between their performance was found to be statistically significant (p= .03). This points to the effectiveness of the animated sitcom which was utilized in teaching conditional sentences to the experimental group. These findings are consistent with the findings of earlier studies (Dikilitas & Duvenci, 2009; Mohebbi, 2013; Washang, 2004; Yuksel, 2009), which have investigated videos and supported their effectiveness for language teaching and language learning. The findings confirm previous research (Ilin, Kutlu & Kutluay, 2013; Mohammad, 2013) in that exposure to authentic videos has a favorable effect on L2 learners' grammar learning and help them better understand grammatical structures.

The results achieved for the first research question of this study can be interpreted through the characteristics of multimedia and authentic videos and sitcoms in particular, and the advantages that they afford for language learners. One of the features of the videos that distinguishes them from other materials can be the opportunity to simultaneously hear and see the language being used. In addition, they have been argued to recreate real-life language use and equip learners with additional sources of information that cannot be materialized by using other language materials such as textbooks (Baltova, 1999). These features of videos accompanied by their presentation of paralinguistic aspects of language use, as stated by McNulty and Lazarevic (2012), can lead to better learning.

Another important feature of videos is their provision of rich input environments which are conducive for language learning. They expose learners to context-rich samples of the target language and help them perceive the language in its real context (Shrosbree, 2008). This, in turn, will enhance their understanding and render the input more comprehensible for them.

To add to the above features it can be said that authentic videos enhance language learning and contribute to the learners' involvement in the English learning process (Swaffar & Vlatten, 1999). They also have a positive effect on the students' self-confidence and have the potential to lower their inhibition regarding using the target language (Terrel, 1993).

Being characterized by the above features, the animated sitcom used in this study introduced the students to a new dimension of language learning and they were provided with opportunities to observe and notice the use of conditional sentences in the real context. By confronting learners with authentic and contextualized instances of the target language use, the animated sitcom constituted high-quality input for students which is one of the essential conditions for successful language learning. It also contained simpler language and more repetitions, which resulted in directing students' attention more effectively to conditional

sentences. Additionally, by availing learners of both linguistic and non-linguistic information and presenting context-rich input, it helped participants of the experimental group to learn conditional sentences in an effective manner and do well in the posttest.

Better performance of the experimental group in the posttest in comparison with their pretest performance can also be attributed to another feature of animated sitcoms. These types of authentic videos, apart from being a source of real language, are also a source of entertainment and enjoyment for L2 learners and have a positive effect on their motivation to language learning (Weyers, 1999). This characteristic feature of animated sitcoms turned out to be effective and beneficial for the participants of the experimental group and rendered their efforts to learn conditional sentences more fruitful.

Another factor that can be used to interpret the results of this study is the multimodality of videos. That is, they aid learners to process and comprehend information from different channels. This multimodality is in line with the multimedia learning theory (Mayor, 2001), according to which multimedia materials lead to higher cognitive activity and more efficient learning by providing multiple channels of delivery and simultaneous activation of visual as well as cognitive processing. Based on this theory, it can be argued that the animated sitcom which students of the experimental group were exposed to facilitated their cognitive and visual processing of the input and promoted their awareness of conditional sentences, which consequently led to their higher performance in the posttest. Furthermore, by providing information for learners via different channels of delivery as well as exposing them to context-rich and high-quality input, the animated sitcom helped students to build form-meaning relationships more effectively.

Motivation is a very important part of language learning. It can be said that the more motivated learners are, the more successful they are likely to be in learning an L2 (Samimy & Tabuse, 1991). The authentic videos used in this study offered students a chance to perceive the real language, allowing them to both hear and see how conditional sentences can be used in their actual context.

These findings can also be interpreted from another perspective. Larsen-Freeman (2014, p. 257) states that “grammar is not a static system of rules; grammar is a dynamic system.” In order to exploit the dynamism of grammar it needs to be taught in meaningful and psychologically authentic ways, otherwise, students will be at a loss when they attempt to make use of grammar in their communication. In order to achieve this goal, Larsen-Freeman (2003) proposed a three-dimensional grammar framework, in which form, meaning, and use are interrelated. The form dimension, according to Larsen-Freeman (2003), is related to

lexicogrammatical and morphosyntactic forms and indicates how these combine to formulate a particular construction. The meaning dimension deals with the sense of a particular grammar construction, and finally, the use dimension shows how a grammar construction is used in context. The animated sitcom that was utilized in the experimental group introduced students to all the three dimensions of conditional sentences. The English subtitles shown while playing *The Looney Tunes Show* familiarized students with the form dimension of conditional sentences and the way they are constructed. On the other hand, they provided opportunities for students to both hear and see the use of conditional sentences. By showing their actual use in a number of different contexts and situations, showing subtitled videos assisted students in finding out about the meaning as well as the use dimensions of conditional sentences. The explicit approach applied in the control group was useful in teaching the form dimension to the students. However, it was not equally useful and effective with regard to the other two dimensions.

As for the treatment in the experimental group, one can argue that seeing conditional sentences in the animated sitcom accompanied by the teacher's attempts to draw the students' attention to their use triggered noticing on the part of the students and activated what they might have already known about conditional sentences.

4.2. Students' attitudes regarding the use of the animated sitcom in grammar teaching

In relation to the second research question, *"What are the students' attitudes toward using animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences?"*, the findings of this study revealed the positive attitudes of the majority of the students regarding the grammar learning that they experienced in the experimental group. It was also found that the students held favorable attitudes to the animated sitcom to which they were exposed, seeing it as an effective and helpful resource in their learning of conditional sentences. The students' positive attitudes toward the use of authentic videos in this study affirm the previous studies of Tschirner (2001) and Weyers (1999), who have pointed to the fact that videos contribute to the learners' favorable attitudes towards the target language. By providing them with authentic and contextualized versions of the target language and offering opportunities to perceive the target language in its real context, videos also have a positive impact on learners' motivation.

Furthermore, the findings pointed to the fun and entertaining aspects of utilizing videos and animated sitcoms. Berk (2009) argued that videos generate interest in the class and make language learning fun, which can lead to improving learners' motivation and their attitudes toward both content and learning.

In addition to these findings, it must be added that the responses of the students to the interview questions indicated their awareness of the overwhelming effects of making use of videos. As reported by Swaffar and Vlatten (1997), cognitive overload and excessive amount of information to process at the same time in the working memory is a problem that L2 learners encounter when being exposed to videos. They further suggested that the most straightforward solution to this problem could be to present brief and short segments of longer videos so as to avoid being overwhelmed with too much unfamiliar information.

One limitation of the study that needs to be mentioned is connected with the sample of this study. Even though the participants of the control and experimental groups were fairly different in terms of their background, this difference did not affect the findings of the current study. The results of the proficiency test as well as the pretest administered at the beginning of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between the participants with regard to their English proficiency, neither was there any difference related to their initial knowledge of conditional sentences.

5. Conclusion

Having been inspired by the previous research into the effect of utilizing authentic multimedia and audiovisual programs for language teaching and learning (Baltova, 1999; Harmer, 2001; McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Mayor, 2001; Shrosbree, 2008; Swaffar & Vlatten, 1997; Tschirner, 2001; Weyers, 1999), the present research aimed at investigating the effect of exposing students to an English animated sitcom as an authentic type of multimedia in learning conditional sentences. Furthermore, this study investigated the students' attitudes in relation to using such authentic multimedia in English classes and particularly for the purpose of teaching grammar. The results pointed to the effectiveness of the animated sitcom in teaching conditional sentences, supporting their usefulness for language teaching purposes. Also, the results of the interview showed the participants' favorable attitudes toward using animated sitcoms in their English classes.

The findings of this study have implications for both learners and teachers. It can be stated that grammar has always been one of the most demanding and challenging aspects of learning a second language for L2 learners. The way that grammar is taught at schools and language institutes adds to this unpleasant perception by L2 learners. Quite often they memorize a number of grammatical rules being taught to them, but these memorized rules do not seem to be of much help when they attempt to communicate their messages. Using authentic videos, such as the animated sitcom utilized in the current study, can bring

considerable benefits for EFL learners. Due to the characteristics that they possess and the advantages that they provide for their users, including the presentation of real language, provision of context-rich input, assistance in processing information via multiple channels of delivery, etc., authentic videos have the potential to make the journey of language learning and particularly grammar learning more enjoyable, entertaining, and productive for L2 learners. Seeing how different grammatical structures are used in authentic videos by native English speakers can encourage L2 learners to change their view of grammar and recognize its usefulness in speaking. Rather than perceiving it as something that stands in their way of speaking fluently, they come to see it as a communicative resource that alongside with lexis and phonology can be taken advantage of to both comprehend and produce language in accurate and fluent ways. Moreover, using these kinds of videos will have a positive impact on learners' motivation to learn grammar and thus, will prod them into putting more effort in the process of grammar learning as well as English learning.

Animated sitcoms can also be beneficial in another way. The variety of contexts and situations they provide will help L2 learners to better understand the three dimensions of grammar instruction such as form, meaning, and use.

Likewise L2 learners, language teachers can also benefit from using these kinds of videos. Exploiting animated sitcoms and other videos will help teachers make their grammar instruction more effective and fruitful. In addition, by directing their students' attention to the use of a particular grammar construction in the animated sitcoms they can add a more communicative sense to their grammar lessons.

This study focused on one particular grammar structure which was conditional sentences. Future studies can turn their attention to other grammatical structures and investigate how authentic videos will influence their learning. Moreover, future research could focus on designing tasks and activities and concentrate on the effect of authentic videos on L2 learners' oral production as well as writing performance.

This study investigated the effect of using an English animated sitcom as a type of authentic multimedia in teaching grammar. Focusing on conditional sentences as an aspect of grammar to work on is considered to be one of the limitations of this study. The present study was also subject to another limitation, which was the employment of a rather small convenience sample. The researcher's inability to select the participants randomly was due to the institutional constraints. One final limitation was related to the use of a discrete-point grammar test to assess the participants' obtained grammar knowledge. This was due to the

fact that the current study was focused on learner's explicit knowledge and did not investigate their implicit knowledge.

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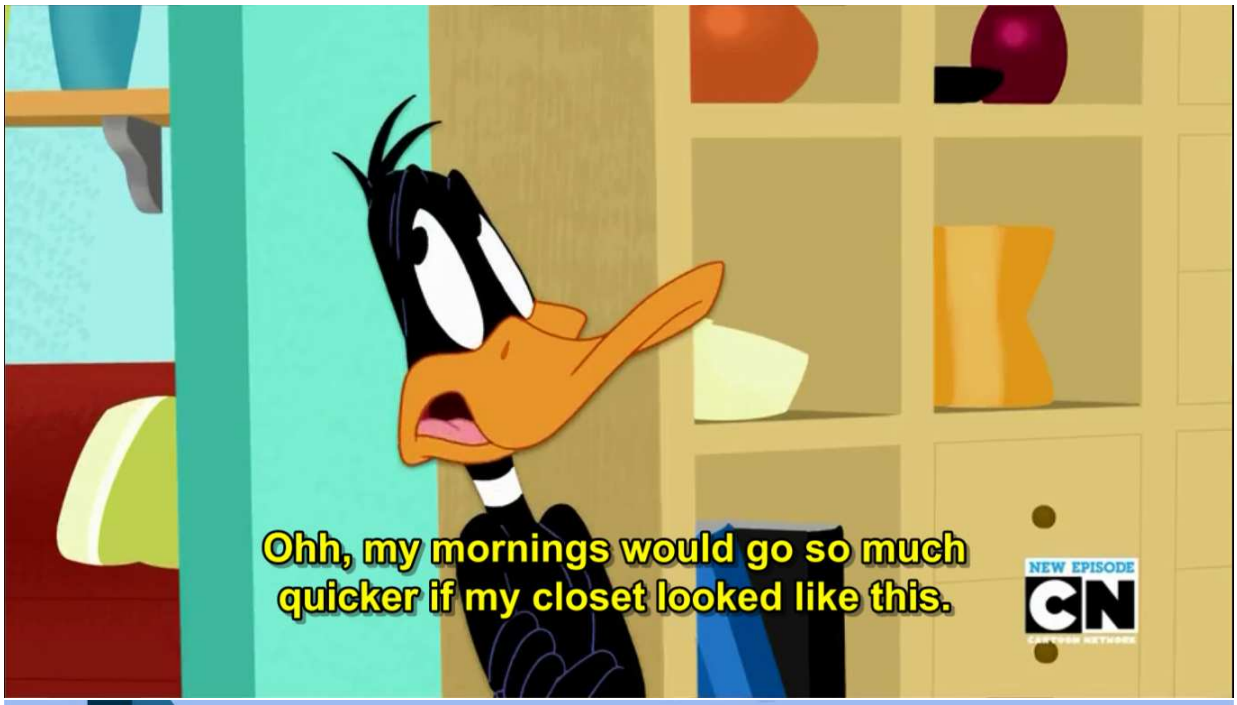
Appendix. Screen Shots of the Animated Sitcom

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QUIZLET IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: ENHANCING ACADEMIC VOCABULARY ACQUISITION OF JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examined the efficacy of using Quizlet, a popular online study tool, to develop L2 English vocabulary. A total of 9 Japanese university EFL students participated in the study. The learners studied Coxhead's (2001) academic vocabulary list (AWL) via Quizlet over the course of 10 weeks. Results of the pre- and post-tests revealed that the learners were able to make statistically significant gains. Moreover, a questionnaire administered by the researcher indicated that the students had positive perceptions of Quizlet to study L2 vocabulary. Specifically, all three constructs studied – perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and behavioral intention to use Quizlet – had mean scores greater than 4 on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating a high-level of agreement. Based on these findings, the author supports the use of Quizlet in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: Computer-Assisted Language Learning; mobile-assisted language learning; vocabulary

1. Introduction

Second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition is an essential component of foreign language learning (Beglar & Hunt, 2005). Therefore, it is important for teachers to place emphasis on L2 vocabulary that will be beneficial to EFL students according to their abilities, interests, and goals. However, the myriad of ways to study vocabulary makes it difficult for teachers to choose the most appropriate method for their learners. Research on Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) suggests that the use of technology to study vocabulary is an effective approach for foreign language students (Altiner, 2011; Azabdaftari & Mozaheb, 2012; McLean, Hogg, and Rush, 2013). In particular, as Godwin-Jones (2011) stated, the rise of smartphone ownership affords learners virtually limitless opportunities to study L2 vocabulary, "Clearly having such powerful devices available anytime, anyplace provides tremendous opportunities for educational use" (p. 3). Given this, numerous apps geared towards vocabulary learning have appeared on the

iTunes and the Google Play app stores, many of them freely available for users to download and use. However, compared with commercial online programs such as Anki and Word Engine, these types of vocabulary learning systems have received relatively less attention in L2 research, especially in the context of English teaching in Japan. Due to this gap in the literature, the primary aims of this study are to investigate whether using Quizlet supports L2 vocabulary development, examine Japanese learners' study habits of the online tool, and assess their opinions of its use in the EFL classroom.

2. Literature review

2.1. L2 vocabulary learning via CALL

Current literature indicates that studying L2 vocabulary in a CALL environment is an effective way to promote vocabulary acquisition (Al-Jarf, 2007; Kiliçkaya & Krajka, 2010; Stockwell, 2010; Thornton & Houser, 2005). McLean et al. (2013) investigated the efficacy of the online flashcard site Word Engine among Japanese university students and found that the site fostered L2 vocabulary development. While the students who used Word Engine made large gains on the vocabulary post-test, the control group which used extensive reading (ER) made little progress, illustrating the efficacy of computerized flashcards over ER to learn L2 vocabulary.

Altiner (2011) also looked at the usefulness of computer-based flashcards in her study involving university ESL students in the U.S. The participants were assessed based on Schmitt, Schmitt, and Clapham's (2001) Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT). The VLT measures learners' ability to understand English vocabulary at five different levels: the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, 10,000, and the academic vocabulary word levels. The students used Anki, a vocabulary software based on space repetition. The mean score of all the participants who completed both the pre- and post-tests increased significantly, thus showing that the software had a positive impact on the learners' L2 vocabulary.

In another study involving CALL and vocabulary learning, Al-Jarf (2007) investigated the use of Nicenet, an online course management system, in conjunction with a wide range of vocabulary websites (e.g., OneLook, Cambridge Dictionary, & English Club). In her study the Saudi Arabian university students were able to make large, statistically significant, gains from the pre-test to the post-test. Al-Jarf (2007) also found that high-usage levels of Nicenet correlated with high achievement on the post-test, demonstrating that the online course helped support L2 vocabulary acquisition.

Besides investigating the learners' L2 growth, Altiner (2011) also examined their perceptions of computerized flashcards. A questionnaire was administered in addition to interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the students' views. Overall, the learners' attitudes were quite favorable, particularly when it came to perceived usefulness and ease of use. However, there were a few downsides as well. The learners stated that it would have been better if Anki included more information on the target words such as pronunciation, pictures, or L1 definitions. As noted by the researcher, some students regularly used electronic or online dictionaries for clarification in their L1. In addition, other learners expressed that a "typing" feature would have helped them better remember the spelling of new words as opposed to simply reading the flashcards.

Learner attitudes towards CALL were explored in Al-Jarf's (2007) study as well. According to post-treatment questionnaires, all of the participants found Nicenet to be useful and fun. In addition, the online medium was found to have increased motivation and improved the rapport between the teachers and students and among the students themselves.

2.2. L2 vocabulary learning via MALL

While CALL and MALL environments both utilize technology to enhance language learning, the ubiquity of mobile learning sets it apart from traditional computing. As a result, MALL has the potential to afford learners much more flexibility compared with CALL (Ballance, 2012). This was confirmed by Lu (2008) in a study which looked into vocabulary learning via mobile phones and short message service (SMS) with Taiwanese high school EFL students. According to the results of the closed- and open-ended questionnaires, students' views of MALL were positive, with the learners viewing the method as convenient and interesting. In their comments to the open-ended section of the survey, nearly one-third of the students remarked positively on the ubiquity of the method.

Similarly to Lu (2008), Azabdaftari and Mozaheb's (2012) study of mobile-based flashcards with Iranian university students resulted in positive findings. The researchers determined two positive themes based on the interviews with the participants, namely, the convenience of the flashcards in allowing the students to study anytime and anywhere as well as the entertainment factor of using the cards. In addition, over a quarter of them commented on the novelty of studying with mobile devices. In the context of Japan, Stockwell (2010) investigated the usage patterns and perceptions of students using computers and mobile devices to learn L2 English vocabulary. The 3-year study focused on a vocabulary activity system called *VocabTutor* which was integrated into Moodle. The university students involved

had the choice of using the online tool on a PC or their own mobile devices. While all but one of the learners used computers more often, the one that preferred using a mobile device did so because of its ubiquity.

Although mobile devices provide distinct advantages, they also come with their own downsides. One-third of the students in Lu's (2008) research stated that studying L2 vocabulary via MALL was troublesome. For instance, some of the participants complained about having to open messages one at a time. The learners in Azabdaftari and Mozaheb's (2012) study stated a few negatives as well. To be specific, small screen size was an issue for some of the students as was the high cost of the Internet when using mobile devices. Similar disadvantages were detailed in Stockwell's (2010) study, in which the majority of the learners did not make use of their mobile phones to learn English vocabulary. Stockwell (2010) concluded that this was partly due to the perceived costs associated with owning a mobile phone as well as the inconvenience of mobile interfaces. However, as Ballance (2012) noted, Stockwell (2010) collected data prior to the widespread proliferation of smartphones; thus, many of the issues related to mobile phone use in his study have largely been resolved (Martinez & Schmitt, 2010).

MALL has been found to be a successful way to learn L2 vocabulary. In their 2012 study, Azabdaftari and Mozaheb found that mobile devices could be used to improve students' L2 English vocabulary. The researchers compared the efficacy of mobile devices versus traditional paper flashcards to enhance L2 vocabulary development. The mean score of the group which studied vocabulary via mobile devices was much higher than that of the paper flashcard group, thereby demonstrating the effectiveness of mobile learning. Lu's 2008 study also examined the potential of MALL to enhance L2 vocabulary among Taiwanese EFL learners. During the first week of her study, a group of students reviewed the target vocabulary using their mobile phones while the second group used print materials. In the following week, the groups switched methods. The results of the study revealed that the MALL and print groups both made statistically significant progress; however, the mobile phone group was able to make greater gains on the post- and delayed post-tests.

2.3. Quizlet in the EFL classroom

With over 100 million user-created study sets and 40 million users every month (Quizlet, 2016), Quizlet is one of the most widely used flashcard systems available. While teachers and students can use the software on a PC, it also offers a free mobile app for use on both the

Apple iOS and Google Android mobile platforms. Quizlet offers several ways to study vocabulary, which are detailed in the following table.

Table 1. Features of Quizlet website and mobile app.

Feature	**Website**	**Mobile app**
Word lists	+	+
Flashcards	+	+
Speller	+	
Learn	+	+
Test	+	
Scatter game	+	+
Gravity game	+	

It is important to note that some of the features on the website are not available on the mobile app. Specifically, the spelling, the test and the gravity game features are not included. Moreover, the app offers students less information about their progress and performance on each vocabulary list compared with the website.

In a recent study, Jackson III (2015) found that Quizlet was favored over Educreations, a mobile application that lets teachers create and share instructional videos, by university students in the United Arab Emirates. In his study, Quizlet was used in conjunction with Educreations to help promote vocabulary learning while using both L1 and L2. Three reasons were cited for the preference for Quizlet: 1) receiving a mark/grade after each study session, 2) the availability of L1 translations, and 3) the games. In addition to studying the learners' perceptions, Jackson III (2015) looked into their study habits outside of class. He found that the majority of them studied the target vocabulary with Quizlet for the recommended amount of time, i.e., 10-15 minutes each night, indicating that most of students took advantage of the additional opportunities to study L2 with the online tool. This is significant because learners often exhibit a high level of unpredictability and variability in online environments (Fischer, 2012; Taylor, 2006).

Chien (2015) also found that EFL students had positive views towards Quizlet. In her study the Taiwanese university students used one of the three online programs: Quizlet, Study Stack and Flashcard Exchange (currently Cram.com). Group interviews were then conducted

with the participants to gauge their views towards the programs. According to her findings, the students enjoyed using Quizlet over the other two programs due to the activities it offered, specifically, Speller (Figure 1), Test, and Space Race (currently named Gravity). Given the favorable perceptions of Quizlet in the studies by Jackson III (2015) and Chien (2015), and because the mobile app is freely available to download and use as opposed to Anki and Word Engine, Quizlet was chosen as the program for this study.

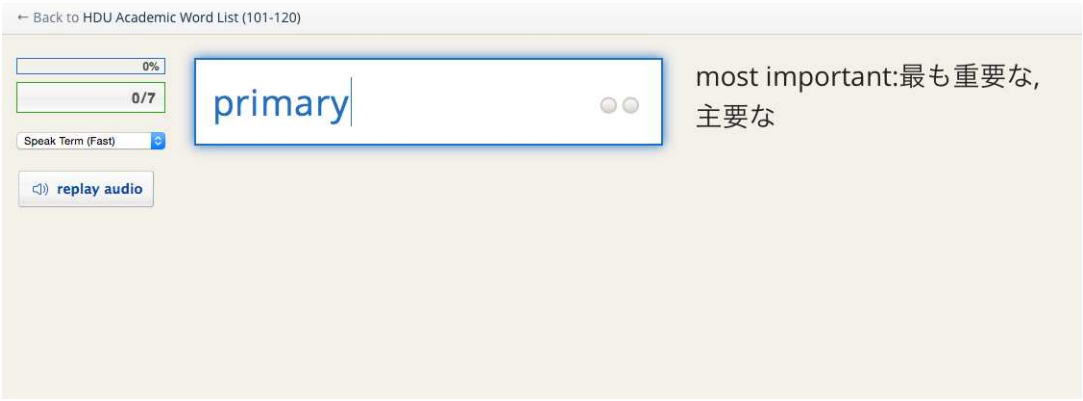

Figure 1. Speller program on the Quizlet website.

To sum up, learning L2 vocabulary via CALL and MALL has been shown to be successful, with learners having favorable views towards their incorporation in the EFL classroom. Such programs as Anki, Word Engine, and VocabTutor have been shown to empirically improve learners' ability to acquire new vocabulary. In this regard, Quizlet seems to be another promising online tool. However, little is known about its effectiveness in the EFL classroom to support L2 vocabulary development. The only exception is Lees' (2014) comparison study of Quizlet versus paper flashcards where he found that the methods were comparable in terms of efficacy. However, the data in the study was taken from a single 90-minute class, thereby minimizing the relevance of the results. Thus, this study seeks to determine whether Quizlet can promote L2 vocabulary acquisition, understand Japanese students' study habits of the tool, and measure their opinions of its use.

3. The study

3.1. Research questions

Given the aforementioned literature, the following research questions were examined in this study:

1) Did Quizlet promote L2 vocabulary development?
2) To what extent did the students make use of Quizlet outside of class?
3) Did the students prefer using Quizlet via computer or smartphone?
4) What were the students' perceptions of Quizlet to learn L2 vocabulary?

3.2. Participants

Convenience sampling was used in this study. A total of nine second-year students participated. Initially, ten students began the treatment but one of them stopped attending the class halfway through the semester. All of the learners belonged to the Faculty of Foreign Studies at a university in Japan. They were among the highest level of English learners within the faculty based on their TOEIC exam scores in the previous academic year. All of the students were enrolled in a course taught by the researcher which met three times a week during the 15-week spring semester of 2015.

3.3. Target vocabulary

Coxhead's (2001) Academic Word List (AWL) was chosen as the target vocabulary for several reasons. As aforementioned, the students in the study were among the most highly proficient L2 English learners in the faculty. Therefore, a sufficiently challenging list had to be selected. In addition, most of the students had already studied the words at the 2,000-level during their 1st year at university; thus, as many researchers have recommended (Coxhead, 2000; Nation & Hwang, 1995; Read, 2004), it was appropriate for them to learn more advanced words beyond the General Service List (GSL) or the 2,000 most frequent English words based on a written corpus (West, 1953). Lastly, a few of the students expressed interest in studying abroad, with two of them registered to take the TOEFL exam at the time. As a result, the study of the AWL would support these academically-oriented learners in their desire to get a high score on the exam or other standardized English assessments such as IELTS and study at a foreign university. As opposed to Altiner's (2011) study in which only 200 words from the AWL were introduced, all 570 terms were covered during the study.

3.4. Procedure

Version 1 of the 30-item Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) was administered at the academic vocabulary level as a pre-test. Following the assessment, the ten-week study began, with the students receiving a brief explanation and demonstration of Quizlet's features to increase familiarity. With the exception of the last two classes in which a total of 30 words were

covered, individual sub-lists consisting of 20 words were then introduced to the learners each class (see Figure 2 for example). Sub-lists were introduced based on frequency, with the most frequent words studied first and the least frequent words studied in the later stages of the treatment. The learners were given ten minutes during the beginning of class to study each sub-list. Students were told they could use the desktop computers in the classrooms, their own smartphones, or a combination of the two. They were not pushed to use one platform over the other. Subsequently, other learning activities were conducted, unrelated to AWL. The learners were encouraged to study the vocabulary outside of class but were not required to do so. After the treatment was complete, version 2 of VLT was taken by the students to measure Quizlet's impact on the learners. According to Schmitt et al. (2001), versions 1 and 2 of VLT provide valid results and produce similar assessment scores, thereby making them effective as pre- and post-test measures.

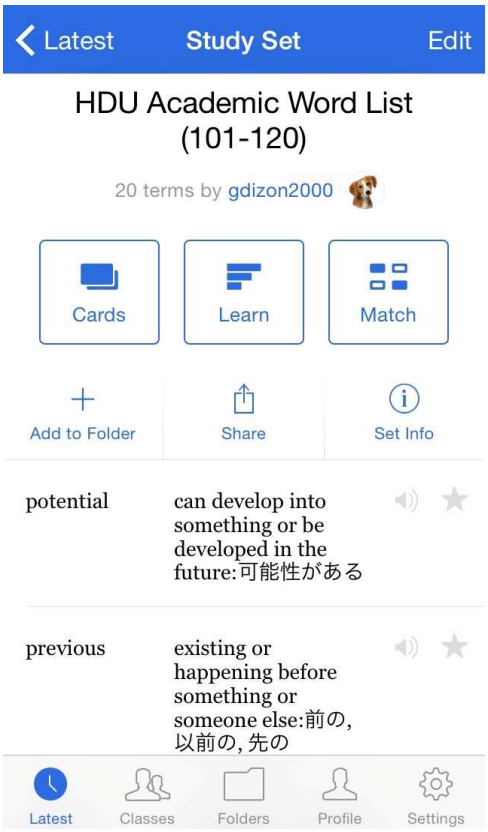

Figure 2. Sample AWL sub-list on the mobile app.

3.5. Questionnaire

A 12-item internet-based questionnaire was created by the researcher in order to learn the students' views of Quizlet (see survey at https://surveymonkey.com/r/G8GFD7X). The first two items of the questionnaire pertained to the students' study preferences as well as their study habits outside of class. The subsequent ten items were based on the technology acceptance model (TAM), a research framework by Davis (1989), which aims at measuring a user's behavioral intention (BI) to use a given technology according to two primary factors: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). According to Davis (1989), PU is "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" (p. 320), while PEOU is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (p. 320). PU and PEOU work together to determine a user's BI, with other external variables sometimes also considered (Figure 2).

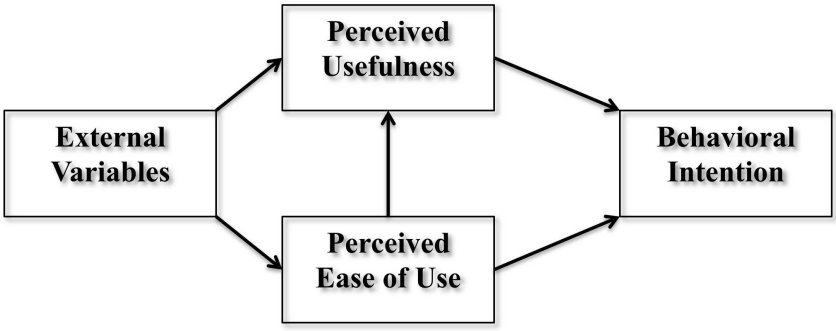

Figure 3. Technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989).

The items were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The reliability of the ten items was verified with Cronbach's alpha (α) using SPSS. Each variable or sub-scale had a value greater than 0.7 (PU, α= .750; PEOU: α= .793; BI, α= .923), indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency. Furthermore, the correlational relationships between the three variables were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), with all three of the relationships having a high positive correlation (Table 2).

Table 2. Pearson's correlation matrix for PU, PEOU, and BI.

	PU	PEOU	BI
PU	1		
PEOU	.843**	1	
BI	.809**	.852**	1

Note. ** p<.01, two-tailed.

The online survey was administered via SurveyMonkey after the post-test was completed. Students were informed by the researcher that their participation was voluntary and that completion of the questionnaire or lack thereof would have zero effect on their grades. They were also told the results would remain anonymous, i.e., their names and IP addresses would not be recorded. The surveys were completed outside of class and as a result did not interfere with instruction whatsoever.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. RQ#1

Table 3 shows the students' mean scores from versions 1 and 2 of the VLT, i.e., their pre- and post-test results. The average score of the students increased by more than three points from the pre-test to the post-test, demonstrating a moderate gain. A paired t-test was performed to determine whether the improvement was significant. The results revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test means at the 0.05 level, suggesting that the students' vocabulary scores significantly improved due to the Quizlet treatment ($t(8)= -2.64$, $p= 0.03$).

Table 3. Results of the pre- and post-tests.

	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
Mean	20.33	23.56	3.23
SD	5.55	5.34	3.67

These findings indicate that using Quizlet did in fact support L2 vocabulary enhancement. Previous studies by McLean et al. (2013) and Altiner (2011) have found similar positive results when incorporating commercial computer- and mobile-based programs such Word Engine and Anki. However, these applications are not completely without cost. Anki charges a fee to download the mobile app and Word Engine requires a paid subscription beyond the 7-

day trial. This is an important factor to consider as teachers and students may not have the financial resources to purchase software or subscriptions.

4.2. RQ#2

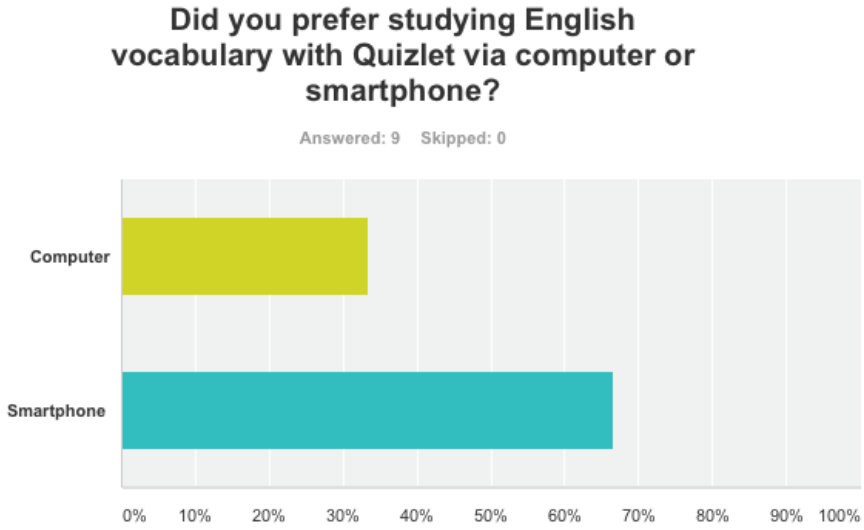

Figure 3. Quizlet study preferences.

Figure 3 illustrates the learners' preferences when using Quizlet. Six out of the nine students liked using their smartphones instead of desktop computers in the classroom. This is despite the fact that the website version of Quizlet offered students more features and information about their progress. Walters (2012) asserts that this preference for mobile technology epitomizes the changing way in which users access the web and other online services:

> The transition from a PC or notebook to the 'always on' smart phone or tablet is not primarily about the smaller, more portable, mobile device. It is rather about the fact that computing services are now available virtually wherever and whenever the user desires them (p. 2).

As Lu (2008) found in her study of mobile devices and L2 vocabulary, ubiquity is one the most important advantages that smartphones have over traditional study methods. Therefore, teachers must take this into account when choosing between activities that incorporate CALL and MALL versus paper-based tasks. In particular, mobile-based activities afford students more opportunities to study the L2 practically anywhere outside of class, thus giving them more control over their own learning (Ballance, 2012).

4.3. RQ#3

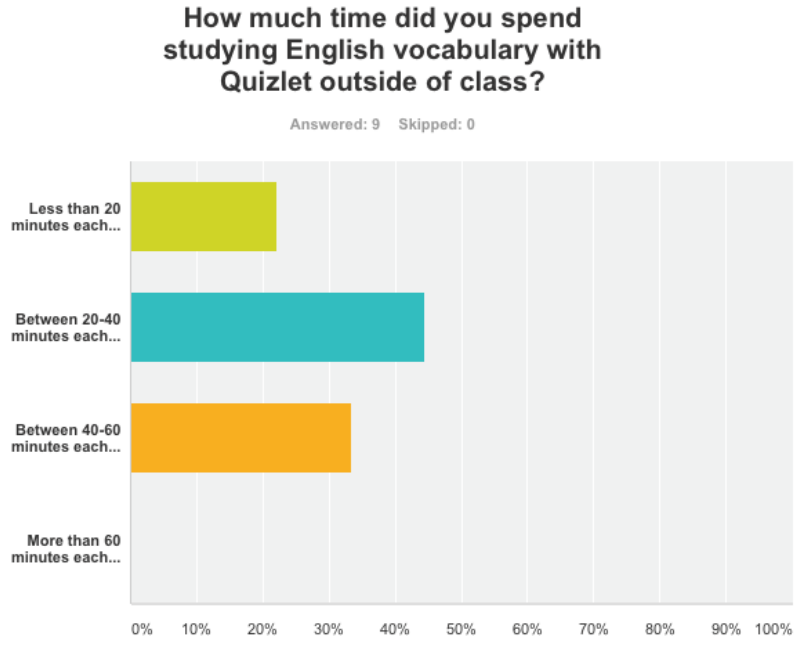

Figure 4. Amount of time studied outside of class.

Figure 4 shows the amount of time the students spent outside of class using Quizlet to study vocabulary. The majority of them (n= 7) spent a considerable amount of time in order to study AWL, i.e., between twenty minutes to one hour each week. None of the learners used more than one hour a week to study the target vocabulary. These results demonstrate that most of the learners in this study made a concerted effort to take advantage of the additional opportunities to study the L2, which is similar to the results found by Jackson III (2015). This is not always the case, as Taylor (2006) asserts that students learning in MALL environments are "becoming more independent, more assured, and consequently more unpredictable" (p. 27). Similarly, CALL tasks often result in variability between learners, especially when it comes to internet-based activities (Fischer, 2012). As a result, it is essential for teachers to constantly provide guidance throughout the learning process in order for students to effectively leverage the advantages of computer- and mobile-based environments.

4.4 RQ#4

The mean and SD of the three TAM variables are shown above in Table 4. All three of the constructs had means higher than 4, suggesting that the learners had favorable views towards the use of Quizlet in the EFL classroom, which is in line with the findings of Jackson III (2015) and Chien (2015). In particular, PU was seen as a distinctive benefit. Out of the ten

items, statement two, "Using Quizlet improved my English vocabulary," had the highest level of agreement (M= 4.67). Item one, "I was able to learn English vocabulary more quickly with Quizlet," and item four, "I think Quizlet was useful in my class," also scored highly with the exact same mean (4.56). According to the results of the survey, it is clear that the students perceived Quizlet to be beneficial in terms of their L2 development. These findings reinforce previous studies which have investigated learner perceptions of computerized and mobile flashcard systems (Al-Jarf, 2007; Altiner, 2011; Azabdaftari & Mozaheb, 2012; Lu, 2008).

Table 4. Mean and SD values of PU, PEOU, and BI.

Construct	Mean	SD
PU	4.5	0.7
PEOU	4.4	0.8
BI	4.4	0.6

5. Conclusion

In short, Quizlet was found to be a useful approach to studying L2 vocabulary as shown by the significant gains the students were able to make on their VLT scores. Equally as important, the learners in the study viewed the program as a useful and easy to use method for studying vocabulary and indicated that they would like to continue using it in the future. Also, the results revealed that the students preferred using their smartphones, illustrating the shift towards mobile technology. Lastly, the majority of the students spent a significant amount of time using Quizlet outside of class, further demonstrating its value as a L2 tool.

Based on these findings, the author strongly supports the use of Quizlet to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom. Teachers should be aware of the benefits of using Quizlet and other internet-based study tools and examine whether incorporating CALL or MALL is appropriate for one's teaching context.

Despite the positive results that were revealed through this study, it is not without its shortcomings. First, the small sample size limits the generalizations that can be made about the efficacy and perceptions of Quizlet. Also, a delayed post-test was not administered to the students. Therefore, it is not known whether they were able to retain the vocabulary they had learned after the treatment was completed. Lastly, a control group was not implemented; consequently, it would be worthwhile if a future study compared the efficacy of Quizlet to paper-based vocabulary learning methods and/or other online study tools.

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Appendix 1

Version 1 of the Vocabulary Levels Test – Academic Vocabulary

1 benefit		1 achieve	
2 labor	_____ work	2 conceive	_____ change
3 percent	_____ part of 100	3 grant	_____ connect together
4 principle	_____ general idea used to guide one's actions	4 link	_____ finish successfully
5 source		5 modify	
6 survey		6 offset	
1 element	_____ money for a special purpose	1 convert	
2 fund	_____ skilled way of doing something	2 design	_____ keep out
3 layer	_____ study of the meaning of life	3 exclude	_____ stay alive
4 philosophy		4 facilitate	_____ change from one thing into another
5 proportion		5 indicate	
6 technique		6 survive	
1 consent		1 anticipate	
2 enforcement	_____ total	2 compile	_____ control something skillfully
3 investigation	_____ agreement or permission	3 convince	_____ expect something will happen
4 parameter	_____ trying to find information about something	4 denote	_____ produce books and newspapers
5 sum		5 manipulate	
6 trend		6 publish	
1 decade		1 equivalent	
2 fee	_____ 10 years	2 financial	_____ most important
3 file	_____ subject of a discussion	3 forthcoming	_____ concerning sight
4 incidence	_____ money paid for services	4 primary	_____ concerning money
5 perspective		5 random	
6 topic		6 visual	
1 colleague		1 alternative	
2 erosion	_____ action against the law	2 ambiguous	_____ last or most important
3 format	_____ wearing away gradually	3 empirical	_____ something different that can be chosen
4 inclination	_____ shape or size of something	4 ethnic	_____ concerning people from a certain nation
5 panel		5 mutual	
6 violation		6 ultimate	

Appendix 2

Version 2 of the Vocabulary Levels Test – Academic Vocabulary

1 area	
2 contract	_____ written agreement
3 definition	_____ way of doing something
4 evidence	
5 method	_____ reason for believing something is or is not true
6 role	

1 alter	
2 coincide	_____ change
3 deny	_____ say something is not true
4 devote	
5 release	_____ describe clearly and exactly
6 specify	

1 debate	
2 exposure	_____ plan
3 integration	_____ choice
4 option	_____ joining something into a whole
5 scheme	
6 stability	

1 correspond	
2 diminish	_____ keep
3 emerge	_____ match or be in agreement with
4 highlight	
5 invoke	_____ give special attention to something
6 retain	

1 access	
2 gender	_____ male or female
3 implementation	_____ study of the mind
4 license	_____ entrance or way in
5 orientation	
6 psychology	

1 bond	
2 channel	_____ make smaller
3 estimate	_____ guess the number or size of something
4 identify	
5 mediate	_____ recognizing and naming a person or thing
6 minimize	

1 accumulation	
2 edition	_____ collecting things over time
3 guarantee	_____ promise to repair a broken product
4 media	
5 motivation	_____ feeling a strong reason or need to do something
6 phenomenon	

1 explicit	
2 final	_____ last
3 negative	_____ stiff
4 professional	_____ meaning `no' or `not'
5 rigid	
6 sole	

1 adult	
2 exploitation	_____ end
3 infrastructure	_____ machine used to move people or goods
4 schedule	
5 termination	_____ list of things to do at certain times
6 vehicle	

1 abstract	
2 adjacent	_____ next to
3 controversial	_____ added to
4 global	_____ concerning the whole world
5 neutral	
6 supplementary	

WEB-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING PERCEPTION AND PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The significance of learners' personality in language learning/teaching contexts has often been cited in literature but few studies have scrutinized the role it can play in technology-oriented language classes. In modern language teaching/learning contexts, personality differences are important and should be taken into account. This study determined university students' introvert/extrovert personality types and examined their perception/ attitudes towards web-based language learning. The participants of the study who were selected through purposive sampling were 40 BA students of EFL, 22 female and 18 male. The participants attended blended classes that incorporated use of the Internet (Edublogs). Quantitative data were collected via the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (1975) and two modified web-based language learning attitude/perception questionnaires (Gilmore, 1998; Slate, Manuel, & Brinson, 2002). Interviews were conducted to reveal insights concerning the advantages/disadvantages of integrating use of the Internet from the participants' perspectives. T-test analyses did not indicate significant differences in attitudes between extroverts and introverts. Qualitative results indicated most of the participants considered internal, external, and psychological factors associated with the Internet use to be motivating, exciting, and stimulating. The study has implications for teachers and practitioners, particularly in blended, language learning classrooms.

Keywords: introvert/extrovert; personality types; web-based language learning

1. Introduction

In current educational contexts, the use of technology is growing. Today most college students are familiar with digital tools. Ease of access has also facilitated the implementation of technology in educational contexts. Internet resources are invaluable for language teaching

and learning because they can provide authentic contexts for language learners. Moreover, use of the Internet enables multilateral relationships with others from every corner of the world, including native and indigenous language users. Utilization of Internet resources in language teaching and learning can change traditional teaching. Traditional pedagogies often oblige students to follow a general method even though they have different learning styles, on the other hand, web-based learning assists students to follow their own styles and strategies in learning a skill or doing a language-related task. For this reason, personality types and attitudes of language learners may play a significant role in effective implementation of technology in language learning.

There are some studies that report language learners' positive attitudes towards the use of technology in their language learning process (Levine, Ferenz, & Reves, 2000). Students become motivated when they have classes integrating traditional and computer-mediated pedagogies. They appreciate opportunities for interaction and for learning some computer skills (Warschauer, 1996). In another report Jones (1992) states that familiarity with computer and Internet skills enhanced positive attitudes towards the use of technology. Recent studies in applied linguistics indicate that autonomy of language learners is important to their achievement and may be increased via computer-mediated instruction and interaction with both teachers and classmates. Brajcich (2000) also emphasizes the importance of autonomy and believes that students can develop this worthwhile and beneficial feature through web-based learning whether individually or cooperatively.

Personality types and attitudes of students also affect achievement. Incompatibility of personality types with chosen methods may result in decreased learning. Early attention to individual differences was motivated by the need to identify which learners should be taught English by devising such tests as the Modern Language Aptitude Battery by Carroll and Sapon, (1959). This test was expected to predict which learners would be both versatile and successful. Recent studies continue to explore possible links between learners' personalities and differential success.

Personality type has been discussed from different vantage points. It has been viewed as pertaining to different forms of information processing or learning styles (Messick, 1994). The effect of individual differences and studies related to the role of individual differences (IDs) has a long tradition in second language studies/teaching and everybody would certainly accept the crucial influence of IDs like aptitude, motivation, or learning styles on the success and mastering of foreign language learning (Dornyei, 2005).

However, in spite of the important role of individual differences in SLA, foregrounding those differences has been marginalized in the realm of language learning and teaching (Ellis, 2008). Individual differences, including their effect on the cognitive processes involved in language acquisition, have received little attention from researchers. This may be attributed to the overriding concerns of language researchers and practitioners with universalistic facets of language acquisition.

Personality can be considered as those characteristics of a person that "account for a consistent patterns of feelings, thinking and behaving" (Pervin and John, 2001, p. 4, as cited in Dornyei, 2005). It is generally perceived of as made up of a series of traits such as Introversion / Extroversion and stability/neuroticism (Ellis, 2008). Introversion/Extraversion have received more attention than the other personality types in the sphere of language teaching and learning. This could be the case because it is fairly easy to provide reliable measures of these traits and there are some clear commonsense relationships between extraversion/introversion and language use (Furnham, 1990). This study aims to investigate the relationship between the two personality types, Introversion/ Extraversion, and web-based language learning. The focus is on the two personality types' attitudes towards web-based language learning.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) points to the potential of the World Wide Web to allow learners to experience liberatory autonomy. He maintains that teachers can foster liberatory autonomy meaningfully by:

- encouraging learners to assume, with the help of their teachers, the role of miniethnographers so that they can investigate and understand how language rules and language use are socially structured, and also explore whose interests these rules serve;
- asking learners to write diaries or journal entries about issues that directly engage their sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world, and continually reflect on their observations and the observations of their peers;
- helping them form learning communities where learners develop into unified, socially cohesive, mutually supportive groups seeking self-awareness and self-improvement;
- providing opportunities for learners to explore the unlimited possibilities offered by on-line services on the World Wide Web and bringing back to the class their own topics for discussion and their own perspectives on those topics. (p. 547-548)

As Bueno-Alastuey and Lopez Pe´rez (2013) point it out,

> [r]esearch on blended learning has mainly focused on outlining the advantages and disadvantages of some blended courses. However, the perceptions of students on different courses, regarding the usefulness of technologies for the development of the different skills and areas of language, have hardly been explored. Knowing students' opinions and perceptions of

> the potential of particular blended learning experiences and their contribution to the development of the different skills and areas of language (and whether those perceptions vary depending on the technologies used) can provide valuable information for blended learning design and implementation. (p.2)

According to previously conducted studies, there are some advantages for web-based and computer-mediated language learning. In a study by Schoepp and Erogul (2001), the findings revealed the effectiveness of computer technology on the development of learners' independence and autonomy and also the development of reflective language learning. Working in an interactive environment and "learning-by-doing" leads to increased confidence. According to Pow (1999), learners appreciate group work when experiencing online interactive activities.

However, few studies have made an attempt to investigate the potential differences between different personality variables and their attitudes towards web-based language learning. The current study seeks to examine the difference between two personality types' (Introvert & Extrovert) attitudes towards blended language teaching classes. The second phase of the study seeks to determine participants' attitudes towards the blended classes using qualitative methods.

2. The study

2.1. Participants

The study was conducted at Allame Tabatabe'I University in Iran and the participants of the study who were selected through purposive sampling were 40 B.A students of EFL, 22 females and 18 males. The students were in two classes with 20 students in each, taught by one teacher. One of the classes was held in the morning at 8:00 AM and the other one was held at 3:00 PM. Students were in their fourth term of undergraduate studies and their proficiency level was pre-advanced. Participants were familiar with the use of computers and the Internet as they were expected to do their assignments using online resources and tools. The instructor was a seasoned language teacher, familiar with the use of technology in language teaching and learning.

2.2. Instruments and materials

In order to identify the personality type of the participants, the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (1975) was employed. The questionnaire was made up of 90 items with Yes or No answers. The questionnaire was in English and a Persian translation was attached

to make some difficult English items understandable. Two modified web-based language learning attitude/perception questionnaires (Gilmore, 1998; Slate, et al., 2002) were employed. All participants experienced a blended language-learning course. The course included traditional classes and Internet-based classes. The main concern of the course was to teach writing skills. Edublogs were used in order to send questions and answers to the previously queried questions (see Appendix 1).

2.3. Procedure

Before collecting the desired data the participants were provided with the conditions in which they could experience language learning through the Internet from the beginning of the term, the teacher cooperated with the researcher by incorporating Edublogs in his classes. The teacher instructed the students in face-to-face classes but they were expected to complete some assignments via the Internet. During the term they had ten sessions of work online. At the end of the term the teacher asked the students to fill in the questionnaires. As mentioned above, the main instruments for collecting the data were Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (1975) and two modified web-based language learning attitude/perception questionnaires (Gilmore, 1998; Slate, et al., 2002). In order to avoid having mixed data we attached the attitude/perception questionnaires to the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), so it would be easy to identify each personality type's attitudes towards web-based language learning. The obtained data were submitted to SPSS for statistical analysis and find the descriptive data. The t-test was applied to see if there was a significant difference between the two groups' attitudes toward web-based language learning.

In order to obtain richer and more sensitive data, the researchers selected 10 participants randomly to take part in the qualitative part of the study, five introvert and five extrovert. Predetermined and structured interviews were conducted including six items regarding the role of language teachers and the Internet and also psychological effect of using the Internet, if any, on participants. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were audio-taped for transcription and analyzed to inform our understanding of the participants' perceptions regarding the role of the Internet in language learning.

3. Results

After collecting the data the researchers used the t-test to compare the difference between the two groups' attitudes towards the target feature of the study. The computed and analyzed data

revealed that both of the groups' perception towards the use of web in their classes was positive. The descriptive statistics show both of the groups have the same perception of the web.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the groups' attitudes towards web-based language learning.

	personality	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. deviation**
attitude	Introvert	17	3.23	.17
	Extrovert	22	3.25	.41

As Table 1 reveals, the mean of the groups, M= 3.23 and 3.25, is similar. However, in order to examine none/significance of the difference between the mean of the groups we need to analyze the computed data through use of the t-test. The following table (2) presents the result of the t-test.

Table 2. T-test results comparing extroverts' and extroverts' attitudes towards web-based language learning.

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	1.48	.23	-.27	37	.78

The results of the groups' attitudes appear in Table 2, indicating that there is no significant difference between introverts' (M=3.23, SD=.17) and extroverts' (M=3.25, SD=.41) attitudes (t (37)=-.27, p=.23) towards the role of the Internet in language learning. According to the obtained data both groups have positive attitudes towards the use of the Internet in their classes. Both personality types, introvert and extrovert, appreciate the use of the Internet in blended language classes.

The above-mentioned results may provide an inspiring message to language practitioners and teachers who encounter language learners with considerably different personalities adding to the complexity of determining best practices. Extroverts are perceived to be more sociable and more concerned with what is happening around them while introverts are less sociable and too reserved to join social activities. Language teachers may use computer-mediated instruction to provide all learners, regardless of their personality type, to have access to optimal learning conditions. When language teachers encounter students that

rarely take part in classroom activities, Internet-mediated instruction can help provide opportunities for collaboration and interaction.

Next the researchers attempted to learn more about the relationship between individual personality differences and web/internet based language learning. Some of the participants were selected randomly to participate in interviews.

3.1. Qualitative analysis

During this phase of the study, ten participants were randomly selected to be interviewed. Five of them were introverts and five extroverts. The questions asked were extracted from the questionnaire that was used in the quantitative part of the study. However, some parts of the questions were modified in order to elicit richer and more sensitive data from the participants. The interview procedure took about thirty minutes for each of the participants. The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed for detailed analysis of the attitudes of the participants and the role of the Internet in their learning process. Selected responses follow:

1. Is the Internet easier to use than the library? Which one do you prefer?

> Participant: I personally use Internet when I search some topics or I want to write about something I prefer modern technology rather than traditional one. I think using library is difficult for me maybe it's time consuming I cannot find any suitable source and there is no one to help us to find suitable source in library. We can have a lot of source and they are more available than searching in library among many books.

Most participants indicated they preferred to use the Internet as opposed to the library. Participants mentioned: *difficulty in the use and access to library, time consuming features of the library, lack of suitable sources and lack of enough guides in the library, inadequate libraries in the vicinity of the participants, and lack of time of the students.* The aforementioned factors were identified as demerits of using library from the participants' point of view. On the other hand, two of the participants acknowledged the *reliability* of sources in the library.

2. Do you find the Internet as informative as language teachers? Why?

> Participant: I think the Internet is in some ways more helpful than language teachers. Maybe you have something in your mind that you want to search about that points in the internet maybe you cannot transfer what you mean to language teachers and not expect them to help you because of psychological barriers. But if you know that what you want to search what do you want to get from this part, so you should know and search better and you should find better

> through the Internet rather than language teachers. But in other ways it's absolutely that language teachers can help too. But I think I can get more results from internet rather than language teachers.

The above excerpt indicates the participant's positive perception of the Internet. According to some of the participants, *psychological barriers* may prevent them from eliciting needed information from their teachers. On the other hand, some of them said that teachers can be more specific than the Internet i.e. teachers can better pinpoint the confusing issues faced by students. Positive traits including *access to varieties of information and being up to date* were attributed to the Internet. All in all, the participants seemed to have similar attitudes towards the effectiveness of teachers and the Internet.

3. Do you like to take blended English classes? Why?

> Participant: nowadays I think if we go through the new technology and if we will adopt ourselves with this world so we know that most of the world, most of the classes will help with technology and using internet than the traditional one. But maybe some teachers or depending on each student's situation or talent maybe some traditional ways help students.

The majority of the students expressed positive attitudes toward having blended classes and few opposed their use. In the excerpt above, the student implies that both language learners and teachers need to keep abreast of the latest development in technology and their use in education. The motivational effect of using the Internet was noted, while the role of language teachers in improving conversation was highlighted by two of the participants.

4. Do you think that working with the Internet will be enjoyable and stimulating? Can you elaborate your answer?

> Participant: I like to learn English with the Internet. Whenever for example we search something in the Internet and you are not satisfied you search more and more but when you ask a teacher and you are not satisfied you can't ask again and again. It is a limitation. When I look for information in the Internet I feel easy and not under pressure or stress.

The majority of the participants acknowledged that in comparison to language teachers in traditional classes, the Internet does not restrict the options at their disposal for seeking answers to problematic language points. Other positive factors from the participants' perspective included *provision of stress free and low pressure atmosphere* and *up-to-date and new information*. One of the participants was averse to using the Internet in language classes.

5. Does the Internet motivate you to learn English? How do you find it motivating/demotivating?

> Participant: Yes. It is motivating because it explains very small points I think. For example I see a sentence in net and I don't know about the grammatical structure, then it motivates me to go and learn about it and I feel stress free. Nowadays I believe that we can have interaction and connection with native speakers.

The participant viewed such factors as *access to native speakers, real data, variety of sources, getting very subtle and informative points about lexical improvement and grammatical structure, and low pressure* to be the motivational features of the Internet. Conversely, some of the participants were averse to the use of the Internet, stating that in face-to-face teacher-directed classes they experience competition which improves their performance. Advocates of face-to-face only language classes believe that provision of *rewards* and *positive responses* from language teachers provide an advantage for language learners.

6. Does the Internet help you to work with your classmates?

> Participant: Not at all. I don't like to have any connection with my friends through the Internet. I prefer the face-to-face interactions and cooperation.

Due to the fact that most of the Internet cooperation was accomplished through writing, some of the participants favored face-to-face interaction. One of the participants explicitly asserted that she confines her interactions to classmates who are more knowledgeable than her because most of her classmates are not proficient enough to promote her linguistic development. On the other hand, some did refer to the positive effects of peer correction and feedback received through the Internet.

4. Discussion

This study explored the role of individual differences (IDs) in EFL learners' perceptions regarding the use of the Internet in their language learning process. Analysis of quantitative data did not show a significant difference between the two groups' (Introverts & Extroverts) attitudes towards the use of the Internet in their language classes. Overall participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of the Internet was positive.

The qualitative part of the study provided richer insights into the participants' attitudes towards the target variable. Based on the elicited data we categorized driving factors in determining perceptions of the Internet as a teaching tool. Categories included: *internal,*

external, and psychological factors. It is worth noting that there is no clear boundary between the aforementioned factors, that is, some of the subcategories overlap. However, internal factors are primarily concerned with the intrinsic desire of learners to accomplish a goal, while external factors refer to ecological and extrinsic forces, which drive learners to do something and psychological factors refer to functions of the human mind which are affected by individual ways of thinking and feeling, and other cognitive traits.

Such factors as ease of access to unlimited information, access to native speakers, real data, getting very subtle and informative points about lexical acquisition and grammatical structures, were considered to be enjoyable, exciting and motivating features of the Internet from the students' perspective. All contributed to internal satisfaction. In contrast to most of the participants, one person, who was also an extrovert, viewed access to native speakers to be demotivating. This stemmed from lack of self-confidence on the part of the interviewee.

External factors including access to varieties of sources, being up-to-date, growing influence of technology, cooperation with classmates, and time-saving qualities were also influential in determining positive responses to Internet use. Psychological factors, including low pressure, feeling unstressed, and adjusting for individual differences, were also cited by participants.

Although both of the personality types had positive attitudes towards the role of the Internet in language learning, some of the participants downgraded the facilitative and pedagogical role of the Internet in their classes. This dichotomous attitude of some participants may be attributed to their comfort with traditional pedagogies. If language learners are exposed to prolonged, blended classes, they may find more value in using technology. Moreover, blended classes may provide conditions in which language learners with different personality types can have autonomy in doing language-related tasks as they favor.

In language teaching classes we encounter some students who are too reserved to take part in class activities and discussions. In such cases, language teachers complain about their inability to inspire those students to participate. The Internet may provide an ideal means for these language learners to participate in the class activities with fewer psychological barriers. In this study, the importance of the Internet in minimizing psychological barriers including stress and pressure was highlighted.

As Kumaravadivelu (2001) pointed out, the World Wide Web can provide opportunities for maximizing the liberatory autonomy of language learners in the post-method era. Liberatory autonomy of language learners is germane to language learners' critical

thinking abilities. Therefore, language teachers and syllabus designers are advised to integrate the use of the Internet resources in their classes in order to create equal conditions for language learners with different personality types, learning styles and cognitive strengths to improve linguistic proficiency.

Findings of this study are congruent with those of Lin (2002), who found that technologically based language teaching enhanced the learners' motivation for completing tasks and created a sense of excitement in learners. Similarly, a study by Bueno-Alastuey and Lopez Pe´rez (2013) showed the usefulness of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) from the perception of two groups of learners in EFL and ESL settings. The EFL group experienced full integration of ICT in their classes while the ESL group used lower level of integration. The researchers reported that the ESL group found ICT more useful in strengthening some skills (grammar and vocabulary) while the EFL group highlighted the role of ICT in influencing their pronunciation and productive skills. It may be concluded that learners' personality types can influence their attitudes towards learning varying language skills via the use of the Internet.

5. Conclusion

Nowadays the use of technology including the Internet continues to gain momentum in education. Many language teachers feel compelled to integrate the use of the Internet and computer-mediated instruction in their language classes. The current study explored the relationship between personality types (introverts and extroverts) and EFL learners' attitudes towards web-based language learning.

This study applied quantitative and quantitative methods for collecting and analyzing data. Results shed light on extroverts' and introverts' attitudes towards the use of the Internet in their blended language learning classes. The analysis of quantitative data revealed that there was no significant difference between introverts' and extroverts' attitudes. Analysis of qualitative data indicated that participants considered internal, external, and psychological factors in attributing positive effects to the Internet use. They found use of the Internet in language classes to be motivating, exciting, and stimulating. They also acknowledged that using the Internet reduced pressure and established less stressful atmosphere. Nevertheless, some of the participants preferred to pursue their language learning using traditional means with a lower level of the Internet integration in their classes. This may be attributed to the accepted authority of language teachers in some educational contexts.

Further studies are needed to investigate the role of individual differences in personality, learning and cognitive strategies, which might play a determining role in applying Internet resources in language classes. Researchers need to further examine internal, ecological, and psychological factors that affect learning. It will be important to study the aforementioned factors from the perspective of language teachers as well as language learners. In addition, Internet-based language testing needs to be evaluated and examined from the perspective of test takers themselves while individual differences affecting Internet test performance are explored.

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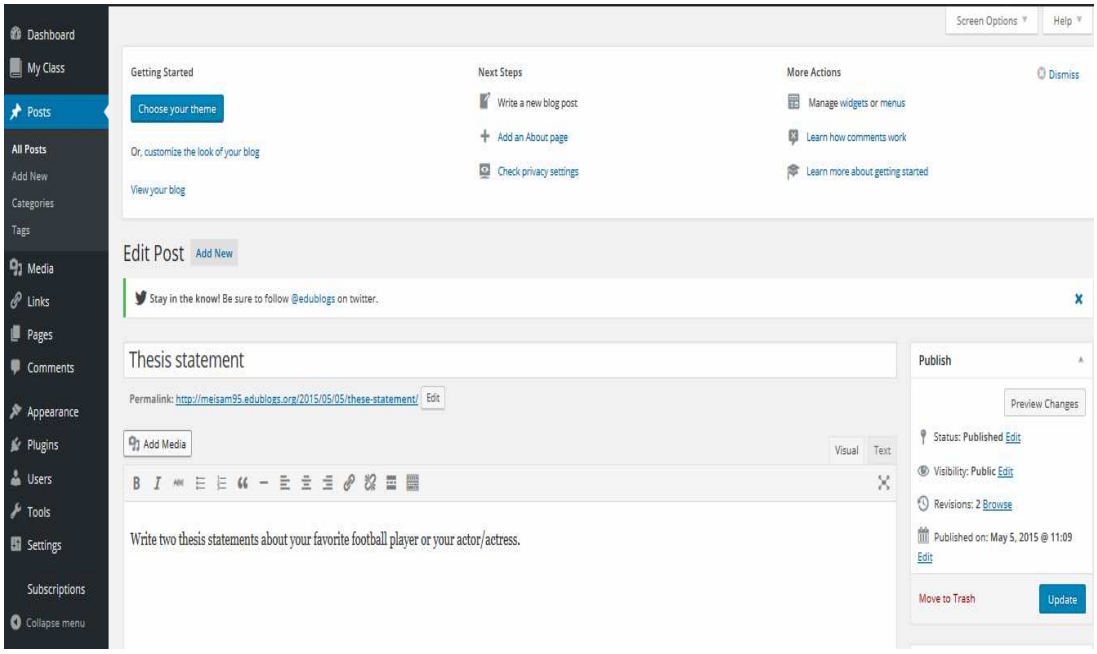
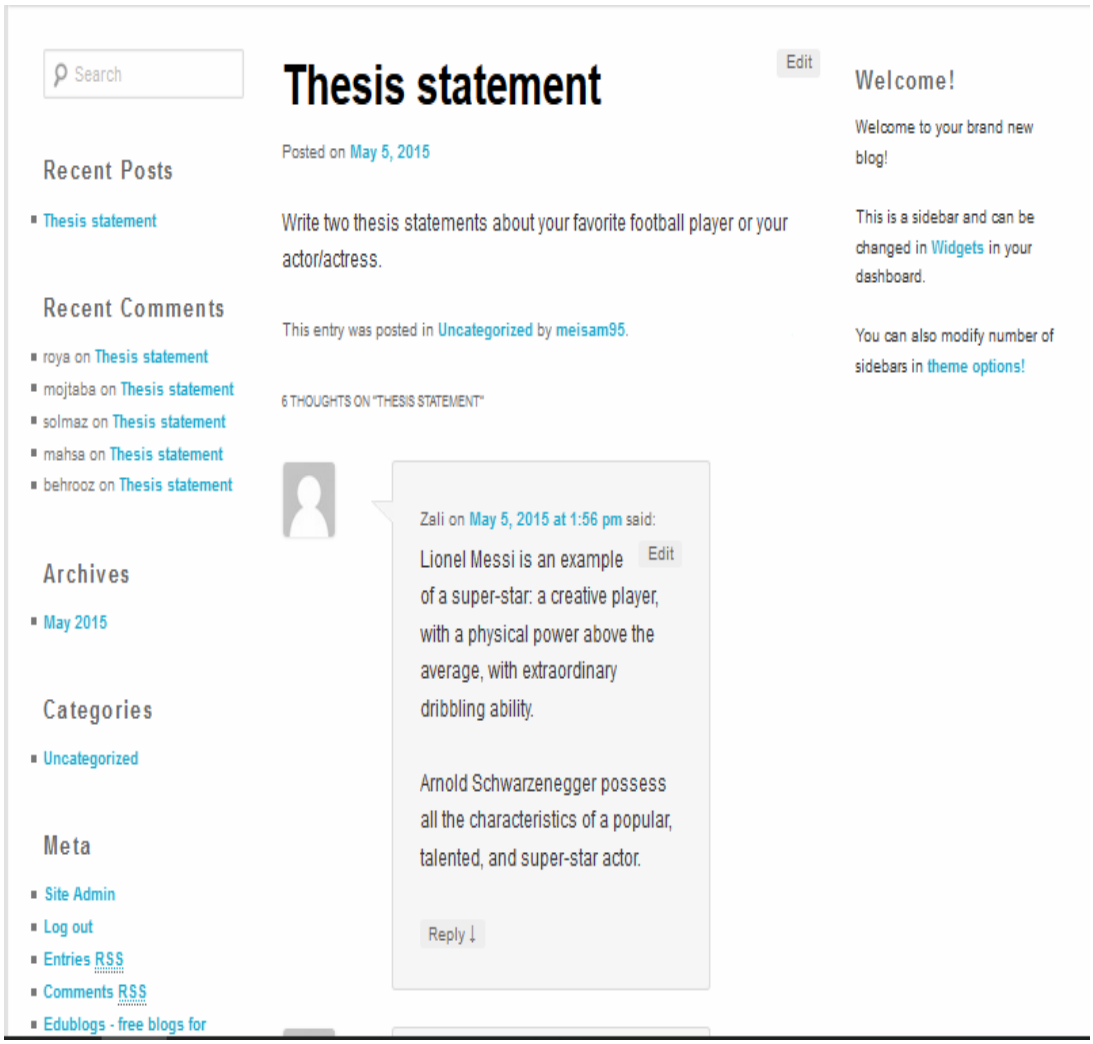
Appendix 1. A sample of Edublogs setting





EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDINGS ON ORAL PERFORMANCE OF EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study reports the results of an action-based study conducted in an EFL class to examine whether digital video recordings would contribute to the enhancement of EFL learners' oral fluency skills. It also investigates the learners' perceptions of the use of digital video recordings in a speaking class. 10 Turkish EFL learners participated in this study. To determine the impact of digital video recording on EFL learners' oral performance, the speaking module of IELTS was modified as pre- and post-test. In addition to the analysis of the scores assigned to the learners by two raters using an analytic scale, an analysis of learners' discourse in pre- and post-test was undertaken to determine whether measures of fluency in learners' output differ as a result of the video recording. The results suggest that the incorporation of digital video recordings into speaking classes improved the learners' overall speaking proficiency; however, it did not lead to a significant improvement in learners' oral fluency. Yet, the analysis of the qualitative data showed that the utilization of digital video recordings may not only bolster the learners' self-confidence, but also encourage them to take risks with the target language.

Keywords: speaking, digital video, assessment, perception, language teaching

1. Introduction

With the increasing importance attached to speaking as part of one's language competence within the Communicative Language Teaching paradigm, the teaching of speaking skills in second language learning has become a burgeoning area of research over the past two decades. Speaking is a vital, yet difficult, skill to be acquired in a language class as it poses a great number of challenges to second language learners for a few reasons (Luoma, 2004; Bozatlı, 2003; Feng, 2007). First, it encompasses a complex cognitive processing task that is difficult for L2 learners to accomplish (Bygate, 2006, 2009; Saint-Leger, 2009). As such, it requires learners to employ linguistic, non-linguistic, and contextual parameters such as body language, mimics, and gestures in an effective way to construct meaning by producing

utterances. Second, there are some psychological factors that come into play during L2 learners' oral performance such as anxiety and self-confidence (Aydın, 2001; Cheng, 2005; Wilson, 2006). As there is an inverse relationship between anxiety and self-confidence, it is of paramount importance for practitioners to employ speaking tasks that can reduce learners' anxiety levels and foster a sense of achievement, which, in turn, increases their self-confidence (Saint-Léger, 2009; Graham, 2004). In addition to the cognitive demand and other psychological factors, another challenge with speaking is that in the context where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), learners have a limited number of opportunities to use the language outside of the class, if not any at all. Thus, language educators need to find ways to extend the speaking practice out of class to expose their learners to the target language more, rather than merely rely on in-class activities (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Although several studies have explored the utilization of digital video recordings in foreign language speaking classes as a way of increasing learners' exposure to the target language, the majority of these studies either only focused on learners' perceptions of the incorporation of digital video recordings into speaking classes, or were conducted in an ESL context, where learners might have had many other opportunities to practice the target language. Besides, few attempts, if any at all, have been taken to research the relative contribution of digital video recordings to learners' oral performance, in particular fluency, in an EFL speaking class.

On the grounds of these reasons, the present study seeks to examine the effectiveness of digital video recordings on EFL learners' oral performance, in particular, on fluency. The study will offer insights into the implementation of digital video recordings in EFL speaking classes.

2. Background to the study

In order to increase the amount of extensive practice of speaking skills out of class, to foster self-reflection, and to enhance learners' oral language skills, a number of multimedia technologies have been recently employed in language classes (Lynch, 2001, 2007; Hsu, Wang & Comac, 2008; Christianson, Hoskins, & Watanabe, 2009). Out of these, digital audio and video recordings have received considerable attention from educators and researchers, in particular those interested in promoting learner self-reflection (Pop, Tomuletiu, & David, 2011; Mennim, 2003, 2012; Cooke, 2013). Hence, digital recordings have been used not only in teaching, but also the assessment of speaking skills as a component of oral speaking portfolios (Brooks, 1999; Cheng & Chau, 2009).

Though informative, the research on the inclusion of digital recordings in speaking classes has yielded inconclusive results with respect to the effectiveness of digital recordings on the improvement of oral language proficiency (Danny Huang & Alan Hung, 2010; Akef & Nossratpour, 2010; Sun, 2009, 2012). To illustrate that, Danny Huang and Alan Hung (2010) conducted a study to explore the EFL learners' perceptions towards the use of e-portfolios as an alternative way of assessing their oral proficiency at a university in Taiwan. In the study, fifty-one EFL learners were asked to upload an audio file in which they conveyed their ideas and thoughts on the topic discussed in the class to their e-portfolios on a bi-weekly basis. Moreover, the learners were required to give feedback to their classmates' audios each week. The analysis of the data the obtained from e-portfolios, attitude questionnaires and interviews revealed that EFL learners generally favored the implementation of e-portfolios as they provide them with an opportunity to identify their weaknesses in speaking, to practice speaking out of class, and to reduce their speaking anxiety. However, the learners also reported that they had doubts about the effectiveness of the audio recordings in e-portfolios in cultivating their oral skills due to the absence of face-to-face interaction feature and the presence of rehearsal opportunities, which mask their true oral language proficiency. On the grounds of those findings, the researchers proposed the employment of audios as a supplementary oral assessment measure that would be used to keep track of the learners' learning progress to capture a more accurate picture of the learner's oral proficiency.

On the other hand, Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011) investigated the effect of self-evaluation through video portfolios on Spanish oral performance of nine undergraduate learners in an intermediate speaking class. The learners were asked to submit multiple drafts of digital video recordings on a given topic and to reflect on their individual speaking performances using a retrospective self-evaluation form. Based on the emerged common themes in the self-evaluation forms, a training intervention was administered to the learners. The findings drawn from the self-evaluations and the questionnaires indicated that the use of video portfolio could improve the learners' perceived speaking abilities and their motivation.

Cheng and Chau (2009) also explored the potentials of digital video for fostering self-reflection in an e-portfolio mediated learning environment. The results showed that learners found creating digital video for reflection relevant to their learning needs, particularly for cultivating their listening and speaking skills. As such, they participated in video-based reflection willingly over a 14-week semester though it did not contribute to their grades in the course.

Similarly, Sun (2009) conducted an exploratory study on the use of voice blogs as extensive speaking practice in two oral communication classes as a part of a large-scale study. Forty-six college learners were required to upload 30 voice blog entries and 10 voice responses to their classmates' blog entries by the end of the term. A survey of students' attitudes toward the use of voice blogs and retrospective interviews with students were used as data collection tools. The findings suggested that voice blogging enhanced student learning, self-representation, information exchange and social networking. In addition, the learners reported that they perceived an improvement in their speaking skills, in particular in fluency, rather than accuracy. The researcher suggested that this might be due to the authentic nature of blogging since it promotes purposeful language use, with form playing a secondary role (Skehan, 1996).

With the purpose of investigating the effectiveness of extensive speaking practice via voice blogs on EFL learners' speaking performance and learners' perceived gains in extensive speaking practice through voice blogs, in Sun's (2012) study, the participants' first three and last three voice blog entries were evaluated by two raters. In addition, learners' perceived gains in speaking skills were collected through questionnaires. Although no significant difference was found between students' first three and last three blog entries in terms of accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, and complexity of language based on the scores assigned to the learners' performances by two raters, learners reported that they generally perceived gains in their overall speaking proficiency. As indicated in Sun's (2009) study, these results might result from the authentic nature of blogging, which may have led the learners to focus on content, rather than accuracy or language complexity. Furthermore, the learners' flagging interest in blogging and increasing demands of other coursework towards the end of the semester might have caused them to invest less time in blogging, which, in turn, affected the quality and quantity of the postings. Thus, one of the limitations of this study appears to be the lack of a speaking test which would be administered to the learners both prior to their experiences of voice blogging and at the end of the semester to measure the impact of voice blogging on their true oral proficiency since the comparison of the learners' first three and last three blog entries does not seem to give an accurate picture of the learners' oral proficiency.

Though several studies have been conducted on the utilization of digital video recording in foreign language speaking classes, the majority of these studies, albeit explanatory, have focused not on the actual improvement of oral proficiency as a result of the digital video recording, but the learners' perceptions of the incorporation of digital video recording into speaking classes. Furthermore, few attempts have been taken on researching

the impact of digital video recordings on learners' oral performance, in particular fluency, in an EFL speaking class. In light of these reasons, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of digital video recordings on EFL learners' oral performance, specifically fluency. By relying on in-depth analyses of the actual performance discourse and scores assigned to the learners' performances through analytic rating, this study will offer implications for the use of digital video recordings in EFL speaking classes.

3. The study

The following research questions guided the present inquiry:

1. To what extent does digital video recording affect Turkish adult EFL learners' fluency in oral performance?
2. What are the learners' perceptions of the incorporation of digital video recording into speaking classes as an extensive speaking practice?

3.1. Description of the context of the study

This study was carried out in Oral Communication class, which was a one-semester (14 week) elective course offered to the undergraduate learners with intermediate level of English proficiency at Hacettepe University. The class met three hours per week. The course was designed to enhance the learners' English speaking skills by providing them with ample opportunities to practice their speaking skills. In addition, it aimed to help the learners develop confidence in speaking in L2 in a variety of situations, both prepared and impromptu, for everyday and academic purposes. To that end, it included lectures on public speaking skills, video demonstrations of speech delivery, presentations, impromptu speeches on a vast array of topics, in-class discussions and collaborative tasks where learners are required to exchange information with their peers on a particular subject. Recording digital videos as an extensive speaking practice was a required assignment, accounting for %30 of the final grade. Other requirements were regular attendance and participation in the class activities, two speaking exams, the first accounting for the half of the grade in midterm, and the second accounting for the final exam, and a 7-minute oral presentation on one of the current interesting events accounting for the other half of the grade in midterm (Figure-1).

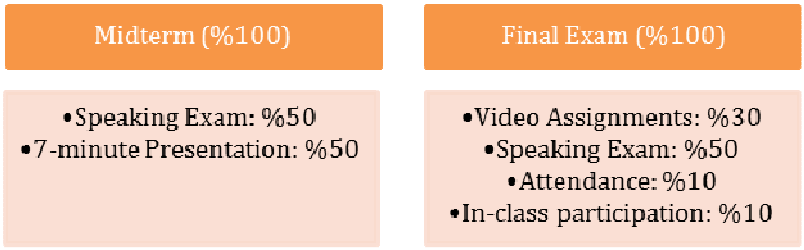

Figure 1.The distribution of the course requirements.

3.2. Participants

The participants of the study were 10 Turkish-speaking adult L2 learners of English attending the Oral Communication course at Hacettepe University. 6 of them were male while 9 of them were female with an age range of 19 to 22. One student was a freshman, 5 were sophomores, and 4 were juniors. They had an intermediate level of proficiency in English. They were enrolled in the departments where the medium of instruction was partially (30%) English. The departments of the learners were Computer, Mining and Electronic Engineering, International Relations, and Business Administration. The numbers of the learners enrolled in the departments of Computer, Mining and Electronic Engineering, International Relations, and Business Administration was respectively 1, 3, 2, 3, and 1. They had similar backgrounds concerning the type of language instruction they had previously received. All of them had been learning English as a foreign language for approximately 8 years and none of them had studied abroad in an English-speaking country.

3.3. Instruments

In order to determine the impact of digital video recording on EFL learners' oral performance, the speaking module of IELTS was modified as pre- and post-test (Appendix 1). Accordingly, the speaking exam consisted of three parts: an introduction, an individual long turn, and a two-way discussion. In the introduction part, the learners were asked to talk about general topics, while in the second part they were given written task cards as prompt and asked to talk about the task on the card. In the third part, they were required to discuss more abstract issues and concepts which were thematically linked to the topic of the talk in the second part.

To ensure the content validity of the test, a group of expert judges, namely the head of testing unit of the department and two coordinators, were asked to evaluate the speaking test. Thanks to the researcher's and experts' judgments, the content validity of the test was tried to be secured. With regard to the reliability of the test, as Underhill (1987) suggests, "the

classical measures of test reliability have little relevance for oral tests because they are designed for rigid, pre-planned tests consisting of a fixed number of individual questions" (p.106). As such, more useful information could be gathered by comparing each marker's scores with her/his own scores or with the scores of other markers. Based on this, the inter-rater rater reliability of the scores assigned to the learners by two raters was examined in this study.

As for the rating scale used for the assessment of learners' oral performances, the public version of IELTS speaking scale was adapted. As the main focus of the study was to investigate the impact of the digital video recordings on learners' fluency, the criterion of (a) *Fluency and Coherence* in the IELTS scale was divided into two separate criteria as (a) *Fluency* and (b) *Content Development*. A concise definition of *Content Development* as a criterion was given as follows: "the degree to which the test-taker is conveying relevant and well-elaborated/developed ideas on given topics" (Sato, 2012:226). Besides, brief descriptors for each level were developed based on the criterion of *Task Fulfillment* in the IELTS writing scale to achieve high inter-rater reliability (Appendix 2).

Eight speaking tasks on personal experiences were designed by the teacher-researcher to elicit monologue type of discourse (i.e., narrative) from learners through digital video recordings on a par with their proficiency level and regular activities in class (Appendix 3). With the purpose of increasing the likelihood of classmates watching and interacting with each other (Bloch, 2007), the teacher-researcher chose to set up a private Facebook group as a platform to which the learners could upload their video recordings. The reason of choosing a private Facebook group as a video-hosting platform was that the learners were already familiar with Facebook and used it frequently in their daily lives. Besides, a significant advantage of Facebook as a video-hosting platform is that it is compatible with various types of videos, which means that all videos can be played on any computer with Internet connection.

In addition to the speaking exam and tasks, the adapted scale, and the private Facebook group, a focus group interview was conducted to investigate the learners' perceptions of the incorporation of digital video recording into speaking classes. Focus group interview was chosen as a method of data collection for it elicits rich qualitative data efficiently (Dörnyei, 2007). As the researcher's main aim was to create a supportive atmosphere in which discussion was promoted by giving the participants a chance to explain their points of views, she asked more general questions such as "What do you think about the digital video recording as an extensive speaking practice?", "Do you find it useful to identify

your strengths and weaknesses?", and "How did it contribute to your speaking skills?". According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), focus group interviewing generally includes 7 to 10 participants, but the size of the group can change. In this study 7 learners participated in the focus group interview.

3.4. Procedure

Before and after the completion of eight video recording assignments, the speaking module of IELTS was administered to the learners as pre- and post-test to evaluate their oral performance in English and to provide useful feedback on the learning process. In the first and third parts of the exam, the learners were not given any planning time before they started conveying their ideas on the given topics, yet in the second part of the exam, where the learners were given written task cards as prompt, one-minute planning time was given to the learners before they started to talk about the topics given. The speaking exam was conducted individually and each learner was allocated 8 minutes. The conversations were recorded on a MacBook Pro for transcription and analysis.

In order to ensure valid and reliable scoring, a second rater with two years' experience in both teaching and assessing speaking skills was involved in the assessment procedure together with the teacher researcher. The second rater also worked as an instructor in the same school with the researcher and both raters had the formal training on the use of the IELTS speaking scale.

As for the video assignments, once a week, with certain exceptions, learners were asked to upload their videos speaking in English on a given topic for about three minutes. The exceptions were the first week, the mid-term, and the final exam weeks, as well as other weeks in which the learners had to deal with the other assignments in their coursework. Thus, for the practical purposes of the class, eight video recordings in the semester fully met the requirements. Although the learners were allowed to revise and redo their video recordings as many times as they desired before the deadline, they were instructed not to memorize or read from a script while recording their speeches. Furthermore, they were required to shoot their video in only one shot without taking any breaks. Upon the completion of the video recording, they uploaded their videos to the private Facebook group and one week later they received brief written feedback from the instructor with regard to their overall performance in the video. As such, the teacher was able keep track of the learners' learning progress throughout the research period.

One week after the completion of all video assignments, 7 learners were interviewed together by using focus group methods, through which the researcher aimed to explore the learners' perceptions of the use of digital video recording in speaking classes.

The pre- and post-test scores assigned to the learners by two raters using an analytic scale were statistically analyzed through SPSS 20.0. First, Pearson correlation efficient was computed between two sets of composite scores assigned to the learners by two raters to confirm inter-rater reliability. Next, to determine whether there was a significant difference between the learners' scores in pre- and post-tests in terms of their composite scores and scores obtained from the fluency criterion in the scale, a paired sample t-test was performed on the data. This analysis was aimed at finding out the relative impact of digital video recording on EFL learners' oral performance, in particular fluency.

Apart from the statistical tests used in the study, an analysis of learners' discourse in pre- and post-tests was undertaken to determine whether measures of fluency in learners' output differ as a result of the video recording assignments. In order to obtain precise temporal measures, the learners' speech samples were transcribed through a software called Transcriber (http://trans.sourceforge.net/en/presentation.php). By means of the software, each silent pause was detected and measured in milliseconds. In line with the guidelines recommended by Freed (1995), Freed (2000), Morley & Truscott (2006), and Iwashita (2010) for the measurement of fluency in oral performance, the temporal features of speech such as filled pauses (*ums* and *ers),* unfilled pauses, disfluencies, total pausing time (as a percentage of total speaking time), speech rate, and mean length of run were examined in this study (Figure-2).

The number of filled pauses was calculated by counting the pauses such as *uhm*, *er*, or *mm* that occurred in the speech. The number of unfilled pauses was calculated by counting the number of pauses of 1 second or more in speech (Mehnert, 1998). The number of disfluencies was calculated counting repetitions, restarts and repairs that occurred in speech (Freed, 2000). In order to enable comparisons, instances of filled pauses, unfilled pauses, and disfluencies were counted per 60 seconds of speech since actual speaking time of each learner differed. Total pausing time was calculated by adding up all the unfilled pauses. Speech rate was calculated by dividing the total number of syllables produced in a given speech sample by the amount of total time expressed in seconds (Kormos & Dénes, 2004).

Following Riggenbach's (1991) suggestion, unfilled pauses longer than three seconds were excluded in the calculation of speech rate for unfilled pauses shorter than three seconds are widely regarded as articulation pauses, not hesitation markers. Mean length of run, which

is a manifestation of how lengthy the language produced between two pause boundaries, was calculated as an average number of syllables produced in utterances between pauses of 1 second and above (Mehnert, 1998). To see if there was a significant difference between the learners' performance in pre- and post-tests in terms of the measures of fluency, a paired sample t-test was run on the data.

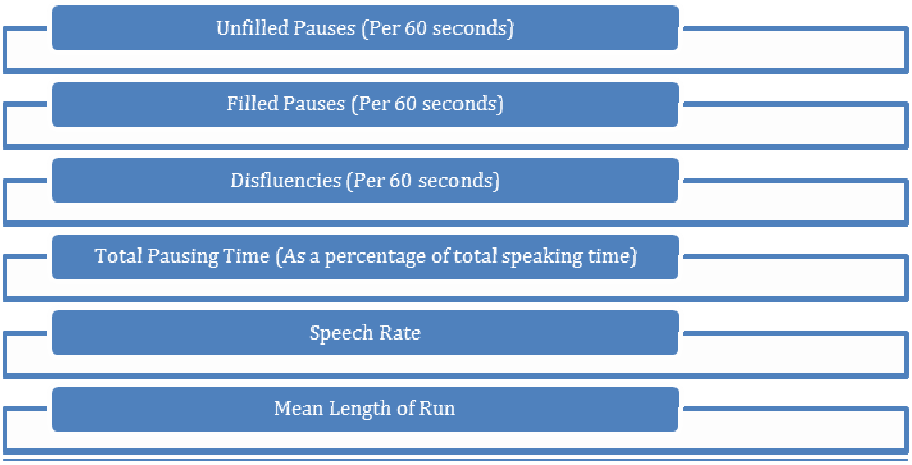

Figure 2. The measurements of fluency analyzed in this study.

Last but not least, data collected through the focus group interview pertaining to the learners' perceptions of the integration of digital video recording into speaking classes was categorized qualitatively after the researcher perused the transcriptions to get a sense of the data (Creswell, 2007). Descriptive coding was conducted to explore the patterns in the data (Saldana, 2011). Based on the emerging themes, the learners' perceptions on the utilization of digital video recording in a speaking class were presented.

3.5. Results

3.5.1. Inter-rater reliability

For the study utilizes a test of production as pre- and post-tests, in which raters' judgments affect the decision to be made about the performances of learners, the reliability of the scores assigned to the learners by two raters using analytic scale was examined by calculating the correlation coefficient of the scores.

Table 1. The correlation coefficient of raters' ratings.

		First Rater	Second Rater
First Rater	Pearson Correlation	1	.937**
	Sig. (2 tailed)		.000
	N	10	10
Second Rater	Pearson Correlation	.937**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	
	N	10	10
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

As demonstrated in Table 1, the correlation coefficient obtained for two raters is .937, which indicates a quite high inter-rater reliability. In addition, it was found that the correlation coefficient for first and second rater was statistically significant with a *p*-value smaller than .05, which means that the test scores assigned to the learners by two raters are reliable.

3.5.2. Comparison of the learners' scores in pre- and post-tests

The focus of this paper is to empirically examine the effectiveness of digital video recordings on enhancing the EFL learners' oral performance, in particular fluency. Hence, this analysis was intended to find out whether digital video recordings contributed to the improvement of learners' oral skills, especially fluency, or not. Table-2 presents the descriptive statistics of the scores assigned to the learners (out of 9) by two raters in pre- and post-tests.

Table 2. The descriptive statistics of the scores assigned to the learners.

		Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Fluency	10	4.72	1.15	5.30	.97
Content Elaboration	10	5.10	1.10	6.10	1.17
Composite Score	10	4.99	1.21	5.52	.91

To determine whether there was a significant difference between the means of the learners' both composite scores and scores obtained from the fluency, and content elaboration criteria in the scale in pre- and post-tests, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between the learners' scores obtained from the fluency

criterion in the scale in pre- (*M*=4.72, *SD*=1.15) and post- (*M*=5.30, *SD*=.97) tests; t(9)=-2.20, p=0.055. Yet, it was found out there was a significant difference between the learners' scores obtained from the content elaboration criterion in the scale in pre- (*M*=5.10, *SD*=1.10) and post- (*M*=6.10, *SD*=1.17) tests; t(9)=-3.13, p=0.012. In addition, the results indicated a significant difference between the learners' composite scores in pre- (*M*=4.99, *SD*=1.21) and post- (*M*=5.52, *SD*=.91) tests; t(9)=-2.88, p=0.018. Taken together, these results show that the incorporation of the digital video recordings into EFL speaking classes improved the learners' overall oral communication skills, though it did not have any statistically significant impact on learners' fluency, a component of the oral proficiency.

3.5.3. The analysis of learners' performance discourse

With the purpose of determining whether determinants of fluency in participants' output differ between pre and post-tests the learners' actual performance discourse was further analyzed. For the measurement of fluency in learners' oral performance data, the temporal variables of speech such as filled pauses, unfilled pauses, disfluencies were counted per 60 seconds. Next, total pausing time (as a percentage of total speaking time), speech rate, and mean length of run were calculated. In order to examine if there was a significant difference between the learners' performance in pre- and post-tests with respect to the means of the determinants of fluency, a paired sample t-test was performed. Table 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test results of the aforementioned measurements of fluency in learners' oral performance in both pre- and post-tests.

Table 3. The descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test results of the measurements of fluency in learners' oral performance.

		Pre-Test		**Post-Test**		**t**	**df**	**p**	**95% CI for Mean Difference**	
	N	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**					
Filled Pauses	10	10.83	5.17	11.46	5.87	-.64	9	.534	-2.79	1.55
Unfilled Pauses	10	7.36	3.30	4.95	3.69	1.79	9	.107	-.63	5.45
Disfluencies	10	2.64	1.33	1.92	1.14	1.79	9	.106	-.18	1.63
Total Speech Time	10	213.53	48.18	254.30	63.29	-2.19	9	.056	-82.85	1.32
Total Pausing Time	10	20.87	11.89	14.11	14.52	1.58	9	.147	-2.88	16.41
Speech Rate	10	2.14	0.61	2.27	0.55	-1.90	9	.089	-.28	.02
Mean Length of Run	10	23.40	20.02	43.99	52.54	-1.72	9	.119	-47.63	6.46

As demonstrated in Table 3, the results of the paired sample t-test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the measurements of fluency in the learners' oral performance data in pre- and post-tests. These results suggest that the utilization of digital video technology in EFL speaking classes as an extensive speaking practice did have any significant impact on learners' fluency, providing a partially negative answer to the first research question.

3.5.4. Learners' perceptions on the effectiveness of digital video recording on the improvement of their oral skills

In order to find out the learners' perceptions on the effectiveness of digital video recordings on their speaking skills, which is the locus of the second research question, a focus group interview with seven learners was carried out. Upon coding the data descriptively, the emerged themes were "Contributions of the Digital Video Recordings to the Learners' Speaking Skills" and "Limitations of the Digital Video Recordings".

3.5.4.1. Contributions of the digital video recordings to the learners' speaking skills

The codes under this theme were "improving fluency", "elaborating ideas", "learning new vocabulary items", and "boosting self-confidence". First of all, the learners pointed out that the video assignments enhanced their fluency, granting them an opportunity to practice the language outside of the classroom. Besides, they stated that the digital video recordings helped them to realize the prevalent use of pause fillers, and hesitation markers in their own speeches and how those disfluency markers in their speeches irritated them as listeners. One of the participants expressed how being irritated by her own disfluency markers affected the way she spoke up:

> ...I was so irritated by those ıım, ıımh, and errr sounds in my speech that while I was shooting videos, I commanded my brain to not produce any kind of fillers in my speech. I remember, once I had to shoot the same video 10 times to live up to my own expectations. (Tilbe, Focus Group Interview)

Secondly, over half of the learners expressed the difficulty they had at the initial stages of the video recordings since they were unable to convey all of their ideas in a precise and brief way within the allotted amount of time. In addition, some of the learners stated that not until they watched their own videos over and over again did they realize that they could not develop topics satisfactorily in their speeches. They claimed that the video assignments assisted them in elaborating the content of their speeches with supporting ideas, and examples

in such a manner that their ideas would be clearly transmitted to the audience at the end of the video. One of the learners pointed out how he benefited from video assignments giving an example from one of his classes in the following way:

> In my novel classes, we discuss about the plot, characters, and setting of a novel. At the beginning of the semester, I thought I was elaborating my ideas satisfactorily about the book; however, for some reason, I could not obtain a high grade in the class. Yet, upon watching my first video, I realized that I had a lot of repetitions in my speech, and that, in fact, I was talking about the same stuff without a full stop. Then, I started to have a few ideas on my mind prior to my talk and I think last week I was quite successful since I talked for about 3 minutes and got 9 out of 10. (Eralp, Focus Group Interview)

Thirdly, learning new vocabulary items was a perceived gain of the digital video recordings. Three of the learners stated that they sometimes got stuck in their speeches due to lack of some topic-related vocabulary items at their disposal, and they had to shoot the videos one more time after they looked up the unknown words. Furthermore, they pointed out that they could easily recall the words that they used during their video recordings after two or three weeks, which indicates that digital video recordings created a learning opportunity for them and helped them to access new vocabulary items easily.

Last but not least, learners stated that watching themselves speaking English and comparing their performance in the first and last video assignments helped them regain self-confidence and increased their motivation to speak English since they were offered a chance to observe the leap of improvement in their speeches, which, in turn, gave them a sense of accomplishment. Furthermore, they pointed out that sharing their videos with their friends, though initially seemingly daunting, gave them an opportunity to be involved in a real task that required the use of English. Thus, they had a chance to watch others' performance and learn from one another. For instance, one of the learners expressed how she started to feel less embarrassed while speaking English in front of her peers thanks to the digital video recordings:

> I used to feel so embarrassed about the way I spoke English and my mistakes, and thought that everybody is just better than me in speaking English. That's why in our first video assignment, I waited for everybody's post before I uploaded mine. However, when I watched my friends' videos on Facebook, I saw that everybody did some mistakes. So, I felt less embarrassed about my mistakes. (Amina, Focus Group Interview)

Besides, they stated that they were not as excited as they were in the first speaking exam since they already knew what they were capable of doing, and even if they had no idea about the topic, they could sustain the conversation with some examples.

3.5.4.2. Limitations of the digital video recordings

The codes under this theme were "No Impact on Accuracy", and "Technical Problems". To start with, the learners pointed out that the digital video recordings did not help them to improve their accuracy in actual conversation. Although they stated that they sometimes had to shoot a video more than three times to have an error-free sample, they did not feel that it contributed to their actual oral performance. One of the participants stated that he found it quite difficult to transfer what he had produced in the video to his real conversation with the other people in terms of grammatical accuracy:

> Although I noticed that I misused the "if clauses" in my speech even at the initial stages of recording, I still have some difficulty in producing them correctly in my actual speech. I think we need more weeks to shoot more videos. Maybe that would help… (Can, Focus Group Interview)

As stated by the learner, some of the students explained that eight weeks were not enough to improve their oral accuracy, and having more weeks to shoot videos might be of help for they would have more opportunities to practice the patterns that pose challenge to them in their oral production.

Next, the learners made the point that the time they had to spend uploading their videos to Facebook was sometimes much more than they would expect due to the large size of the videos. Thus, they suggested that it would be practical to have an online learning environment where they can shoot their videos without having to upload them from their computers or mobile phones.

4. Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to examine whether digital video recordings as an extensive speaking practice would contribute to the enhancement of EFL learners' oral skills, in particular fluency. The results of the statistical and discourse analyses suggest that the incorporation of digital video recording into speaking classes as an extensive practice improved the EFL learners' overall oral proficiency and content elaboration at a significant level, however, it did not have any statistically significant impact on the improvement of learners' fluency, which accords with previous studies (Sutude nama & Ramazanzadeh, 2011; Baniabdelrahman, 2013), which reported that the utilization of digital video recordings considerably enhances the EFL learners' speaking skills.

On the other hand, the findings do not confirm those of Akef and Nossratpour (2010) in that recording digital videos on a weekly basis does not lead to a significant improvement

in EFL learners' oral performance with respect to fluency. One probable explanation for the lack of significant improvement in learners' fluency might be that sharing their personal experiences through digital video recordings on Facebook acted as a spur for learners to express themselves freely and without feeling the pressure that they might have experienced in class. Thus, they were encouraged to take risks with the target language focusing on content at the expense of form, which resulted in significant improvement not in fluency, but in content elaboration. As Skehan (1996) as well as Willis and Willis (2001) argue, the tasks in which learners have a real purpose and audience to communicate with lead them to emphasize content over form since the focus is on the accomplishment of the task. Hence, the learners in this study might be motivated by the free expression of meaning, leaving form to play a secondary role (Sun, 2012).

As regards the learners' perceptions on the effectiveness of digital video recording on their oral communication skills, the findings revealed that, interestingly, the learners perceived an improvement in their fluency for they were provided with a chance to extend the speaking practice outside of the class and to identify the weaknesses in their speeches, which is consistent with the results obtained in Sun (2012), Danny Huang and Alan Hung (2010) and Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011). These authors argued that this result might stem from the fact that learners can alleviate their speech anxiety over time and become more confident in speaking a foreign language through voice blogs or digital video recordings, which, in turn, increases their perceived speaking skills.

Next, the findings indicated that the digital video recordings helped the learners to satisfactorily elaborate the content of their speeches, which is tune with that of Kim (2014), who explored how ESL learners' oral proficiency changed through online recording tools and receiving feedback from their instructor outside of the classroom, in that the learners started to speak up more confidently and making longer sentences after they used recording tools. Put it differently, learners elaborated upon the content of their speeches by providing examples since they had a chance to express themselves freely through digital video recordings. Besides, having their peers as audience might have also contributed to the learners' content elaboration for their primary emphasis is on the expression of meaning, rather than on form. The findings also showed that the digital video recordings provided the learners with an opportunity to learn and use new vocabulary items in their speeches. A similar result was also reported by Kırkgöz (2011), who concluded that video recordings helped the learners to expand their theme-related vocabulary.

Another benefit that was noted by the learners regarding the use of the digital video recordings was that it helped them to build up comfort and confidence, and increased their motivation for speaking the target language. One possible explanation for this might be that the majority of learners viewed the digital video recording assignments as a positive language learning experience, rather than as a component of the assessment. The accumulation of those videos gave them a sense of achievement and strengthened a sense of ownership of their own learning, which may elevate their level of motivation (Ho, 2003). In a similar vein, Hsu et al. (2008) suggest that having an individual blog or a speaking portfolio gives the learners a great sense of achievement and facilitates their language learning.

Concerning the limitations of the digital video recordings as an extensive practice, the findings showed that some learners did not find the incorporation of digital video recordings into speaking classes useful since it does not include any genuine interaction as is the case in face-to-face communication. This result corroborates previous studies (Hung, 2009; Danny Huang & Alan Hung, 2010) in that some learners tend to be cautious about the effectiveness of the digital video recordings on the improvement of their actual speaking performance due to the presence of rehearsal opportunities and the lack of genuine interaction. That is to say, learners seldom need to employ communication strategies such as paraphrasing and circumlocution in digital video recordings. Hence, as pointed out by Ho (2003), the activities that would provide the learners with a chance to practice communication strategies, which are not frequently used in digital video recordings, are to be emphasized in the classroom to enhance learners' oral communication skills.

5. Limitations of the present study

One self-evident methodological limitation of the current study is the absence of a control group, which would help us to gain a better understanding of how much the utilization of digital video recordings contributed to the oral proficiency gain as compared to what the classroom would have offered alone. Besides, due to constraints of time, the digital video recording assignments lasted for eight weeks, which may not be sufficient to improve learners' fluency. Thus, a longitudinal study may yield more informative and contributing results with respect to both short-term and long-term effects of digital video recordings as extensive speaking practice. Finally, having more participants, perhaps with different levels of proficiency, would provide more precise results.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated whether digital vide recordings would enhance the EFL learners' oral performance in terms of fluency. It also examined the learners' perceptions of the use of digital video recordings in a speaking class. The results obtained from the analysis of the scores assigned to the learners by two raters using an analytic scale indicated that the integration of digital video recordings into speaking classes contributed to the improvement of the learners' overall speaking proficiency; however, it did not lead to a significant improvement in learners' oral fluency skills. Yet, the analysis of the qualitative data showed that the utilization of digital video recordings may not only bolster the learners' self-confidence, but also encourage them to take risks with the target language. The results have implications for both the assessment of speaking skills and the design of speaking courses in EFL contexts.

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Appendix 1. A sample of modified version of Speaking Module of IELTS

Part 1:

Entertainment

- Do you prefer relaxing at home or going out in the evening? Why?
- When you go out for an evening, what do you like to do?
- How popular is this with other people in your country?

Part 2:

Describe one of your friends.

You should say:

-how you met

-how long you have known each other

-how you spend time together

And explain why you like this person.

Part 3:

Qualities of friends

- What do you think are the most important qualities for friends to have?
- Which are more important to people, their family or their friends? Why?
- What do you think causes friendship to break up?

Appendix 2. Adapted version of the IELTS speaking scale

Band	Fluency	Content Development/ Elaboration	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	• speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features	• presents fully extended and well supported ideas using clear and appropriate statements	• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately	• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech	• uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety • sustains flexible use of features throughout • is effortless to understand
8	• speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language	▪ presents a sufficiently developed and extended response to the question with relevant and supported ideas	• uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required	• uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors	• uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	• speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse	▪ presents and extends relevant main ideas although some ideas or points may not be fully developed	• uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively	• uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	• shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8

	markers with some flexibility				
6	• is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	▪ presents relevant main ideas although conclusions may become unclear or repetitive	• has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully	• uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems	• uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	• usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communicatio n causes fluency problems	▪ presents some main ideas but these are not sufficiently developed	• manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	• produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems	• shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	• cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives	▪ presents a few ideas, which are largely repetitive and undeveloped	• is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase	• produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	• uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener

	and some breakdowns in coherence				
3	• speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message	▪ may attempt to present a few ideas, but there is no content development	• uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics	• attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions	• shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	• pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible	▪ answer is completely unrelated to the task	• only produces isolated words or memorised utterances	• cannot produce basic sentence forms	• speech is often unintelligible
		1		• no communication possible • no rateable language	
		0		• does not attend	

Appendix 3. Sample video assignment

VIDEO ASSIGNMENT-5

1. You are expected to record a video of yourself narrating **the last book/movie you have read/watched** in English.
2. The length of your video **should not** exceed 3 minutes.
3. You should shoot your video in only one shot without taking any breaks.
4. Any kind of memorization or reading from a script will be subjected to the penalty of cheating which is a grade of zero on the entire assignment.
5. You are required to submit your videos on the Facebook Page of the class. You do not have to choose Public for your post. You may adjust the privacy settings so that only I can see your post.
6. The Deadline for this assignment is **May 11, Monday** (by midnight).

GOOD LUCK! ☺

ENHANCING AN INTERMEDIATE SYLLABUS FOR ESL STUDENTS WITH BYOD INTERVENTIONS

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Abstract

Mobile devices such as tablets and smart phones have entered education and started being used by teachers and learners for studying. This evidence-based case study focuses on the enhancement of a syllabus with BYOD classes and the role it played in boosting motivation and classroom engagement. It shows how to enhance a syllabus for Intermediate students of English and how to implement any syllabus changes, furthermore, it shows the impact of the changes on the staff members and learners. The study was carried out in an Irish, middle-sized language school, concluding that the enhanced syllabus had a positive impact both on the learners and the teachers.

Keywords: BYOD; mLearning; TESL; syllabus design

1. Introduction

As the recent Docebo (2014) report informs us, mobile phones and technologies have entered all walks of life. This trend seems to be increasing every year as more and more people use smart phones for work and education, they are just a must for many (Cearley, 2014). With global access to the Internet, people study on the go, at any time and place. This big shift to modern technologies was also noted by New Media Consortium (NMC), whose Horizon Report (Johnson et al., 2012, 2015) focuses on the way modern technologies can be used in education.

Modern learners are called by some the *net generation* or *digital natives* (Hockly & Dudeney, 2010) referring to the ways the students cope with reality around them, study, work and build social networks. These students build their reality online and acquire new competencies and skills online. All of this leads to developing digital literacies feeding into building full digital citizenships (Alberta Education, 2012).

There are myriad ways of working with the current generation, and Bring Your Own Device (hereafter, BYOD) might have potential to help students increase their skills.

2. Background to the study

2.1. BYOD: description and discussion

The term BYOD is an acronym that stands for Bring Your Own Device (Disterer, 2013) and is often substituted by BYOT (Bring Your Own Technology), or just BYO (Bring Your Own). BYOD/BYOT emerged when more and more companies started to allow their employees to use their own laptops, notebooks, tablets, smartphones at work. The devices could be company-owned as well as employee-owned. In both cases there was a need for rules and regulations before embarking on the BYOD path (Disterer, 2013). With the majority of people having access to the Internet on-the-go, and the ubiquitous presence of smart phones, there is a tendency to use mobile devices over any others at work, and to study (Sweeney, 2012). Smart phones serve the purpose of communicating, looking for information, recording findings in multiple ways so that they are fully fit for education. BYOD gives a lot of flexibility, increases efficiency, reduces the costs of training and maintenance and it seems to be a good move for many organisations. On the other hand, security of all data must be considered and regulated through policies, especially in education. It is a must to involve all parties involved in BYOD projects to protect the intellectual property of individuals, and prevent problems arising from any policy breaches (Beckett, 2014).

Ackermann and Krupp (2012) define five components to be considered before introducing BYOD/BYOT in organisations: security of all data, involvement of all stakeholders, appropriate policies in place, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of people involved and building a financial plan for all projects/programmes involving BYOD. Hockly (2012) sees some downfalls of BYOD and advocates piloting the educational projects before actually running them. It must be noted here that the use of personal devices in education might bring also inequity into light, as there will always be students coming from low-income families and those from more affluent ones. Moreover, educational and non-educational organisations must provide multiple charging stations to allow for charging different kinds of mobile devices. Schools must also adjust to BYOD class management with the introduction of clear e-policies (Hockly, 2012). Another challenge for educational organisations at any level can be the network speed and infrastructure, which can involve sophisticated and costly solutions (Avaya, 2011).

2.2. Literature review on BYOD

In Ireland BYOD has already entered public schools especially at the primary level, but there have been no studies carried out in language schools with regards to it. Many brochures and guidelines were published for public schools outlining the implementation and procedures, but no formalised research has been carried out in the field of BYOD syllabus changes for Teaching English as a Second Language (hereafter TESL). A lot has been said about the pros of using mobile devices to foster communication, building Personal Learning Networks (PLNs), and equipping the *net generation* with the right skills needed in the future. However, there is a danger of distraction and misuse of mobile phones and tablets (Hockly, 2012). The use of mobile devices in class can connect social life and learning but has to be well-managed by teachers, who need to decide with the management/ directors how to use the devices so that the students fully benefit from them (Sharples at al., 2014).

There are different models of managing and directing BYOD implementation in an educational context. The five models summarised below vary depending on the organisational decisions and they fall into the continuum ranging from high standardisation to high flexibility (Alberta Education, 2012 p.11). All of the models shown in Table 1 have pros and cons that need to be considered before BYOD implementation.

Table 1. Models of BYOD (adapted from Alberta Education, 2012).

Standardisation ◄——————————————————► Flexibility

1	2	3	4
Limiting the device to one specific model	Limiting not the device but the software	Limiting the device to specific functions / capabilities	No limitations as long as the device is connected to the Internet

Whichever BYOD model is considered, we must acknowledge that the technology has entered our lives and the students we teach take it for granted. Therefore the use of Information and Communication Technology (hereafter ICT) in the ESL class is inevitable (Kolade, 2012). ICT in language education started in the early 1980s with Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which evolved into Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) in the 1990s, adding the use of projectors, Interactive Whiteboards and tablets in class (Hockly & Clanfield, 2010).

Then the Internet entered schools with the 21st century and allowed for mobile or m-learning. This shift enabled students to study on-the-go and changed the static classroom environment to fluid personal spaces, which redefined the ways of communicating (El-Hussein & Cronje, 2010). Following the general trend, a new approach emerged in language learning i.e. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning called hereafter MALL (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). MALL takes into account all mobile devices, excluding stationary desktops, which can be used for learning languages through the use of short messages systems (SMS), instant communicators, microblogging sites, augmented reality applications, GPS (Yang, 2013).

The integration of ICT and TESL has potential, but must be done through consideration of the educational aims, defining individual teaching models, organising the classroom, assessing the tools to be used and then revisiting them to review their validity (Lewis, 2009). Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum (2013) suggest using TPACK or SAMR frameworks to integrate ICT in TESL. TPACK is a widely known model, which has been taking shape over the last few years (Schmidt at al., 2009) and the acronym stands for teachers' integrated Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge. The framework suggests that educators should not try to become IT specialists; technology is just an enhancement to the pedagogical and content knowledge they possess (Dudeney at al., 2014). To complement the integration of ICT in English Classes, Puentedura (2014) proposes his SAMR model (2011), which initiates the changes in an educational process with just an enhancement to regular classes (Substitution and Augmentation), moving to the transformative process (Modification and Redefinition), which enables the teachers to create new tasks, inconceivable with older technology. These models might be of use when introducing mobile learning/ BYOD classes in teaching English.

Al-Okaily (2013) has researched the use of personal devices by her students, indicating that students' engagement in the classes increased and that there should be more research done in this field. The study focused on the use of smartphones with multitude of applications. There are many applications that can be used for language learning, ranging from managing systems to games, flashcards, crosswords and quizzes (Ballantyne, 2010, Sharma, 2013). One of the suggestions can be the use of Device Neutral Applications (DNA), the ones that can be used on any device and platform (Campo, 2013). Al-Okaily (2013) suggests two ways of approaching the issue of using mobile applications while teaching. First of all, a teacher must be fully flexible and accept students' choices. Secondly, assignments might be based on previous experience and feedback from students. Campo (2013) adds to

this list the use of generic instructions, cross-platform Web 2.0 tools, grouping students to produce a satisfactory outcome and allowing some freedom in a tool they would use. Strasser (2012) suggests that following these guidelines will support the implementation of ICT in class and help teachers take advantage of it.

3. The study

3.1. Participants

Initially the whole project was intended to be carried out by the researcher; however with a change of the position within the organisation, the researcher did not have the direct access to the students in classes. Therefore, English teachers were involved in the implementation phase. There were three teachers invited to take part, and all of them with extensive experience at TESL. Two of the teachers were female and one was male. They were given pseudonyms Julia, Jenny and James. Teachers were fully informed about the project and provided with technical support while carrying out the project. Julia and Jenny stated that they were ‘casual users’ or technology, whereas James had a technical background so felt “familiar with the use of IT in class”.

As for the focus group, it comprised thirty students who were invited to take part in the focus group after their classes but only four attended the meeting. The meeting was facilitated by an independent person trained and experienced in facilitating meetings. The students who came to the meeting, signed a consent form and were given the information on the project. There were no incidents during the meeting and students had no problems answering the questions asked. Focus group data was analysed through thematic coding.

3.2. Design and procedure

The research was a case study, seeking an insight into the use of BYOD-enhanced English lessons in TESL. Figure 1 shows the triangulation of research methods with reference to students' engagement (Online Questionnaire and Focus Group) and the staff involvement (Teacher Log).

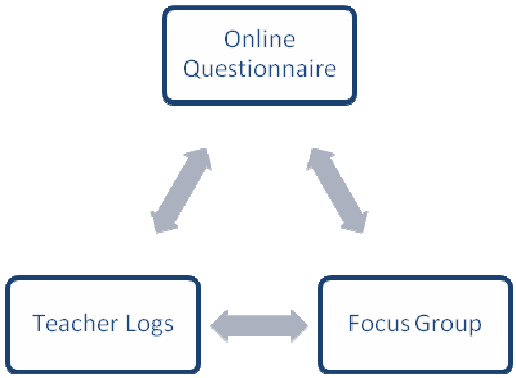

Figure 1. Research design triangulation.

The first phase of the research was a two-part questionnaire. The questionnaire had 20 questions, and was piloted prior to being sent to respondents as suggested by Seliger and Shohamy (2011). The questionnaire aimed at getting insight into the way students react to the use of smartphones or mobile devices in the classroom.

The questionnaire was distributed to students in an electronic form through a free online survey tool (http://www.surveymonkey.com). The respondents were sent the link to the questionnaire via email, and they could also access it through Facebook. Each student could only use the link once, with no possibility to reuse a link. The questionnaires were completed before the introduction of the lesson plans for teachers. The questionnaire took the students a maximum of 12 minutes to fill in and none of the students had any problems understanding and responding to questions. Fifteen students at an Intermediate level of English responded to the questionnaire.

The focus group took place at the end of the research project after lessons using the new materials had been completed. The focus group questions were semi-structured which triggered respondents to thorough thinking and elaboration within limits (Seliger & Shohamy, 2011 p. 167).

The implementation phase of the research project was stretched over four weeks throughout which students were exposed to BYOD-enhanced lessons called here 'interventions' (a total of 8 interventions). Prior to each intervention teachers were provided with a lesson plan (Figure 2). Each lesson plan was designed according to the lesson plan model suggested by Harmer (2001) and included Presentation, Practice and Production. BYOD activities were designed to substitute the traditional approach to teaching and enabled the teacher to introduce, practice or produce some pieces of the language being learned with the focus on vocabulary, grammar or language skills.

Figure 2. Implementation phase - Teaching staff involvement

Figure 2 shows the process designed for the implementation phase and illustrates how the teachers were involved. For this project the traditional lesson plan template also included a reference to anticipated problems and solutions as well as warm-up and follow-up activities. All lesson plans were shared with the teaching staff on Google Drive prior to the classes taking place and teachers were asked to analyse and prepare them for the class and contact the researcher in case of questions. Teachers then adapted the lesson plans to meet their needs, especially whenever they encountered something that was not appropriate. The lesson plans can be found at http://myesol.weebly.com/byod-enhanced-syllabus-for-an-intermediate-level.html.

As a follow-up after each session there was homework assigned to the students, who could practice a bit more of the language. Students and teachers were encouraged to use a social networking site to share their projects and individual tasks. Therefore the implementation phase allowed the students to practice not only the language skills but also digital literacies. After each intervention the teachers were asked to answer four questions in writing (via email). The first question was a reflection on the lesson plan design, its usefulness and relevance. The second question was posed to get an insight into the implementation phase and adoption of BYOD. The third one focused on the language skills students were practising in class. Finally, the last one was supposed to elicit general comments on the lesson and subjective opinions on the success of the class. Once the set of data was collected, it underwent an inductive procedure in which sets of categories were derived from the text, followed by *the discovery of commonalities and patterns* in the data (Seliger & Shohamy, 2011 p. 205).

3.3. Results and findings

3.3.1. Questionnaire

There were fifteen responses to the questionnaire and, as Figure 3 represents, the majority of respondents came from Latin America and were mainly females aged 20-35, at Intermediate Level of English (B1 CEFR scale). The European Council describes intermediate students as those who can form longer sentences with some minor mistakes that do not impede communication, understand most of the written and spoken pieces of information and are able to react in different social situations and use a good range or grammatical and lexical structures (Council of Europe, 2011).

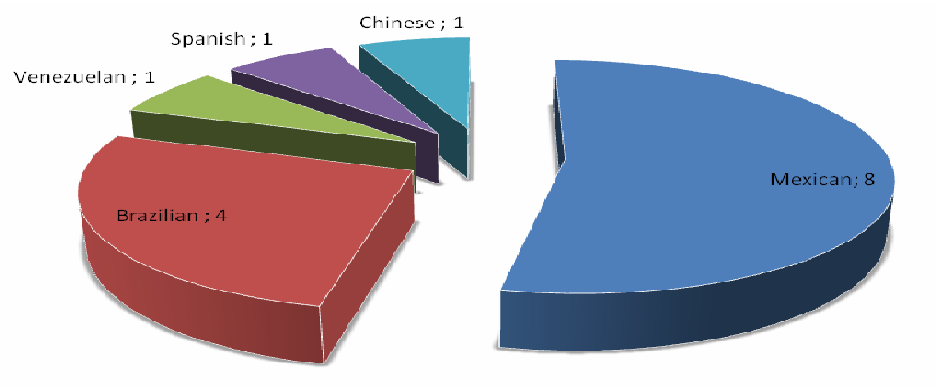

Figure 3. Breakdown of questionnaire respondents' nationalities.

The length of study of English was varied. It might suggest that the students come from different backgrounds, with different access to education, and varied levels of motivation.

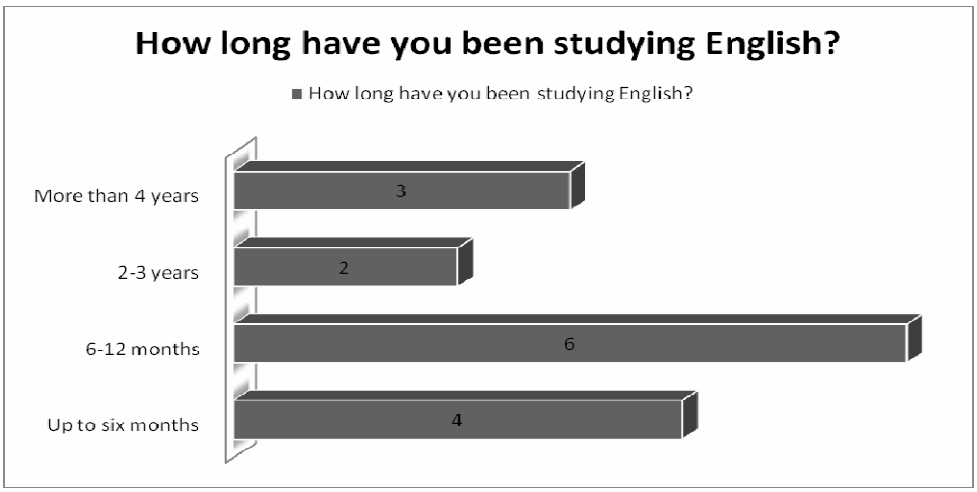

Figure 4. Length of English study.

Although, studying English is a complex activity, the respondents managed to pinpoint the things they find easy and difficult when studying English. The word cloud below (Figure 5) shows students' comments with regards to the easy points of studying English.

Figure 5. Areas of study pinpointed as easy by respondents

The most commonly mentioned were listening (5 respondents), reading (3 respondents) and writing (3 respondents). Living in an English-speaking country allows students to practice their receptive skills all the time, whereas written production requires taking time and analysing the language structures. One of the respondents said that writing is easy as she *can understand all the words*. On the other hand, this shows that the students still need to focus on speaking, vocabulary and grammar, which can all be practised inside and outside of the class.

When asked about difficulties when studying English, the respondents commented on the above mentioned adding also pronunciation issues and struggles with long comprehension texts. This data shows that there is a need for an additional teaching focus on the areas that students have problems with, to give them extra motivation and encouragement when studying, and help them to progress.

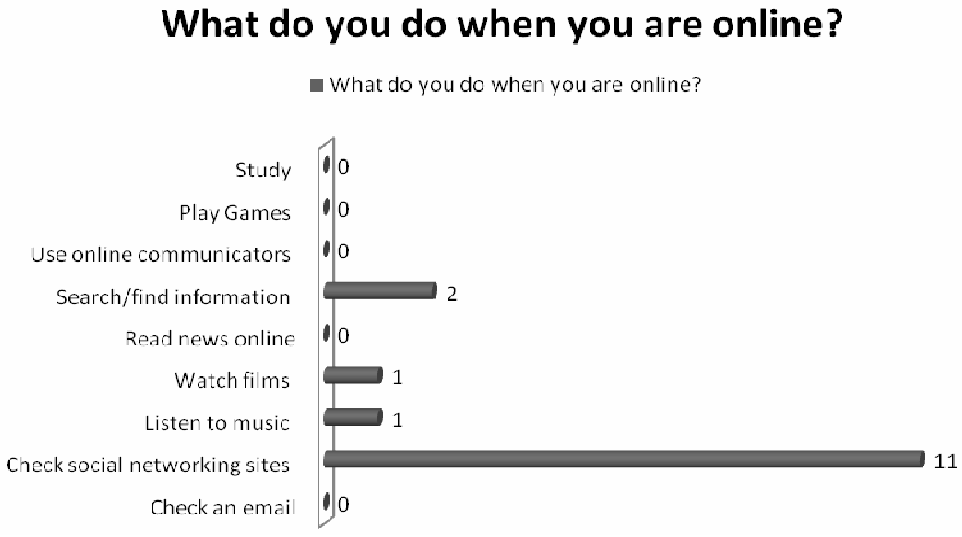

Figure 6. Students' online activities

The majority of respondents spend more than three hours a day online. The majority (11 out of 15 respondents) logs into social networking sites and looks for particular information online (Figure 6). This information can be of use when designing BYOD courses. When asked about studying online all of the respondents have done it or still do it and found it beneficial. They also use the Internet for entertainment, which is also now enabled by mobile devices. Traditional forms of communication and quality face-to-face time have been substituted by the virtual realm as one of the respondents uses the Internet to *check my email account, listen music, watch video, find information and use online communicators*. This could have implications for BYOD in the classroom, as students might expect to be more entertained whenever in class.

All students use their laptops, smartphones and mobile phones every day. The qualitative data showed they would like to use their devices for learning, which has a great potential for all educators. The majority of respondents agree that using mobile devices in the class is a good, as it motivates them more. One of the respondents said *It will be dynamic, and it's nice we can use the technology to learn and study English [sic]*. Only three out of fifteen do not want to use their devices in class as *because sometimes it can distract you [sic]*. The negativity around the use of technology in the class might stem from a personal preference of face-to-face classes or the possibility of distraction during classes. However, the issue of distraction during class time has always been present in the field of education regardless of the use of technology. One of the respondents said

> if you are a good student you should know that you're allowed only to use it to help you if you have any doubt, however it's good to use it in class because as i said above it could help you finding examples and extra material [sic].

Finally, thirteen out of fifteen respondents believe that technology is vital, fast, easy and fun saying *That's maybe funny!* and *I think will be a great idea have examples, videos and actual material to improve the classes, could be good material to make the class more dynamic [sic]*. They would appreciate some extra activities online that accompany the course materials. They really and like to use the Internet to search for information, translate words, find images and examples while in class.

These initial findings indicate multiple potential uses of mobile devices in the classroom for different purposes and also sheds some light on how to use mobile devices to complement the syllabus.

3.3.2. Participation by teachers

The teacher logs focused on their use of the pre-designed lesson plans. The feedback on the lesson plans was very positive with all commenting that the BYOD activities were nice and useful as follow-up or lead-in activities and that students found them motivating. Julia mentioned that the lessons were *a success, students were interested throughout the lessons and loved using their mobile devices for an English language learning activity*. All interventions were designed and timed, so no issues were observed with the implementation. Julia commented that everything was *well-staged, clear and concise*, which made the lesson plans fully usable. In one situation Jenny stated that the lesson plan *had to be stretched to the next class* as the students could not finish the online activity on time because of a poor WIFI connection.

Teachers were then asked to comment on how they felt about introducing different parts of the lesson. Jenny said that *the students were attentive and interested* in the class as the class was a bit different. On the other hand, teachers also encountered problems. A major problem mentioned a few times by teachers was the WIFI connection in the classrooms. In one instance some students could not access the Internet to download the applications which were supposed to be used and the students had to move to another room to get the connection. This issue was also resolved by James and Jenny by using the computer room and moving away from using mobile devices in the class. As James stated,

> I had organised to do the class in the computer room for the relevant sections. This way the students that had problems connecting to the app etc with their phones could use PCs. By doing this I felt confident giving the class.

Teachers felt more confident with the familiar PCs which were giving them full control over the class.

Julia also said that giving students *the name of a reliable website prevents wasting time*. This way students do not have the option to choose a website they prefer, they just have to work on the websites prescribed by the teacher.

As the teachers teach in a communicative way, they were asked about the content of their classes with the reference to language skills and competencies. The comments from teachers are illustrated by the word cloud below (Figure 7) .

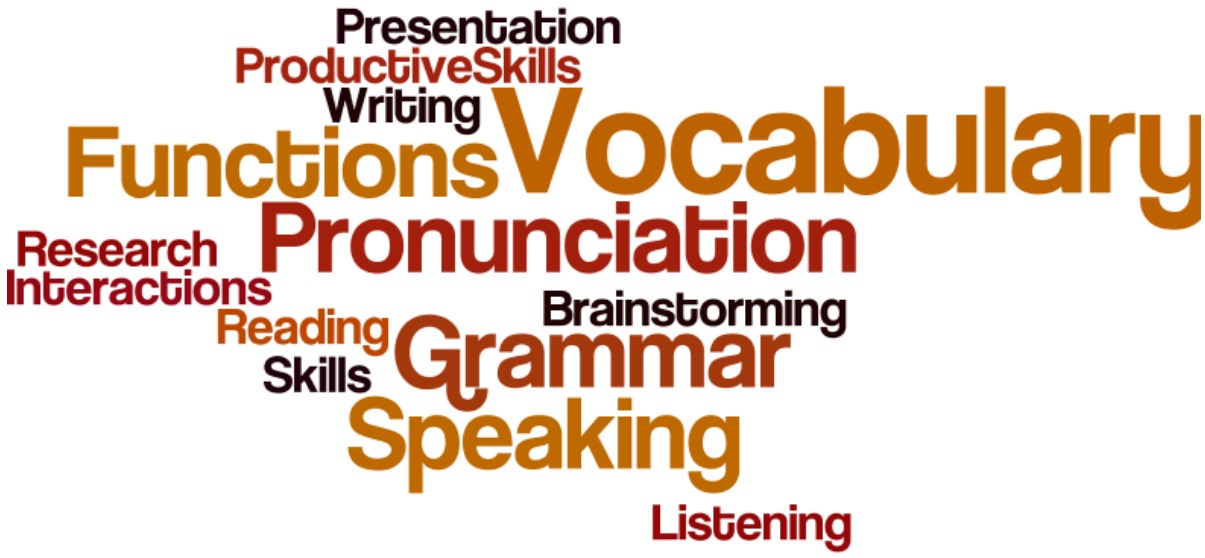

Figure 7. Language skills and elements practiced in BYOD lessons.

As can be seen, teachers were focusing on vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking and grammar most of the time. In addition, the remaining language skills were also practised and were not neglected in the course of study.

Finally, teachers were asked about the success of their lessons enhanced with BYOD. Only positive comments were made such as *the lesson was differe*nt than ordinary classes, *bringing a new way of teaching and learning to life*. The teachers stated that the BYOD lessons *added some extra value to the class* but what the students enjoyed the most was the possibility of sharing their work with their classmates, friends and families on the social networking site. They responded well to the idea of collaboration and for them it was really rewarding to see their artefacts online. What is important to note here is the increase in interaction among the students, albeit in a virtual setting.

3.3.3. Focus group

Having attended the BYOD enhanced classes students were asked questions related to their past and present experience with learning a language as well as the future of education with ICT.

First of all, students were asked to comment on the ways they practice their language skills. All of them were mentioning the traditional (book, pen, paper) and modern methods (mobile devices, PCs, applications) of studying.

As Table 2 shows, students practice speaking mainly in the street, student 1 said that she uses English when she *asks for directions or is in a restaurant*. Movies also play an

important role for students as they watch and repeat what is said by the actors. Students pay attention to intonation and pronunciation patterns, which might differ across English-speaking countries but can still be a good model to follow. Students also mentioned the importance of repetition and recording their voices. They stated that they like the applications that enable voice recordings as then they listen to the audio tracks and compare with the right patterns of pronunciation to copy the exact sentence.

Listening is a receptive skill that might be easier to practice as students are surrounded by English music and films. It can be connected with entertainment and allows students to practice without fully realising doing it. Some students mentioned listening to the news on the radio, which involved more attention, but can be even more beneficial than just films and songs exposing students to more sophisticated and formal vocabulary. Furthermore, some respondents mentioned podcasts which can be listened to on-the-go and can be really interesting, as the listener chooses the topic of interest. This information is crucial for BYOD projects as it directs educators into the field of personalised study, with the use of own devices for better results.

As for reading, students mention all traditional ways of studying including books, newspaper and journal articles. Through the study of the abovementioned sources, the learners can expand their vocabulary and also practice their grammar, and see how the real life language is used in the written form. On the other hand, students mention the use of websites and reading articles on the go. This is the new dimension of studying, and students resort to online texts in a natural way. They process the online information without even seeing a difference between the hard copies and electronic versions while studying.

Writing has always been a skill that requires a lot of input from students. It is also time consuming. To practice the skill of writing students can write short sentences as well as the lengthy articles at different registers. Students mentioned that they only practice this skill in the class, when they have to write something for the teacher. They see only the potential of practising it outside of class while writing emails and texts as they have to communicate *with other friends that do not speak* their mother tongue. This might suggest using emails and online communicators for written assignments could be beneficial.

Similarly to writing, students do not tend to practice grammar outside of the class. They just do the exercises provided to them at school, and watch some films with subtitles as subtitles are *better than just listening to people because they (actors) have good grammar and you can watch and see the spelling [sic]*, *listen to songs and analyse the lyrics*. It might be a traditional way, but could be easily enhanced by the use of e.g. some quiz-making

applications, which can help the students grasp English grammar, provide them with some entertainment allowing peer correction or comments. Any online activities that involve inputting data would be perfect for grammar practice.

Table 2. Traditional and modern ways of practising English derived from focus group responses.

	Speaking	**Listening**	**Reading**	**Writing**	**Grammar**
Traditional ways of practising	In the street Using the functional language in shops and restaurants Watching and repeating words from movies	Films News Songs	Books Articles Journals Newspapers	All kinds of texts for the class	Drills at school Songs+ lyrics Films+ subtitles
Modern ways of practising	Application mentioned DuoLingua	Podcasts	Ebooks Websites Online articles	Emails Texts Apps for communication	

The analysis of the ways students study at the moment gives an insight into how important it potentially is to introduce technology in teaching English. Students are already accustomed to ICT and the personalisation of their studies could have benefits.

Students were also asked to comment on their preferred study methods and mentioned that a blended learning method is the most desired by them. At school they would like to use course books while outside of the school in the mobile devices are preferred. When talking about technology, they feel that translators *can be really useful* in class, when they need to look up a word quickly. These kinds of applications *are great because they do not need the wifi connection all the time.*

Apart from the functionality of mobile devices as translation tools, students mentioned that the lessons with mobile phones are less boring, as there is some variety. On the other hand, one student mentioned issues with the automatic error correction function when using translation tools and other editing applications. It was stated that auto correction *makes you really indifferent* and you *just switch off your thinking* and do not fully engage. It might imply that students do not really want to be spoon-fed with information, but would rather use technology for experimenting with language, bringing it to life more. They want to be engaged and involved.

IT skills seem to be irrelevant for the students when using mobile devices. They all have different levels and abilities but feel that they can manage mobile learning. In the focus group meeting there were students with both high and low IT skills. The latter should not impede the production of language and the students can always learn from each other.

When introducing mobile learning (BYOD) for the purpose of the project there were some issues with the Internet connection. Students taking part in the meeting really enjoyed the BYOD lessons but stated that the problems with networks must be addressed prior to the commencement of the lessons enhanced with BYOD activities. Students enjoyed the multiple applications and websites used in the project, as they were practising many skills at the same time and some of them *can be used in everyday situations*. Another issue commented upon was the number of mobile devices available in the class. Students mentioned that the educational organisation should always have some extra tablets and smart phones available for the students, if classes are to be run with the use of mobile devices.

When asked for preferences of applications, students liked the ones with the recording option as they *could listen to what they said*, practising not only speaking but also listening at the same time. They mentioned that videos can be a bit intimidating and not everyone would like to do them, but could be beneficial.

To sum up, students discussed the success of the research project within the hosting organisation and stated that they *would like to use them (mobile phones) in the future in class* as it was something new and interesting.

7. Discussion

The research project dealt with intermediate students of English. At this level the students might feel the decrease in motivation and do not progress so fast, so they need to focus on all language competences and still practice as much as possible. The research showed these students are really enthusiastic about using technology in class, they have access to WIFI and already use their mobile devices to connect to one another. They already spend a lot of time online and this potential should be explored when implementing BYOD projects. The research also showed that the traditional pen and paper can be substituted by personalised mobile devices with no negative impact on the students. While the students were taught with the communicative method, the classroom enhancement did not impede the interactions and grammar practice.

As far as teachers are concerned, they would like to take part in future BYOD projects and felt as if they really involved the students in classes. The BYOD lesson plans were easy to

follow but the research project findings showed that all instructions should have a reference to specific websites and a generic reference to the activities (for more technology advanced teachers). This finding is not in line with Device Neutral Application approach (Campo, 2013) in which students choose their own applications, websites according to their own preferences, learning styles. The lesson plans in this project were based on the DNA theory, which was found to be not fully effective in the context of this research.

The project involved using technology that failed at times. Technical issues can always occur whenever we use devices so the teachers should anticipate the problems not only with connections but also with the capacity of the mobile devices students bring to school. This issue arose during the research project and resulted in time-consuming resolutions to the problem. Students had to check the compatibility of their mobile devices, then change pairs/ groups to successfully finish the activities assigned. Informing students of the prospects of using their devices prior to the class might have helped in classroom management, and in getting the best outcomes in a limited time.

While some of the problems can be eliminated, teachers should always try to prepare for the worst. One of the recommendations stemming from the study is that teachers involved in BYOD projects should be fully prepared and have a backup plan for their classes. The BYOD-enhanced course should have a solid structure and a secure connection for such projects to be successful.

The students' perspective was really of importance in the study, and they seemed to enjoy the BYOD-enhanced classes. They really liked social communicators and the idea of sharing things online and interacting with others.

8. Final conclusions and recommendations

The latest Horizon Report states that BYOD is a trend that will enter education in a very short term (Johnson et al., 2015) so the educators should be ready for it. This research indicated that that BYOD can have potential in TESL and the students feel more motivated in class when using technology. Therefore, it is advisable to introduce it to foster social learning among learners to increase the interest in classes. The introduction of BYOD classes and enhancing the syllabus might be a little time consuming from the planning perspective but adds extra value to teaching and studying. The research showed that BYOD can be suitable for medium-sized language colleges which would like to embark on internal changes and offer an interesting study plan for international students.

It must be noted that there is no one-size-fits-all model and all materials are recommended to be adjusted for individual groups or lessons. On the other hand, small adjustment in the way the lesson plans are designed might result in big improvements for the students and their engagement.

When implementing the changes, all staff members are to be ready and eager to be fully informed and prepared. All activities in lesson plans and syllabi should be device-specific to avoid technical issues and BYOD lessons might include some short activities in the classroom, one-off projects or ongoing reflective diaries. It is advisable to check the Internet connections within the organisation and review the devices accessible to the students before embarking on a BYOD project.

This research gives an insight into the changes that BYOD brought both for teachers and the students. Students felt really motivated while using technology in the class, it really personalised their learning experience as they were using their own devices with their own settings and preferences on them. Another extra value was the social aspect of the BYOD classes in which students had to share and collaborate.

It is recommended to introduce technology in a gradual way, starting off with just one small parts of individual classes e.g. just a warm-up or free practice, then moving to more sophisticated enhancements such as project work or keeping a diary. Only when these two work fine, it is suggested to move to the syllabus enhancement.

Teachers who do not feel confident using technology should not fear it with the BYOD classes, as there is no need for complicated and time consuming training or a complex school's infrastructure as students are using their own, fully configured devices. Even small changes made in class might have a huge impact on the perception of classes and the whole educational organisation/ school.

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INSTANT MESSAGING LANGUAGE IN JORDANIAN FEMALE SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the existence of Instant Messaging language phenomenon among female teenagers in some Jordanian private schools and its influence on their learning experience, mainly literacy. It also raises questions about the characteristics of textese as well as teachers' attitude towards their students' use of SMS language in their academic writing. The methodology used in this study involves the descriptive and quantitative analysis of writings taken from 320 female teenagers in four different private schools in Amman, Jordan following National and International Programs as well as the responses to a questionnaire filled out by 100 EFL teachers.

Upon the examination of these writings, it becomes clear that Instant Messaging language appears in students' writing, and teachers have reservations towards its use by their students in their writing. Data suggest that teachers should raise students' awareness of this issue to help them effectively control and enhance the influence of Instant Messaging on their academic writing.

Keywords: texting, instant messaging, mobile communication, academic writing, cyber language

1. Introduction

The unfolding advances of communication technology, such as mobile phones, online gaming, text messaging and social media, bring new avenues of social contact and interaction. Understanding emerging, new dynamics of communication which surround these tools and technologies can provide us with essential pillars for the education of today's youth. Among these growing technologies, the cell phone and its text messaging capability has become popular, especially among teens (Thurlow, 2002).

In the recent years, the Internet has come to dominate our lives. E-mail, Instant Messaging and chat are rapidly replacing conventional forms of correspondence, and the Web has become the first port for both information enquiry and leisure activity. IM is a form of

Computer-Mediated Communication in which two people (or more) engage in a conversation through texting. Swartzlander (2010: vi) admits that "It is a language that has swept our world like a tsunami, in less than a decade." According to Craig (2003), Instant Messaging or IM

> is a technology which allows two individuals, who are separated by any distance, to engage in synchronous written communication. Like a phone call, it takes place in a real-time environment; however, its mode of operation relies solely on the written word to transmit meaning (p. 118).

For Crystal (2006), texting is a form of writing utilized to write a message to someone via a cell phone, Twitter, Facebook, or any other social networking site. Texting comes in many forms; some people spell every word out, which is not common due to the lack of space that most social networking sites and SMS functions allow. Other forms of texting include text messaging using numbers; words spelled phonetically, words with numbers in them, symbols, and sometimes using only the first letter of each word in order for someone to provide information to the receiver.

Some researchers (Thurlow, 2002; Crystal, 2008) classify Instant Messaging language based on some stylistic properties. According to Thurlow, the word 'stylistic' refers to "one way of speaking starts to seep into another" (2002, p. 127). Although they are by no means exhaustive, some of these marked properties involve the use of reductions and shortenings, non-standard spelling, acronyms and abbreviations, etc.

Plester, Wood, & Bell (2008) listed the most common abbreviated forms in texting: "cuL8r" instead of using "see you later" and "BCNU" instead of "be seeing you". It is worth noting that days and months are commonly abbreviated. Crystal (2008) argues that contractions are words with omitted middle letters, usually vowels, because consonants provide more information than vowels. Examples of omitting vowels are: "text - txt", "message – msg", "have – hav" and "homework – hmwrk". These habits exist regularly in the "Insta-communication" (Salem, 2013, p. 66).

It is evidenced in research that both native and non-native English speakers use abbreviated forms for many words like "cuz" for "because", "U" for "you", and many other commonly used words. This observation has led the researchers to investigate the existence of Instant Messaging language, 'Textism' or 'Netspeak', in teenagers' academic writing. Moreover, this new language is called the 'Cyber slang' (Instant Messaging Language/Internet Language), which is a term used to describe shortcuts, alternative words, or even symbols used to convey thoughts in an electronic document (Tomaszewski, 2011).

Since the present research deals with the language used in mobile text messaging, we used the term 'Instant Messaging', shortly 'IM,' to refer to any occurrence of this language.

Across the globe, SMS (Short Messaging Services), which includes Instant Messaging or texting, has increased in zealous popularity, especially among teens (Thurlow, 2002). For example, Gromik (2009) surveyed 745 students and found out that 322 sent 1 to 5 messages per day, 267 respondents sent 5 to 10 messages per day, and the remaining 156 respondents sent more than 10 messages per day. However, these results conflict with Thornton and Houser (2005), who reported that their students sent an average of 200 text messages per week. The researchers of the present study noticed that many of their students use Instant Messaging language in their writings, and accordingly thought that this habit might endanger their English.

The present research, thus, aims to investigate EFL students' use of Instant Messaging language at both national and international programs in some female schools in Jordan. Our aim was to find their English language teachers' attitude toward the use of Instant Messaging language in students' academic writing. Findings of the present study may suggest some pedagogical implications for both teachers and students. This study would help determine the extent to which Instant Messaging is interfering with academic school writing, and how it may be addressed. Teachers might help their students make appropriate use of Instant Messaging. The results of this study could also help increase awareness of the potential relationship between Instant Messaging and writing quality.

2. Literature review

2.1. Negative impact of Instant Messaging on language skills

Findings of some researchers showed that Instant Messaging negatively affects English language through the use of ungrammatical and incorrect forms, and could ruin standardized words which are essential in the English language. For example, Eller (2005) explored whether Instant Messaging has a positive or negative effect on the written language. She found that many Instant Messaging conversations, in personal and professional settings, use Internet slang and short hand. The interviews revealed that many high school instructors have seen Internet language in their students' written work. Eller observed that not all "texters" use complete sentences when they "talk" on IM.

In another study, Cingel and Sundar (2012) conducted a survey to test the association between text message usage of sixth, seventh and eighth grade students and their scores on an

offline, age-appropriate grammar assessment test. Results showed broad support for a general negative relationship between the use of techspeak in text messages and scores of grammar assessment.

Similarly, De Jonge & Kemp (2012) investigated the use of text-message abbreviations (*textisms*) in Australian adolescents and young adults, and relations between *textism* use and literacy abilities. The use of *textisms* was negatively correlated with scores for reading, non-word reading, spelling and morphological awareness, but some of these relationships were accounted for by participants' usual text-messaging frequency.

2.2. Positive impact of Instant Messaging on language skills

Many studies indicated that Instant Messaging has positive impact on students' language. For instance, Plester, Wood & Bell (2008) investigated the relationship between children's texting behaviour, their knowledge of text abbreviations and their school attainment in written language skills of 11-12-year old children. The findings showed positive correlations between the spelling ability and performance on the translation exercise, and group-based comparisons based on the children's writing scores also indicated that good writing attainment was associated with greater use of textisms. Overall, the findings suggest that children's knowledge of textisms is not associated with poor written language outcomes for children in this age range.

In another study, Mildren (2010) found a positive correlation between students who use text language in their school work and their ability to spell and write proper English, indicating that higher text use can have "a significant impact on their ability to spell and write correctly" (Mildren, 2010, p.30).

Similarly, Coe and Oakhill (2011) conducted a study to explore whether or not there is a relationship between children's reading ability and text-messaging behaviour. The aims of this study were to compare good and poor readers on their amount of usage of mobile phones, the frequency and type of text devices they used, and the speed at which they could read messages in 'text' versus those written in formal English. Ten- and eleven-year-olds completed three assessments: a questionnaire, two writing tasks and a reading task. The results showed that, overall, poor readers spent more minutes per day using their phones. Despite their less frequent use of phones, the good readers used more textisms in their written text message and were faster at reading all the messages.

By the same token, Durkin, Conti-Ramsden and Walker (2011) investigated the relationships among textism use, language and literacy skills of 17-year old adolescents.

Participants completed standardized assessments of cognitive, language and literacy abilities, had an interview about the frequency of their text messaging, and were asked to send a text message in reply to one sent by the experimenter. Correlational analyses revealed significant positive relationships among textism density, the number of types of textism used and measures of literacy in adolescence.

In 2011, Drouin examined reported frequency of text messaging, use of textese and literacy skills (reading accuracy, spelling and reading fluency) in a sample of American college students. Participants reported using text messaging, social networking sites and textese, and their frequency of textese use varied across contexts. Correlational analyses revealed significant positive relationships between text messaging frequency and literacy skills (spelling and reading fluency), with significant negative relationships between textese usage in certain contexts (on social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook and in emails to professors) and literacy (reading accuracy).

In the same year, Wood, Jackson, Hart, Plester & Wilde (2011) studied the impact of text messaging on 9 to 10-year-old children's literacy skills. One hundred and fourteen children who had never owned a mobile phone before were recruited and randomly allocated to either the "intervention" or "control" conditions. It was found that there were no significant differences between the two groups of children in terms of their literacy attainment during a 10-week period. However, within the mobile phone group, there was evidence that the use of text abbreviations was positively related to gains in literacy skills. The results showed that the children's use of textism when text messaging is positively related to improvement in literacy skills, especially spelling.

Using a mixed methods study that not only examines the conventions of digitalk, but also explores the impetus behind teens' language choice, Turner, Abrams, Donovan and Katic (2014) collected their data over the course of two years and three rounds of data collection. They investigated the digital language use of 81 adolescents (Grades 7-12) from urban and suburban, public and private schools in a large metropolitan area. The data revealed teens engaged in purposeful writing that may differ from standard written English, but, nonetheless, show an awareness of audience, efficiency in communication, expression of personal voice, and inclusion in a community of practice.

Two recent studies investigated the relationship between texting and writing ability, and both found positive relationships. Janin-Starr (2014) addressed the relationship between texting and writing among college students and explored students and professors' perceptions of the impact of texting on students' writing skills. Based on the results of 10 professor

interviews, 10 student interviews, and 105 online survey responses, it was concluded that there was no relationship between the frequency of texting and student performance on written examinations. There were statistically significant relationships between writing performance and four types of text messaging. Writing performance was higher for those who used formal words in text messaging and lower for those who used slang, symbols, and phone apps. Similarly, in her PhD dissertation titled "The effect of text messaging on formal writing in English", Tirotta (2015) found a statistically significant effect of nonstandard punctuation on test scores. The participants whose texts included missing commas and/or superfluous punctuation marks produced higher scores on the test. Participants with higher levels of grammatical skill may have an enhanced ability to "code switch" between formal writing and texting.

2.3. Attitudes toward Instant Messaging

Concerning attitudes toward the impact of Instant Messaging/texting on students' language, Crystal (2008) summarized some of the prophecies of the linguistic evils of text messaging for which, he claims, there is no supporting evidence. Some of these prophecies were:

- Texting uses new and nonstandard orthography.
- Texting will inevitably erode children's ability to spell, punctuate, and capitalize correctly – an ability already thought to be poor.
- They will inevitably transfer these new habits into the rest of their schoolwork.

(Crystal 2008: 151)

Some researchers were interested in exploring students and teachers' attitudes towards Instant Messaging. Few studies revealed that Instant Messaging has negative impact on students' language learning. For instance, Salem (2013) conducted interviews with 211 participants. The findings indicated that using these wrong shortcuts, which are used in BBM and WhatsApp, is fossilized and cannot be repaired through remedial practice. The results of the study also showed that using Instant Messaging has an adverse impact on English language learning inside the classroom. However, if linguists find a way to standardize the use of these shortcuts, it will be of great help for non-native speakers of English. This is because certain languages, such as Arabic, do not have the same sound system of English.

However, some researchers found positive attitudes toward Instant Messaging. For example, Tayebinik & Puteh (2012) examined undergraduate students' perspective on the use of abbreviations or textism in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and the impact of such practice on students' competence. The analysis of the semi-structured face-to-face

interview indicated effective factors in the use of textism as well as its impact on university students' English language proficiency. In a recent study, while investigating professors' perceptions of the impact of texting on students' writing skills, Janin-Starr (2014) found that most of the professors perceived texting as a valid form of communication, although some felt that texting had adversely affected students' writing ability. The students felt that texting could adversely affect someone's writing abilities. To minimize the potential negative effects of texting on students' writing skills, the author recommended that school administrators should continue policies related to bans on using cell phones during class times, and implement a policy that all text messages between students and professors should use formal language rather than slang, symbols, or phone apps. University professors are advised to make their cell phone usage policies clear to students in the course syllabi, and require formal language in text message communication without slang, symbols, or phone apps.

As far as the literature review is concerned, the majority of the studies conducted on Instant Messaging revealed its positive impact on language users' literacy skills, although some studies showed negative impact. It has also shown that Jordanian EFL learners are underrepresented in Instant Messaging research. Thus, the present research aims to fill this research gap.

3. Methodology

3.1. Aims of the study

These days, Instant Messaging language appears in most teenagers' academic writing, forgetting about the Standard English that they should use. Primarily, this study aims to analyze the use of Instant Messaging (Cyber Slang) among female teenagers in Jordan. It also aims to find out if there are any differences in the use of Instant Messaging language in national vs. international programs in private schools. Furthermore, the study investigates the attitudes of EFL female teachers towards the use of Instant Messaging language in Jordanian EFL female students' writing. More specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Does Instant Messaging language exist in Jordanian EFL female students' writing? What are the stylistic and linguistic properties of this language?
2. Are there any differences in the use of Instant Messaging language between students due to the program they are joining (national vs. international)?

3. What is the teachers' attitude toward the use of Instant Messaging language in their students' academic writing?

3.2. Data collection and analysis procedures

Two methods were used to answer the questions of the study. Students' writing samples were used to see if they use texting language, and Instant Messaging language found in their writing was analyzed. The second method was a teachers' survey used to measure the teachers' attitude toward texting in their EFL students' writings.

3.2.1. Setting and participants

The present research was conducted in selected private schools in the capital city of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is worth mentioning that Jordan offers various educational programs: the National Program (first grade to "Tawjihi" or 12th grade) and the International Programs (IGCSE / GCE and SAT). Public schools follow the National Program only while private schools offer their students either to follow the National Program or one of the International Programs (IGCSE / GCE and SAT).

The subjects of this study were 320 female students selected randomly according to their availability in four different schools in Amman. Their age range was between 13 and 17 years old. At the time of data collection, both groups had been studying English for 7 to 11 years. The National Program students had been studying all the school subjects in Arabic, their native language, while the International Program students had been studying all the school subjects in English, which is their second language.

As far as the second aim of the study is concerned, a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to 100 female EFL teachers in selected private schools in Amman, some of which were the 4 private schools from which the students' writing samples were collected. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out the teachers' attitudes towards the use of Instant Messaging language in their students' writings (see Appendix for the very tool). The questionnaire was adapted from Mildren (2010) with some modifications to suit the purpose and context of the study. It was given to a jury of judges that consisted of three English language expert teachers and supervisors to check its validity. Their comments and notes were taken into consideration in rewriting the final draft of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.83, which makes it an acceptable measurement instrument.

3.2.2. Students' writing samples

The students were all asked to write personal letters to their friends or family members. The students' writings consisted of 15,200 words for the National Program students and 15,450 words for the International Program students. The writing samples were collected from 4 private schools in Amman, Jordan. 160 students were studying in a National Program and 160 students were studying in an International Program, IGCSE.

3.3. Data analysis

Taking into consideration that the main goal of this study was to explore and analyze the existence of Instant Messaging language in Jordanian EFL females' academic writing, the researchers analyzed the data quantitatively. The analysis included frequencies and percentages of Instant Messaging language, which was classified according to its stylistic properties, and its linguistic realization. The samples of students' writings were first collected, analyzed to find out any instances of Instant Messaging language, and categorized. Afterwards, we identified and contextually interpreted the linguistic items which seemed to serve the need of this study. Then, these instances were classified according to their stylistic properties and linguistic realization. The SPSS statistical software was used to analyze and find out if there are any significant differences in the use of Instant Messaging language among the students due to the program they are in (national vs. international). Since the second aim of the study was to measure the teachers' attitudes towards the use of Instant Messaging language in their EFL students' writings, the questionnaire data were analyzed quantitatively by showing frequencies, means and Standard Deviations.

4. Results

4.1. Types of Instant Messaging language according to their stylistic properties

The data collected and presented in Table 1 revealed that seven stylistic categories were found in students' writings.

Table 1. Stylistic properties of IM language of both groups.

Stylistic Properties	Examples	National Program		International Program	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. Reductions and shortenings	U, ur, ok	119	47.41%	114	42.70%

2. Non-standard spelling	Luv	44	17.53%	37	13.86%
3. Pictograms and logograms	xoxo	36	14.34%	34	12.73%
4. Acronyms and abbreviations composed of initials	OMG, LOL	12	4.78%	32	11.98%
5. Word Combination	gonna	14	5.58%	30	11.24%
6. Emoticons	:) ,):	22	8.77%	17	6.37%
7. Single digits can replace words	'2' for 'to'	4	1.59%	3	1.12%
Total		**251**	**100%**	**267**	**100%**

Table 1 shows that one of the most significant findings is that both groups (National vs. International) used an almost equal number of features of Instant Messaging language, 251 and 267, respectively. Another significant conclusion evident in Table 1 is that reductions and shortenings (e.g. 'u' for 'you' and 'r' for 'are') ranked first in both groups, 47.41% in the National Program and 42.70% in the International Program, followed by non-standard spelling (e.g. 'luv' and 'ya') with 17.53% in the National Program and 13.86% in the International Program. Another significant finding is that the International Program students recorded many more acronyms and abbreviations (e.g. 'btw' and 'idk'), and word combination (e.g. 'gonna' and 'wanna') than the National Program students. However, the table shows that the "Single digits can replace words" category was the least used stylistic category with the percentage of 1.59% in the National Program and 1.12% in the International Program.

Reductions and shortenings

Table 2 shows reductions and shortenings, which were the most frequently used IM category. As evidenced in Table 2, both groups (National and International) recorded an almost equal number of IM instances in their writing task, 119 and 114, respectively. However, there are some differences in the use of individual IM language. For example, the National Program students registered more instances of 'u' (66) than the International Program students, accounting for 55.46%. However, it is noticed that 'ur' and 'ok' were used more often by the International Program students. Another significant finding is that the National Program students did not use some IM language items, such as "b-day" instead of "birthday", while such IM language items were used by the International Program students.

Table 2. Reductions and shortenings according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
You	U	66	55.46	44	38.60
Your	ur	10	8.42	13	11.40
Okay	ok	5	4.20	9	7.90
Are	r	6	5.04	5	4.39
Please	Plz	3	2.52	5	4.39
Thanks	Thnx	3	2.52	2	1.75
Sister	Sis	2	1.68	3	2.63
People	Ppl	1	0.84	0	0.00
Listen	Lsn	1	0.84	2	1.75
Brother	Bro	1	0.84	3	2.63
University	Uni	1	0.84	0	0.00
Birthday	b-day	0	0.00	3	2.63
Something	Sth	6	5.04	4	3.51
Good	Gd	5	4.20	0	0.00
Because	cuz/cause	8	6.72	9	7.90
Doing	doin’	1	0.84	3	2.63
Going	goin’	0	0.00	2	1.75
Joking	jokin’	0	0.00	4	3.51
Honey	Hun	0	0.00	2	1.75
Favourite	fav.	0	0.00	1	0.88
Total		**119**	**100%**	**114**	**100%**

Non-standard spelling

Table 3 shows the non-standard spelling used by teens in their writing tasks. As seen in Table 3, both groups (National and International) recorded an unequal number of IM instances in their writing tasks, 16 and 37, respectively. For example, the International Program students recorded more instances of ‘hey’ (30) than the National Program students, accounting for 81.08%. However, it is noticed that ‘luv’ was used by the National Program students, 12.50%; whereas it was not used at all by the International Program students. Another significant finding is that the National Program students did not use some IM language items, such as “yeah” instead of “yes”, while such IM language items were used by the International Program students with the percentage of 5.41%.

Table 3. Non-standard spelling according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Love	Luv	2	12.50%	0	0.00%
Yes	yeah	0	0.00%	2	5.41%
You	Ya	4	25.0%	5	13.51%
Hi/ hello	Hey	10	62.50%	30	81.08%
Total		**16**	**100%**	**37**	**100%**

Pictograms and logograms

Table 4 shows the pictograms and logograms used by teens in their writing tasks. As shown in Table 4, both groups (National and International) recorded an almost equal number of IM instances in their writing tasks, 36 and 34, respectively. For example, the International Program students recorded more instances of "<3" (27) than the National Program students, who recorded (26) instances. However, it is noticed that "xoxo" was used by the National Program students (27.78%) more than the International Program students (20.59%).

Table 4. Pictograms and logograms according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
A heart	<3	26	72.22%	27	79.41%
Hugs & kisses	Xoxo	10	27.78%	7	20.59%
Total		**36**	**100%**	**34**	**100%**

Acronyms and abbreviations composed of initials

Table 5 below shows the acronyms and abbreviations composed of initials used by both National and International Program students in their writing tasks. As noticed in Table 5, both groups (National and International) recorded an unequal number of IM instances in their writing tasks, 12 and 32, respectively. For example, the International Program students used instances of "OMG" with the percentage of 40.63%, "JK" and "ttyl" with the percentage of 3.12% for each; whereas these instances were not used at all by the National Program students in their writing tasks.

On the other hand, the instances "asap", "ik" and ""tc" were used by the National Program students with the percentage of 8.33% each, while it is noticed that these instances were not used by the International Program students at all.

Another significant finding is that the National Program students used the instance "btw" instead of "by the way" with the percentage of 50%, which is the highest percentage among other instances, while it is shown in the results that the instance "btw" prevailed with a percentage of only 21.88% in the International Program students' writings.

Table 5. Acronyms and abbreviations composed of initials according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
By the way	Btw	6	50.00%	7	21.88%
I don't know	Idk	2	16.68%	4	12.50%
Laugh out loud	LOL	1	8.33%	6	18.75%
As soon as possible	Asap	1	8.33%	0	0.00%
I know	Ik	1	8.33%	0	0.00%
Just kidding	JK	0	0.00%	1	3.12%
Talk to you later	Ttyl	0	0.00%	1	3.12%
Take care	Tc	1	8.33%	0	0.00%
Oh my God	OMG	0	0.00%	13	40.63%
Total		**12**	**100%**	**32**	**100%**

Emoticons

The data revealed a total of 39 instances of smileys. The National Program students registered 22, while the International IGCSE students registered 17 instances.

Single digits can replace words

In their writing tasks, it is noticed that teens replaced words with a single digit such as "2" instead of "to". The data showed that the National Program students used the instance "2" four times, whereas the same instance, "2", was used 3 times by the International Program students.

Word combination

One of the most significant findings evidenced in Table 6 is that the students in the International Program used word combination more than the students in the National Program, 30 and 14, respectively. Another significant feature visible in Table 6 is that the instance "gonna" ranked first in both groups, 50.00% in the National Program and 46.66% in the International Program, followed by the instance "wanna" with 42.86% in the National

Program and 33.33% in the International Program. It is noticed that the forms "wassup", "gotta" and "dunno" were used with the percentage 6.67% for each of them by the International Program students; however, they were not used at all by the National Program students.

Table 6. Word combination according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Going to	gonna	7	50.00%	14	46.66%
Want to	wanna	6	42.86%	10	33.33%
Kind of	kinda	1	7.14%	0	0.00%
What's up	wassup	0	0.00%	2	6.67%
Got to	gotta	0	0.00%	2	6.67%
Don't know	dunno	0	0.00%	2	6.67%
Total		**14**	**100%**	**30**	**100%**

4.2. Types of Instant Messaging language according to their linguistic realization (parts of speech).

Some researchers categorized IM language according to their linguistic realization or part of speech. Such language can be categorized into verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc. Table 7 shows the major linguistic realizations of the IM language found in the data.

Table 7. Major categories of the linguistic realization of Instant Messaging language.

Words in full	Examples	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Nouns	'luv' for 'love'	7	3.14%	9	3.37%
Verbs	'gonna' for 'going to'	23	10.31%	50	18.73%
Adjectives	'gd' for 'good'	10	4.48%	12	4.49%
Adverbs	'btw' for 'by the way'	7	3.14%	7	2.62%
Pronouns	'u' for 'you'	86	38.57%	66	24.72%
Interjections	'OMG' for 'Oh My God'	16	7.18%	52	19.48%
Conjunctions	'cuz' for 'because'	8	3.59%	9	3.37%
Prepositions	'2' for 'to'	4	1.79%	3	1.12%
Others	'Ik' for 'I know' 'Jk' for Just Kidding' 'xoxo' for 'hugs and kisses'	62	27.80%	59	22.10%
Total		**223**	**100%**	**267**	**100%**

Table 7 shows that the most used linguistic categories were pronouns, verbs and interjections, with the percentages of 38.57%, 10.31% and 7.18% by the National Program students and 24.72%, 18.73% and 19.48% by the International Program students, respectively. Another significant observation was that a total of 121 IM language instances could not be classified into any of the linguistic categories, which were classified under others. The least used linguistic category was prepositions with the percentages 1.79% in the National Program and 1.12% in the International Program writing tasks. It was also noticed that the National Program students used IM language to write pronouns more than the students of the International Program with the percentages 38.57% and 24.72%, respectively.

Nouns

Table 8 shows nouns which were used by the participants of this study. As noticed in Table 8, both groups of students (National and International) recorded an almost equal number of nouns in their writing tasks, 7 and 9, respectively. However, there are some differences in the use of the nouns. For example, the International Program students registered more instances of 'sis' 33.33% than the National Program students, accounting for 28.56%. However, it is noticed that "luv", "ppl" and "uni" were used more by the National Program students than the International Program students, who did not use these instances at all. Another significant finding is that the International Program students used the instance "b-day" instead of "birthday" with the percentage 33.33%, while such a form was not used by the National Program students at all.

Table 8. Nouns according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	**Instance**	**National**		**International**	
		Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Love	Luv	2	28.56%	0	0.00%
Sister	Sis	2	28.56%	3	33.33%
People	Ppl	1	14.29%	0	0.00%
Brother	Bro	1	14.29%	3	33.33%
University	Uni	1	14.29%	0	0.00%
Birthday	b-day	0	0.00%	3	33.33%
Total		**7**	**9.99%**	9	**99.9%**

Verbs

One of the most significant findings in Table 9 is that the students in the International Program used the IM Verbs more than the students in the National Program, 50 and 23,

respectively. Another significant observation is that the instance "gonna" ranked first in both groups, 30.42% in the National Program and 28.00% in the International Program, followed by the instance "wanna" with 26.09% in the National Program and 20.00% in the International Program. It is noticed that the instance "tc" was used with the percentage 4.35% by the National Program students; however, it was not used at all by the International Program students.

Table 9. Verbs according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Going to	Gonna	7	30.42%	14	28.00%
Want to	Wanna	6	26.09%	10	20.00%
Are	R	6	26.09%	5	10.00%
Doing	doin'	1	4.35%	3	6.00%
Listen	Lsn	1	4.35%	2	4.00%
Got to	Gotta	0	0.00%	2	4.00%
Don't know	Dunno	0	0.00%	2	4.00%
Going	goin'	0	0.00%	2	4.00%
Joking	jokin'	0	0.00%	4	8.00%
Take care	Tc	1	4.35%	0	0.00%
Laugh out loud	LOL	1	4.35%	6	12.00%
Total		**23**	**100%**	**50**	**100%**

Adjectives

One of the most significant findings in Table 10 is that the students in the International Program almost used the same number of instances of adjectives as the students in the National Program, 12 and 10, in that order. Another significant observation is that the form "ok" ranked first in the International Program, 75.00%, whereas "gd" and "ok" were used with the same percentage in the National Program, 50.00% for each of them. It is also noticed that the instance "gd", which was used with the percentage 50.00% by the National Program students, was not used at all by the International Program students. Finally, as Table 10 shows, the instances "hun." and "fav." were used by the International Program students with the percentages 16.67% and 8.33%, respectively; however, they were not used by the National Program students at all.

Table 10. Adjectives according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Good	Gd	5	50.00%	0	0.00%
Honey	Hun	0	0.00%	2	16.67%
Favourite	fav.	0	0.00%	1	8.33%
Okay	Ok	5	50.00%	9	75.00%
Total		**10**	**100%**	**12**	**100%**

Adverbs

As shown in Table 11, the International Program students used the instance "btw", 7 times, but they did not use the instance "asap" at all. On the other hand, the National Program students used both instances "btw" and "asap" with the percentages 85.71% and 14.29%, respectively.

Table 11. Adverbs according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
By the way	Btw	6	85.71%	7	100.00%
As soon as possible	asap	1	14.29%	0	0.00%
Total		**7**	**100%**	**7**	**100%**

Pronouns

One of the most significant findings evidenced in Table 12 is that the students in the National Program used pronouns more than the students in the International Program, 86 and 66, in that order. Another significant observation is that the instance "u" ranked first in the International Program and the National Program, 66.66% and 76.74%, respectively, whereas the instance "sth" ranked the last in the International Program with the percentage 6.06% and "ya" ranked the last in the National Program with the percentage 4.65%.

Table 12. Pronouns according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	Instance	National		International	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
You	U	66	76.74%	44	66.66%
Your	Ur	10	11.63%	13	19.70%
Something	Sth	6	6.98%	4	6.06%
You	Ya	4	4.65%	5	7.58%
Total		**86**	**100%**	**66**	**100%**

Interjections

Table 13 shows that the students in the International Program used the linguistic category "Interjections" more than the students in the National Program, 52 and 16, respectively. Another significant feature in Table 13 is that the instance “hey” ranked first in both groups, 57.69% in the International Program and 62.50% in the National Program. Furthermore, Table 13 shows that the instances “OMG” and “yeah” were used with the percentages 25.00% and 3.85%, respectively, by the teens in the International Program, whereas these instances were not used at all by the teens in the National Program. Finally, it is worth noting that the very commonly used instance “thnx”, which was used instead of “thanks”, got the percentages 3.85% in the International Program whereas it got the percentage 18.75% in the National Program. We should admit that no explanation can be offered regarding this point.

Table 13. Interjections according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	**Instance**	**National**		**International**	
		Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Oh my God	OMG	0	0.00%	13	25.00%
Yes	Yeah	0	0.00%	2	3.85%
Please	Plz	3	18.75%	5	9.61%
Hi/ hello	Hey	10	62.50%	30	57.69%
Thanks	Thnx	3	18.75%	2	3.85%
Total		**16**	**100%**	**52**	**100%**

Conjunctions

The data showed that the National Program students used the instance “cuz/cause” eight times, whereas the same instance was used nine times by the International Program students.

Prepositions

Another linguistic category used by the participants in this study are prepositions, which were represented by numbers, such as “2” instead of “to”. As mentioned previously, the data showed that the National Program students used the instance “2” four times, whereas the same instance, “2”, was used three times by the International Program students.

Other Instant Messaging expressions

Finally, Table 14 shows some instances that were classified as “Other IM Expressions”, such as “xoxo” instead of “Hugs and Kisses” and “Idk” instead of “I don’t know”. One of the most

significant findings visible in Table 14 is that the instance "<3", which was used instead of "a heart", ranked the first in both groups, 41.94% in the National Program and 45.76% in the International Program. Added to that, the use of emoticons got the second rank with 35.48% in the National Program and 28.81% in the International Program. Another significant feature in Table 14 is that the instances "kinda" and "ik" were only used by the students in the National Program with the percentages 1.61% for each of them; however, the instances "wassup", "JK" and "ttyl" were only used by the students in the International Program.

Table 14. Other Instant Messaging expressions according to educational system (National vs. International Programs).

Words in full	**Instance**	**National**		**International**	
		Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
A heart	<3	26	41.94%	27	45.76%
Emoticons	Smiley	22	35.48%	17	28.81%
Hugs & kisses	Xoxo	10	16.13%	7	11.86%
I don't know	Idk	2	3.23%	4	6.78%
Kind of	Kinda	1	1.61%	0	0.00%
What's up	Wassup	0	0.00%	2	3.39%
I know	Ik	1	1.61%	0	0.00%
Just kidding	JK	0	0.00%	1	1.70%
Talk to you later	Ttyl	0	0.00%	1	1.70%
Total		**62**	**100%**	**59**	**100%**

4.3. Results related to the teachers' attitudes toward Instant Messaging language

4.3.1. Teachers' attitudes

Table 15. Question 1. What are your thoughts regarding the possible use of text messages by the school and/or teachers?

Questionnaire item		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Rank**
1. It would be helpful to get emergency messages from the school (i.e. closures or cancellation of sports)	**F**	0	5	35	60	**3.33**	**.59**	**1**
	%	0	5%	35%	60%			
2. It would be helpful to send assignments or input relating to course work to students.	**F**	11	44	36	9	**2.43**	**.81**	**3**
	%	11%	44%	36%	9%			
3. I want to have cell phone numbers for my students.	**F**	4	42	35	19	**2.69**	**.83**	**2**
	%	4%	42%	35%	19%			

4. I would be open to utilizing text messaging during class time to incorporate technology into the lessons and teach language surrounding its use.	**F**	15	57	28	0	**2.13**	**.65**	**4**
	%	15%	57%	28%	0%			
5. I think it is appropriate.	**F**	0	19	61	20	**1.99**	**.63**	**5**
	%	0%	19%	61%	20%			

The results above reveal that a combined total of 95% of the participants agree that it would be helpful to get emergency messages from the school, while only 5% expressed disagreement. This statement gained a mean of 3.33 with a standard deviation of 0.59.

When prompted with the statement "It would be helpful to send assignments or input relating to course work to students", 36% agreed and only 9% strongly agreed, while 44% disagreed and only 11% strongly disagreed. This indicates that more than half of the participants feel that sending assignments via text messages is not helpful.

As a response to the statement "I want to have cell phone numbers for my students", 19% strongly agreed, 35% agreed, while 42% disagreed and only 4% strongly disagreed. This statement recorded a mean of 2.69 with a standard deviation of 0.83. Therefore, it can be inferred that having cell phone numbers for the students fails to match approval of the majority of the teachers, but obtains the approval of some.

With regard to whether teachers would be open to utilizing text messaging during class time to incorporate technology into the lessons, the majority of the participants (72%) disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 28% of the participants agreed with this statement, while none of the participants strongly agreed. The mean gained by this statement is 2.13 with a standard deviation of 0.65. Finally, as a response to the statement "I think it is appropriate", a combined total of 81% of the participants agreed with using text messaging, whereas only 19% expressed disagreement.

Table 16. Question 2. What are your thoughts about the use of text messaging by teens?

Questionnaire item		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Rank**
1. I think it is fine; there is nothing wrong with it.	F	3	38	44	15	2.70	.76	2
	%	3%	38%	44%	15%			
2. I think that it is overused.	F	0	21	49	30	3.09	.71	1
	%	0%	21%	49%	30%			
3. I think the abbreviated language that teens use	F	16	54	25	5	2.19	.76	5

in text messaging significantly affects their ability to spell and write proper English.	%	16%	54%	25%	5%			
4. I think that it affects teens' ability to communicate and write.	F	9	29	49	13	2.66	.82	3
	%	9%	29%	49%	13%			
5. I think it is a waste of time.	F	23	46	31	0	2.08	.73	6
	%	23%	46%	31%	0%			
6. I think teens should use text messaging.	F	4	39	44	13	2.34	.76	4
	%	4%	39%	44%	13%			

As can be seen Table 16 which shows the teachers' thoughts about the use of text messaging by teens, 15% of the respondents strongly agreed and 44% agreed with using text messaging by teens. Meanwhile, only 3% strongly disagreed and 38% disagreed with the statement regarding the use of text messaging by teens. This statement scored a mean of 2.70 with a standard deviation of 0.76.

With regard to the statement "I think that it is overused", the majority of the participants supported the statement that text messaging is overused by teens. 30% of the participants strongly agreed, and 49% agreed, while only 21% disagreed and none of the participants strongly disagreed. This statement obtained a mean of 3.09 with a standard deviation of 0.71.

In terms of the abbreviated language, a combined total of 30% of the participants agreed that the abbreviated language that teens use in text messaging significantly affects their ability to spell and write proper English, whereas a combined total of 70% of the participants disagreed, implying that IM does not negatively affect the students' spelling and proper English writing. This statement recorded a mean of 2.19 with a standard deviation of 0.76.

Moreover, 49% agreed and 13% strongly agreed that text messaging affects teens' ability to communicate and write, while the percentage of the participants who disagreed with this statement is 29% compared to 9% who strongly disagreed, making a total of 38%.

When prompted with the statement "I think it is a waste of time", only 31% agreed and 0% strongly agreed, while 46% disagreed and 23% strongly disagreed. This indicates that more than half of the participants feel that text messaging is not a waste of time.

Finally, 39% of the participants disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed that teens should use text messaging; however, a combined total of 57% of the participants supported the use of text messaging by teens.

Table 17. Question 3. What do you do when you see Instant Messaging language in your students' in-class or assignment writing?

Questionnaire item		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD	Rank
1. I allow my students to use the Instant Messaging language in their writing tasks.	F	8	54	35	3	2.33	.67	1
	%	8%	54%	35%	3%			
1. When I find Instant Messaging language in my students' writing, I mark them correct.	F	8	56	31	5	2.33	.70	1
	%	8%	56%	31%	5%			
2. When I find Instant Messaging language in my students' writing, I warn them against using them a second time.	F	4	40	49	7	2.59	.68	2
	%	4%	40%	49%	7%			

The results in Table 17 reveal that a combined total of 62% of the participants disagreed with the statement "I allow my students to use the Instant Messaging language in their writing tasks", while only 3% of the participants strongly agreed and 35% agreed. This statement obtained a mean of 2.33 with a standard deviation of 0.67.

Also, 8% of the participants strongly disagreed and 56% disagreed with the statement "When I find Instant Messaging language in my students' writing, I mark them correct"; however, the percentage of the participants who agreed with this statement is 5% strongly agree and 31% agree, making a total of 36%. This statement obtained a mean of 2.33 with a standard deviation of 0.70.

As a final point, the item "When I find Instant Messaging language in my students' writing, I warn them against using them a second time" got the highest mean (2.59) with a standard deviation of 0.68. In fact, a combined total of 44% of the participants disagreed and 56% agreed to warn the students when they find Instant Messaging language in their writing.

Question 4: How often do you see "text language" in students' school work or tests?

With regard to this question, the majority of the participants (49) occasionally see Instant Messaging, 25 participants regularly see it, 16 participants rarely see Instant Messaging and 10 participants don't know how often they see it in their students' work. This item got a mean of 2.47 with a standard deviation of 0.88.

Tables 18 and 19. Answers to Question 4.

Item	I don't know	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly
How often do you see "text language" in students' school work or tests?	10	16	49	25

Item	Mean	SD
How often have you seen "text language" show up in students' school work or on tests in class?	2.47	.88

Tables 19 and 20. Question 5: To what degree do you think students are able to identify the difference and make the "switch" between language for text messaging (informal) and what is necessary for work in school (formal)?

Item	Rarely	Occasionally	Usually	Always
To what degree do you think students are able to identify the difference and make the "switch" between language for text messaging (informal) and what is necessary for work in school (formal)?	10	16	49	25

With respect to the statement "To what degree do you think students are able to identify the difference and make the "switch" between language for text messaging (informal) and what is necessary for work in school (formal)", 49% thought that students are usually able to do so, 25 participants believed they are always able to do so, while 16 and 10 participants claimed that students are occasionally and rarely able to do so, respectively. This item got a mean of 2.65 with a standard deviation of 0.97.

Item	Mean	SD
To what degree do you think students are able to identify the difference and make the "switch" between language for text messaging (informal) and what is necessary for work in school (formal)?	2.65	.97

5. Discussion

Instant Messaging language has become the norm for many students. The findings of this study show that it occasionally exists in Jordanian EFL female students' writings, both in the International Program (IGCSE) and the National Program (Ministry of Education Curriculum), with the majority of instances used by those enrolled in the International Program. This is consistent with the findings of Eller's (2005) study, in which she indicated that many high school instructors have seen Instant Messaging language in their students' written work.

The study also demonstrates that the most used linguistic categories were pronouns, verbs and interjections. Furthermore, it revealed that seven stylistic categories were found in students' writings. In both groups, reductions and shortenings ranked first, followed by "Non-

standard spelling" while the "Single digits can replace words" category was the least used stylistic category in the two programs. Similarly, features including abbreviations and shorthand as well as frequent negligence of the grammatical rules and punctuation were among the many aspects that several researchers revealed in their studies (e.g., Eller, 2005; Plester et al., 2008; Wood, Jackson, Hart, Plester & Wilde, 2011; De Jonge & Kemp, 2012).

The results of the study also indicate that both groups (National and International Program students), due to the program they are joining, sometimes employed an unequal number of IM instances in their writing tasks, while in other cases some IM language items were used almost equally. This indicates that the program does not have a significant impact of the use of Instant Messaging language.

Regarding the teachers' attitudes toward the use of Instant Messaging language in their students' academic writing, the collected data showed, similarly to Salem's (2013) study, that the majority of teachers support the use of text messaging by students only outside the classroom, indicating that they do not allow their students to use the Instant Messaging language in their English writing tasks. In their response to "I think the abbreviated language that teens use in text messaging significantly affects their ability to spell and write proper English" the majority of the teachers (70%) disagreed, implying that Instant Messaging has a positive impact on the students' spelling and proper writing. This result lends support to previous research which found positive impact on students' language skills, and their positive attitude toward using IM in academic writing (Durkin, Conti-Ramsden and Walker, 2011; Wood, Jackson, Hart, Plester, & Wilde, 2011; Tirotta, 2015).

On the other hand, the majority of the sample were not in favor of using Instant Messaging in their students' academic writing, and they thought that using Instant Messaging has an adverse impact on English language learning inside the classroom (Salem, 2013). This opposition of the use of textese in the classroom is also supported by evidence that IM language affects teens' ability to communicate and write (Eller, 2005; De Jonge & Kemp, 2012).

This study, just like some previous research (Mildren, 2010; Turner et al., 2014), found a positive correlation between students' ability to use text language in their school work, and make the "switch" between language for text messaging (informal), and what is necessary for work at school (formal). This implies that students can easily switch from the informal to the formal. With such empirical evidence, the mainstream of researchers (e.g. Wood, Jackson, Hart, Plester, & Wilde, 2011; Coe and Oakhill, 2011; Janin-Starr, 2014) emphasized the lack of threat imposed by the use of textism on students' English language

proficiency. The present study concludes that Instant Messaging in general and the abbreviated language that teens use in text messaging in particular do not pose a threat to their ability to spell and write proper English.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study could help increase the awareness of the potential relationship between Instant Messaging and writing, as well as determine the extent to which Instant Messaging interferes with academic school writing. Some unanswered questions have been exposed in this endeavor, such as the English language teachers' attitudes toward the use of the Instant Messaging language in the academic writing of their students.

However, the question arises what tools might help teachers to effectively prevent students from using Instant Messaging language inappropriately. Classroom awareness and instruction would help students effectively control or enhance the influence of Instant Messaging on their academic writing through the efficient utilization of mini lessons as well as evaluation and execution of various steps of the writing processes to improve students' written work. This remedial work would target the most common mistakes made by students who text regularly and help them improve their writing quickly and efficiently. It would be beneficial for all students to know the impact or potential influence of Instant Messaging on their writing skills, and teachers should discuss this phenomenon to help all students be aware of it.

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Appendix. Teachers' Questionnaire

Question 1. What are your thoughts regarding the possible use of text messages by the school and/or teachers? Tick the most appropriate box.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. It would be helpful to get emergency messages from the school (i.e. closures or cancellation of sports)				
2. It would be helpful to send assignments or input relating to course work to students.				
3. I want to have cell phone numbers for my students.				
4. I would be open to utilizing text messaging during class time to incorporate technology into the lessons and teach language surrounding its use.				
5. I do not think it is appropriate at all.				

Question 2. What are your thoughts about the use of text messaging by teens? Tick the most appropriate box.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I think it is fine; there is nothing wrong with it.				
2. I think that it is overused.				
3. I think the abbreviated language that teens use in text messaging significantly affects their ability to spell and write proper English.				
4. I think that it affects teens' ability to communicate and write.				
5. I think it is a waste of time.				
6. I do not think teens should use text messaging.				

Question 3. What do you do when you see Instant Messaging language in your students' in-class or assignment writing?

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I allow my students to use the Instant Messaging language in their writing tasks.				
2. When I find Instant Messaging language in my students' writing, I mark them correct.				
3. When I find Instant Messaging language in my students' writing, I warn them against using them a second time.				

4- How often do you see "text language" in students' school work or tests? (Tick one)
1 = Regularly 2 = Occasionally 3 = Rarely 4 = I don't know

5- To what degree do you think students are able to identify the difference and make the "switch" between language for text messaging (informal) and what is necessary for work in school (formal)? (Tick one)
1 = Always 2 = Usually 3 = Occasionally 4 = Rarely

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