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FROM THE EDITOR

by **Jarosław Krajka**

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In the era of ubiquitous social media and widespread access to mobile devices, the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) paradigm of technology use in the classroom is gaining more and more teachers' attention. Mobile applications make it easier to energise learners in class, involve them actively in the stream of the lesson inside the classroom or enable exposure to foreign language input outside the school. Smart use of mobile learning, and, in particular, its integration with (or, to be more precise, subordination to) classroom instruction makes foreign language study a new and enhanced experience. Thus, it seems we will see more and more research studies into and pedagogical reflection on how to join face-to-face and online, computer-based and mobile-based, individual and networked learning. At the same time, the way that mobile applications facilitate the work of the language teacher in its many different areas, such as materials development, lesson planning, monitoring classroom interaction or assessing learners' progress, is not to be underestimated.

The effect of global culture, with the increased interest in gaming and expanding market share of video industry, is waiting to be discovered for language teaching. While ELT methodology has well-established patterns of video use with video-viewing techniques that date back to 1980s, researchers' interest is needed to explore the affordances of contemporary cutting-edge online video environments. Hopefully, soon we will see more and more guidelines on how to use online games, video on demand, video sharing sites and social media video content in foreign language instruction.

The current issue of *Teaching English with Technology* attempts to address many of these issues, taking video games and gamification as one of its major themes. First of all, **Mark Love (Woosong University, South Korea)** tries to familiarize language educators with the ways in which videogames convey meaning as a media form, lay the foundations of the videogame theory and show how educators in intermediate and advanced English as a Foreign Language classrooms can teach critical media literacy.

The application of video clips to foster different interaction patterns during language lessons has been the research focus of **Asnawi Muslem, Faisal Mustafa, Bustami Usman**

and **Aulia Rahman (Syiah Kuala University, Indonesia)**. In their study, the authors prove that the application of video clips in Small Group Activities gave better results than teaching with Individual Activities. Thus, learning speaking with video clips using Small Group Activity techniques could be one of the best alternatives to improve Young Learners' speaking performance.

Continuing the vein of gamification in activating learners, **Abir El Shaban (Washington State University, USA)** describes the benefits of using a student response system *Socrative* in supporting ESL students' active learning. The results showed that the synergy of both techniques (SRS and active learning activities) contributes to increasing the students' level of engagement, promotes their critical thinking, and stimulates collaboration.

The other theme appearing quite prominently in this issue is the way pronunciation skills can be fostered by technology. To address that topic, **Rastislav Metruk (University of Žilina, Slovakia)** explores the way Slovak learners of English use electronic dictionaries with regard to pronunciation practice and improvement, indicating the directions for increasing the impact of pronunciation conveniences of such tools. In a similar vein, **Noparat Tananuraksakul (Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, Thailand)** shows how pronunciation instruction designed around a selected phonetics website builds up Thai students' positive attitudes toward their non-native English accented speech, making them more motivated to learn.

The way technology can facilitate teacher's work in the area of assessment is addressed by **Ferit Kılıçkaya** (Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Turkey), whose study aimed at determining EFL teachers' perceptions and experience regarding their use of *GradeCam Go!* to grade multiple choice tests. As the author proves, *GradeCam Go!* seems to pave the way for easy and efficient regular assessment through facilitating frequent quizzes, providing immediate feedback, and monitoring student progress.

This issue is concluded with **Herri Mulyono's (University of Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA, Indonesia)** review of A.W. (Tony) Bates's book *Teaching in a Digital Age*. The review alerts TEwT readers of the need to reconcile theory and practice of technology-assisted instruction and recommends the book as offering alternative classroom procedures to teach students within a digital environment.

We wish you good reading!

PROBLEMATIZING VIDEOGAMES:
TEACHING STUDENTS TO BE CRITICAL PLAYERS

by **Mark Love**

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Abstract

This contribution aims to familiarize educators with the unique ways in which videogames convey meaning as a media form and to provide an instrument, based on videogame theory, that educators can easily employ in intermediate and advanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms to teach critical media literacy. In order to equip teachers with the skills needed to teach the critical media literacy of videogames, the author reviews relevant videogame theory, including Bogost's procedural rhetoric (2008a) and Consalvo and Dutton's (2006) holistic analysis. Important concepts from these schools of videogame criticism are combined with Freire's (2010) notion of problematizing to create an instrument that can be productively employed by educators to teach students to be critical players of videogames. It is found that the approach offered bridges the gap between theory and student concerns, results in greater personalization on the part of students when they analyze videogames, and is able to help students raise emergent issues that the researcher could not anticipate. It is hoped that educators will share these emergent issues and continue the discussion.

Keywords*:* critical media literacy; videogames; procedural rhetoric

1. Introduction

> The world offers us raw materials for our simulations, and our simulations cause us to act in the real world in ways that change it to better resemble or model simulations. (Gee, 2008b, p. 257)

Teaching critical media literacy is de rigueur in education today, and it is standard practice to teach students how various forms of media try to influence them (Beach, 2007; Hammer, 2011). The most common media form discussed in the classroom is probably advertising, for it is very easy for students to see how advertising attempts to influence society at large. The transparency of most advertisements' motives makes the medium a good training ground for students before teaching them to analyze other cultural artifacts, such as documentaries, (pulp) fiction, film, magazines, music, newspapers, television and social networking sites (Storey, 2010; Zollers, 2009; boyd & Ellison, 2012). Videogames, conceived broadly to include computer games, console games and mobile games, are a media form that has

traditionally incorporated nearly all other media forms (see Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan, 2004). Recently, this process has reversed as many other media forms now incorporate videogames into their form, most obviously demonstrated by Android applications, which advertise a multitude of products, and Google-sponsored on-line advertisements posing as games. As videogames incorporate a full range of (multi)media forms — videogames include music, storylines, film shorts, (fictional) newspapers, (fictional) television shots, cell/smartphones, and even fictional social network sites — a robust critical media scholarship has developed around them that can be employed when teaching the critical media literacy of videogames and other media that convey messages in similar ways. Teaching the critical media literacy of videogames can be part of a holistic approach to teaching critical media literacy that prepares students to confront a wide range of media artifacts they will encounter throughout their lives.

2. Method

Interpreting videogames differs considerably from interpreting literature, the media form with which most teachers who have backgrounds in English literature are most familiar. Literature is often interpreted using literary approaches such as autobiographical criticism, critical race theory, deconstruction, gender criticism, materialist criticism, new criticism, narrative criticism, psychoanalytical criticism, and postcolonial criticism (Barry, 2009; Tyson, 2015). Some of the approaches used to interpret literature have been productively employed in videogame analysis, such as gender criticism (Hayes, 2007; Lynch, Tompkins, van Driel & Fritz, 2016), postcolonialism (Mukherjee, 2016), critical race theory (Polasek, 2014), and analysis of ageism (Williams, Martins & Consalvo, 2009). Even though great insight can be obtained by employing literary approaches in the analysis of videogames, literary approaches only account for those aspects of the videogame experience that parallel the experience of reading literature. An approach is needed that provides students with a deeper understanding of how videogames convey meaning differently, or signify differently, than literature (Zimmerman, 2004) in order to inculcate students with the skills to be adept interpreters of videogames as a unique media form (see Aarseth, 2004; Pearce, 2004).

Some scholars have provided suggestions of ways in which to use videogames in the classroom (Beach, 2007), and useful compendiums of activities for teachers to employ to use or discuss videogames in the L2 language teaching environment (Mawley & Stanley, 2011). While greatly respecting this work, the approach employed here seeks to equip students with a holistic understanding of the signification practices and persuasive techniques of videogames by asking them to reflect holistically on the videogames they play regularly and

discuss their reflections. It is hoped that by making students cognizant of the ways in which videogames disperse signification across their multimodal elements and processes, students will gain analytical skills to interpret videogames and other media artifacts that employ similar techniques.

To equip teachers with an understanding of the ways that videogames convey meaning, a necessary prerequisite for teachers to guide their students in interpreting media artifacts, an overview of the processes through which videogames convey meaning is provided below, followed by a discussion of ways to teach these skills. A few sample instruments are provided that teachers can use in their own foreign language classes to apply these approaches (Appendix), which can be useful for teachers who want to carve out a space for critical discussion in an EFL classroom (Love, 2013). It is recognized that every media artifact demands that a teacher construct a unique instrument to analyze it, and, as such, the instruments provided here serve as examples and a training ground in how to conduct an analysis. It is hoped that teachers will adapt these approaches and develop their own instruments rather than simply use these tools as prescribed activities, though the activities could also be used that way.

3. How do videogames convey meaning?

According to Zimmermann (2004), understanding videogames depends on comprehending four concepts: 1) *narrative*, as videogames are a new narrative form that combines multimodal digital storytelling with games; 2) *interactivity*, as videogames require a player to engage with a game cognitively, functionally, and culturally, and some games require players to engage with other real and non-real players in multiplayer environments; 3) *play*, which is “the free space of movement within a rigid structure” (p. 159) that can be intellectual, physical, semiotic or cultural; and 4) *games*, which are “a voluntary interactive activity, in which one or more players follow rules that constrain their behavior, enacting an artificial conflict that ends in a quantifiable outcome” (p. 160). In all of these categories, a player actively moves the game, or plot, forward while playing the game, in the course of which s/he actively experiences agency/immersion as the results of her/his actions take shape in the game world through the player’s interaction with the game and other players (see Mateas, 2004).

Murray (1997) describes cyberspace narrative, analogous to a game world, as characterized by immersion, agency and transformation. Immersion is a better term than agency to describe what a player experiences in game worlds as agency implies an ability to change a world, while most game worlds offer very limited choices. The lack of choices

offered in most game worlds suggests that agency is a facade because the game is fixed: usually players end up making choices that they were led to take during game play (Domsch, 2013). Agency is highly dependent on programming, and few games provide truly open-ended environments.

The ergodic school of videogame criticism tends to privilege the pure playing moments of the game when the player is actively controlling an avatar or other representation on the screen and focuses interpretation of videogames on those moments (Eskelinen, 2004; Aarseth, 2004; Pearce, 2004). Even so, many in the ergodic school recognize that other elements of gaming, such as narrative aspects, do affect the player's interpretation of the game. As such, the field of videogame criticism is properly characterized as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy due to the fact that the exact proportion of time spent between a player directly controlling her/his on-screen representative/avatar and performing other game activities varies greatly by critic and game title, and performing these other activities affects how a player/critic interprets the game. As such, agency varies greatly by game title. When teaching students to analyze agency and immersion in videogames, it can be fruitful to ask them to reflect on what they can and cannot control in the videogame environment as well as what elements in the videogame environment make them, or prevent them from, feeling immersed.

While videogames share some elements with other media forms, they contain a unique combination of multimodal elements, the exact configuration of which varies by individual game and genre:

> It's clear that games can signify in ways that other narrative forms have already established: through sound and image, material and text, representations of movement and space. But perhaps there are ways that only games can signify, drawing on their unique status as explicitly interactive narrative systems of formal play. (Zimmermann, 2004, p.162)

How can students be taught that the games they play signify differently than other media artifacts? The best way to teach them to analyze videogames processes of multimodal signification is by posing similar questions to them, such as the following: Can you think of some aspect of the videogame in which meaning was conveyed using a variety of multimedia sources? How does the combination of sound/image/text/space in the videogame you are examining construct meaning beyond what could only be conveyed by one of those media sources? How does this surplus of meaning affect your understanding of this videogame and the meanings it conveys?

Bogost (2007) proposes that videogames possess a unique rhetorical form that conveys meaning through processes rather than by stating propositions: "*procedural rhetoric* is the practice of using processes persuasively just as verbal rhetoric is the practice of using oratory persuasively and visual rhetoric is the practice of using images persuasively" (2007, p. 28). While elements of visual rhetoric and oratory rhetoric contribute to procedural rhetoric, Bogost (2007) believes games differ from other media forms in how they make arguments: arguments are perceived by a gamer playing through the game, experiencing, and acting on the multiple processes in the game. Bogost (2007) compares this process to an argument by enthymeme in which "[t]he player *literally* fills in the missing portion of the syllogism by interacting with the application, but that action is constrained by the rules," (p. 34) or procedures, of the game. In this process "[t]he player performs a great deal of mental synthesis, filling the gap between subjectivity and game processes" (Bogost, 2007, p. 43), a process akin to reader-response criticism's task of *filling gaps* between individual readers and texts (see Tompkins, 1980).

It is not one enthymeme, but a whole host of them that the player must fill in when playing a videogame. To simplify, Bogost views games as composed of groups of small processes, which he calls unit operations: one process is invoked to buy an item, another process is involved in persuading people, yet another process is used for combat (2008b). Each process has its own computational rules that govern how the fictional world of the game operates. The argument a specific videogame makes, the rhetoric of the game, emerges from not simply one process or procedure, but the combination of them all, which together construct "arguments about the way systems work in the material world" (Bogost, 2007, p. 47; see Gee, 2005). Bogost aims to create critical players who are capable of "playing a videogame or using procedural systems with an eye toward identifying and interpreting the rules that drive that system" (2007, p. 64). Interpreting those rules demands that players interpret and assess the messages that the unit operations are conveying to players. While the concept of unit operations can seem complex at first for students, asking them to think of each action they perform in the videogame world as a unit and the game as a combination of all of the units can help them grasp the concept. As these processes can be seen as a critique of real life processes (Bogost, 2007; 2008b), the procedural rhetoric of videogames can affect the opinions of players about issues in real life. Bogost labels videogames that make effective arguments *persuasive games*.

As videogames have become a mainstream media form in society with sales figures surpassing those of movies (Nath, 2016), it is imperative for educators to teach critical media

literacy of videogames as they teach other forms of cultural criticism (see Ryan, 2010). Students need to be taught to think about the meanings conveyed by all aspects of play and examine the whole experience of gaming from the moment of first viewing advertising on websites, posters, television; to downloading and/or installing the game, during which a variety of menus and screenshots may be viewed; to playing the game, during which many menus may be perused, in-game videos may be viewed, and a variety of other activities will be engaged in; to viewing the list of scrolling credits at the end of the game; to discussions with friends about a game during play and after (see Zimmerman, 2004). Even a simple achievement screen encapsulates the values of the gaming system in that it openly displays the actions that are rewarded in a game while ignoring other actions performed by a player that may also be worthy of reward but have chosen not to be by the videogame designers (see Consalvo & Dutton, 2006). As such, achievement screens betray the actions that the videogame designers value in the game world.

Lessons could be designed around all of these experiences related to playing videogames. The processes involved in playing a videogame, which include active immersion, agency, interfaces, narrative elements, multimodality, and procedural rhetoric, all contribute to a player's experience and interpretation of a game as the meaning(s) of a videogame is created through the accretion of experiences and their agglutination in the flow of the stream of consciousness of the player (James, 1890; Zimmerman, 2004). To phrase it more succinctly, all aspects of gameplay contribute to the overall message of the game and slightly change how a player interprets the game. As such, a method for analysing videogames in the classroom needs to account for all of the multimodal moments experienced while playing a videogame, the procedural rhetoric of the game, the gameplay itself, and the videogame as a distinct multimedia form.

While all approaches to media analysis enlighten certain aspects of the object of critique, often the effect(s) produced by the entire media artifact is ignored. When an entire media artifact is examined, certain themes may emerge as prominent in a similar fashion as to how themes emerge during qualitative analysis of data, such as grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Guiding students to discover these overarching themes teaches them how to analyze media artifacts, how to recognize themes running throughout media artifacts, and how to analyze the way those themes fit into the larger message the media form conveys. This complex form of media analysis teaches students to reflect on larger issues that they would not consider if not asked to stretch their minds, thereby producing critical players.

4. Teaching students how videogames signify

It seems that it should be relatively easy to teach students about how games convey meanings multimodally as most digital natives are used to consuming a wide range of cultural artifacts multimodally on a daily basis. Even so, it can be difficult to get them to think critically about that consumption (see Ryan, 2010). Digital natives have been habitualized into analyzing games for their aesthetic values or trendiness, having observed most popular media sources analyze videogames and other cultural media artifacts in a manner that shows little concern for the ideologies media artifacts bear or how these ideologies are conveyed (Zagal & Bruckman, 2008).

Though a variety of theorists have proposed methods of videogame criticism (e.g., Gee, 2005; Malliet, 2007; Mäyrä, 2008), Consalvo and Dutton's (2006) is the easiest for an individual teacher who wishes to teach students how to interpret and critique games from an ideological, whole-game, perspective to apply. Its strength and usefulness lies in offering a template of categories for game critics to apply to a game: immersive play, interfaces, ideology, and narrative aspects. Their simple four-part structure for analyzing a videogame helps new interpreters account for the multimodal aspects of a game and encourages them to construct a holistic analysis. Consalvo and Dutton offer their approach as a means by which to perform cultural critique but are not overtly concerned with Bogost's procedural rhetoric. Yet procedural rhetoric is a process that occurs throughout all the aspects of a game; it functions in a similar manner to a subcode that continuously tracks experience and erupts into the criticism. As such, an approach is needed that follows Consalvo and Dutton's categories of analysis for holistic game analysis, but expands on them to make a more comprehensive instrument that incorporates insights offered by other approaches to videogame analysis, such as procedural rhetoric.

The following analysis will progress through each of Consalvo and Dutton's (2006) categories (Object Inventory, Interface Study, Interaction Map, and Gameplay Log), provide a description of each of these tools, and suggest ways to adapt these tools in order to incorporate other theories of videogame analysis to the teaching of videogames. In fairness, Consalvo and Dutton view their categories as heuristic tools to get the player thinking about objects in the game rather than as part of a prescriptive method that must be adhered to. They describe their method as "a preliminary template for critical/textual game analysis…. [that] is meant to serve as one way (likely among others) for game analysts to approach games in a way that is systematic but not rigidly so" (2006, "Game Analysis," para. 7). Their method provides some guidelines to conducting what could otherwise be an overwhelming task, while

being open to incorporating other elements. They also provide questions that encourage students to start thinking about other questions that could be asked about videogames using their categories. As Consalvo and Dutton's list of questions encourages expansion of its categories, it is a useful resource to consult if one is having trouble thinking up questions for a category. One problem with encouraging a student to employ Consalvo and Dutton's questions is that they set an agenda that restricts the analysis conducted to their questions and concerns rather than the student's concerns, though, as mentioned above, Consalvo and Dutton are not intentionally prescriptive. Many critical media literacy approaches are also subject to the same criticism: they tell students what to look for in a media artifact, usually centered around the big three issues of race, class, and gender (Sung & Pederson, 2012), which many students even at grade school levels have already become adept at spotting through the regular raising of these issues in mainstream classes, such as literature or social studies. This standard approach to teaching critical approaches of analyzing media is far too limiting for a class of active minds that can think of a wider range of problems for analysis related to videogame play than their instructors, who have limited experience of games and the current social world of gaming.

One way to go beyond the standard approach to critical media literacy is to have students problematize (see Freire, 2010) issues they see in games, which may bring problems to the attention of teachers, and the public at large, of which they were unaware (Frasca, 2004, employs Freire's concepts in videogame design). Focusing on problematizing issues that students identify in videogames also ensures that a class is student-fronted (see Love, 2012). Some students may wish to examine how games depict adolescents or the relationships of teachers with students or parents with children, and the now-dated game *Bully*, an action adventure game set in a fictional school and its environs, comes to mind as a game in which adults' relationships with adolescents were depicted.

Since popular games are being the most widely consumed, a game such as *League of Legends,* an online, multiplayer battle arena game, is one of the best titles on which to test this approach. Conversations with players have informed the researcher that it is common knowledge that Korean players of the game have to have thick skin as a culture of gaming has developed in which players regularly insult and swear at players who have joined their team if they play badly, make mistakes, or even if the team one has joined simply loses to another team. The researcher suggested to one student that he make the topic of his presentation "How to play *League of Legends* without swearing at other players." He replied that it was impossible to play *League of Legends* without swearing.

The most important point in developing fruitful discussions using this approach is to keep these discussions student-driven rather than instrument-driven: it is imperative for the teacher not to dictate to students what to analyze. Instead, s/he should try to elicit from students the problems that should be discussed to problematize the game. This can be accomplished by beginning with a casual discussion about the game that focuses on asking students which games they play, how often they play them, what games are popular, etc. Once students have warmed up to the discussion and the teacher has discovered a popular game or games, s/he should steer the conversation to ask students to discuss what problems they see in the game by asking questions such as the following:

- What problems do you see or experience while playing this game?
- What problems do you see in how this game depicts the world?
- What problems do you see in how this game depicts social relations?
- What problems do you see in how social relations develop around this game (the social side of gaming)?
- What are some problems that emerge with other players when you play this game?

One reason for beginning with a general discussion of the game is that problems related to a game often only emerge through a general discussion, rather than direct questioning. The teacher needs to pay close attention to the discussion for clues that may betray problems, and then ask further probing questions in a process very similar to Freire's problematizing (2010). Once an issue has been identified, the teacher can steer the conversation to consider each of Consalvo and Dutton's categories, in turn, under the focus of problematizing videogames. The sample instruments provided below combine problematizing with each of Consalvo and Dutton's categories as well as Bogost's procedural rhetoric. A similar format to Consalvo and Dutton's format of presenting questions for each category is followed below because Consalvo and Dutton realized their approach demands analysts to think about games holistically while it also helps to "develop research questions that look at ideological assumptions operating in a game" (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006, "Game Analysis," para. 9).

> we fully expect that this methodology will be modified…. But for now this methodological toolkit – interaction mapping, object inventory, interface study and logging gameplay – is offered… as a way to make the research thorough, without losing those aspects of games – play and emergence – that make them the dynamic artefacts of culture that they are. (Consalvo and Dutton, "Summary," para. 1, 2006)

Adhering to the expectations of Consalvo and Dutton, a modification of their theory to incorporate procedural rhetoric with the specific goal of creating critical players is proffered below.

5. Participants

Though the researcher has been discussing videogames with EFL teachers and learners in a variety of classes since 2008, a pilot test of the instruments was administered to a group of first-year undergraduate students attending a task-based English course at a medium-sized, mid-ranked provincial university in South Korea in 2017. The group was composed of 4 females and 9 males who were between 18 and 21 years of age. The average ability of students was upper-intermediate.

6. Consalvo and Dutton's Object Inventory

> the fact of reality, the real fact, is not the object but our sensation of it, which is where it exists.
> (Pessoa, 2001, p. 65)

In numerous games players collect items, numbering in thousands in some role-playing games. Consalvo and Dutton (2006) suggest the critic "create an object inventory that catalogues all known objects that can be found, bought, stolen or created, and produce a detailed list or spreadsheet that lists various properties of each item" ("Object Inventory," para. 2). This list can be used to examine the game world's underlying concepts, such as its implied economic system or how it constructs gender (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006). Consalvo and Dutton recognize that each game contains unique objects and unique ways of using objects (though game genre similarities may exist), and thus suggest unique categories of objects will have to be generated for each game. They also suggest examining how the player/character and other non-player characters in the video game interact with game objects. Charting all of the interactions would be an impossible task, so it is best to start with a problem and chart interactions that relate to that particular problem. It is useful to ask a general question to first get students thinking about problems that they may have not considered before, but if students have already identified a problem to investigate, they can skip to the second question. The following questions can be employed to stimulate discussion:

- What are some problems with objects in the game?
- Can you name any objects in the game that relate to the problem you identified?
- How do objects in the game relate to the problem of ________?

- What messages do the objects relay that relates to the problem of ________? Can you think of any problems with these messages?
- Do the objects convey any message related to a message being communicated via procedural rhetoric that relates to the problem of ___________? If so, how?
- What are the social aspects of objects in the game, both in-game and out-of-game, that relate to the problem of ________? Do the social aspects of the games present any other problems?

7. Consalvo and Dutton's Interface Study

> the interface is a continuous feedback loop where the player must be seen as both implied by, and implicated in, the construction and composition of the experience. (Newman, 2002, "Playing Games," para. 1)

The creation of meaning while playing a videogame is a combination of not only the game world choices made by the player but also the host of interfaces through which the player encounters the game. There is the physical interface of keyboard and mouse, or controller for a console system (see Konzack, 2002), but this physical interface is more about playability and interaction than meaning creation, though meaning can spill over into every aspect of a game. According to Consalvo and Dutton,

> the interface can be defined as any on-screen information that provides the player with information concerning the life, health, location or status of the character(s), as well as battle or action menus, nested menus that control options such as advancement grids or weapon selections, or additional screens that give the player more control over manipulating elements of gameplay. (2006, "Interface Study," para. 1)

Interfaces that do convey meaning and are subject to critical analysis are the on-screen controls one sees while playing the game as well as the host of menus through which the player navigates the game world, for these interfaces convey to the player what the game creators deem is important in this game world. While engaged in gameplay, the player may be interrupted by a variety of interfaces: by dialogue boxes to which s/he must respond by making choices that affect how the game progresses, cut-scenes (short 'filmic' scenes that advance the plot), and a variety of other game menus, some of which pop up and others which the player must bring up. Within these menus, players have access to information that is not part of the (ergodic) playing experience of the game engine (the programming that generates the game).

In adventure games, players often peruse inventories; read about quests; read manuscripts that give background information about the characters, items, factions, or culture

in the game; access help menus; view maps; view player attributes and abilities; (re)view cut-scenes; upgrade/modify attributes, skills and equipment; have conversations with in-game characters; buy and sell equipment; and perform a host of other functions that vary by game. Interfaces comprise all of the extra game menus that provide information about what the player is doing other than directly navigating and interacting with the environs and characters of the game world, though sometimes interfaces are used for navigation. While playing games, much time is spent outside of the direct game world, and it is usually in interface menus that this time is spent: a player equips items and discovers information about the game world, such as items or quests, through interfaces. All of these interfaces contribute to the multimodal experience of a player and procedural rhetoric of a videogame.

Consalvo and Dutton's Interface Study attempts to chart "the information and choices that are offered to the player, as well as the information and choices that are withheld" (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006, "Interface Study," para. 2). It "reveals clues about the ideological assumptions of the game" and what is valued in the game world (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006, "Interface Study," para. 2). Educators should aim to teach their students to constantly think about the choices that videogames offer them and reflect on how these choices betray what the game values and esteems. Relevant questions for a discussion about interfaces, beginning with a general question, are these:

- What are some problems with interfaces in this game?
- How do the interfaces add additional information about the problem of ____________ that could not be obtained by playing the game without consulting the interfaces?
- What messages do the interfaces convey in relation to the problem of _________? How do they present this information?
- Can you identify any aspects of the interfaces that relate to the problem of ___________ mentioned above?
- Do the interfaces convey any messages via procedural rhetoric related to the problem of ________? If so, how?

8. Consalvo and Dutton's Interaction Map

> Video game spaces are more than simply the sum of their code – they are experiential spaces generated through code and the player's interaction with the execution of that code through the medium of the screen. (Taylor, 2003, para 1.)

Consalvo and Dutton's Interaction Map is a much less wieldy tool of analysis than the item inventory and interface study. It consists of "examining the choices that the player is offered

in regards to interaction — not with objects, but with other player characters, and/or with Non-Player Characters (NPCs)" (2006, "Interaction Map," para. 1). Because of the intricate relationship of interaction to events, Consalvo and Dutton (2006) suggest that "The overall 'story' of the game can be discerned here [in the Interaction Map], if there is one, in order to raise questions about narrative or the ideological implications of the plot" ("Interaction Map," para. 6). They note that this is too broad a task to be applied to every interaction in a game and suggest using it only as a heuristic category (2006). Consalvo and Dutton also note that it is important to replay a game to play out different choices that may not be visible on a first play through. While Consalvo and Dutton are primarily interested in in-game interactions, the rise of massive multiplayer online gaming (MMOG) raises the importance of charting multiplayer interactions as they can be part of the problems players experience in gaming (for example, the above mentioned issue of players being shamed by other players if they play badly while playing *League of Legends*). Relevant questions for teachers are these, again beginning with a general question:

- What are some problems with interactions in the game?
- How do interactions with other players relate to the problem of ___________?
- How do interactions with NPCs relate to the problem of ___________?
- How many game interactions did you note that are related to the problem of _________?
- Are these interactions forced by the game or are they part of emergent play?
- What kind of problems do you have with other real players when you play?
- What does this tell you about the problem you earlier identified of ________?
- What 'story' is told by the interactions?
- Does this story relate to the problem of _______?
- What does this tell you about the ideology of the game?
- What could you do to solve this problem or just make it less of a problem?
- What messages are being conveyed by the interactions of players in-game and out-of-game?

8. Consalvo and Dutton's Gameplay Log

Gameplay is "the kernel at the center of the machine, the engine that drives all of the other [game] elements, putting the *game* in the game-story" (Zimmerman, 2004, p. 162). The

Gameplay Log aims to track these processes, a category which Consalvo and Dutton describe as

> The most nebulous — the overall "world" of the game and the emergent gameplay that can come into being…. the researcher is looking for the "unexpected" in gameplay (among other things) to see how (potentially) open the game is for players…. [and] studies such things as emergent behaviour or situations, the larger game world or system, and intertextuality as it is constituted with the game. (2006, "Gameplay Log," para. 1)

This category allows the player to "put together the 'larger picture' of the game that might have been fragmented through analysis of discrete segments such as the interface, objects or interactions alone" (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006, "Gameplay Log," para. 4). This category also serves as a space in which a player can record overall impressions of the game and anything else the other categories might have missed.

Though they did not divulge their reasons for naming this category of gameplay analysis a log, that they did appears to appeal to common qualitative research techniques of keeping logs, journals, and diaries to record a researcher's field notes, observations, and reflections (Creswell, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001). Consalvo and Dutton's term 'emergent gameplay' further pays homage to this social science research tradition that looks for emergent data, or unanticipated behavior of subjects, in a social situation. A log of gameplay is a repository that can be perused to discover emergent behavior.

Regardless of the specific questions asked, Consalvo and Dutton's focus here is on gameplay and what may be missed in an analysis of the minutiae of a game, as shown by their comment that this analysis looks to uncover "the overall 'look and feel' of the complete world that the game constructs" (2006, "Gameplay Log," para. 1). Questions that could be posed for this category are these:

- What emergent behavior (for example, a game cheat), or behavior that is not expected by game players, have you seen?
- What emergent behavior have you seen "outside of the game", for example, behavior that players regularly engage in before agreeing to join a team or after a game has finished?
- Are there any other kinds of emergent behavior you can think of?
- Is any of this emergent behavior a problem?
- Have you noticed any intertextuality in the game?
- Does this intertextuality relate to the problem of _________ identified earlier? If so, how?

- Are there any aspects of the game in general that relate to the problem of _________ that have not been discussed?
- How many intertextual connections did you see in the game related to the problem earlier identified of _________?
- Is anything gained by the overall playing of the game and using the gameplay log that relates to the problem of ________ that has not been discussed?

9. Weaknesses in Consalvo and Dutton's approach

One weakness of Consalvo and Dutton's approach is that many of their categories overlap. Objects relate to interactions, interactions relate to the interface, and interactions relate to emergent experience. The concept of story, which Consalvo and Dutton place at the level of interactions, overlaps with all four categories they use to analyze videogames (object inventory, interface, interactions, and the gameplay log), for all the multimodal elements of a videogame contribute to a player's understanding of the story told including her/his experience of the story. The critical player's understanding/interpretation of the game, or construction of its story, is based on an amalgamation of all of the factors discussed above.

Consalvo and Dutton analyse intertextuality in the gameplay log, but intertextuality is ubiquitous in most genres of videogames and influences the interpretation of game elements in all of Consalvo and Dutton's categories. An individual mind does not maintain Consalvo and Dutton's divisions as s/he plays and experiences the game and the host of intertexts it contains. An individual player is subject to "the intertextual drive" (see Riffaterre, 1990), which determines that wherever a player encounters something that reminds her/him of something else, that encounter forcibly recalls an intertext from her/his unconscious. As such, discussions of intertextuality could be used when discussing any of Consalvo and Duttons' categories.

Bogost's (2007, 2008a) concept of procedural rhetoric could also be incorporated into any of Consalvo and Dutton's categories as the arguments made by procedural rhetoric emerge by accretion and agglutination in a player of a variety of game elements. It was for this reason that the questions regarding procedural rhetoric were integrated into the questions based on Consalvo and Dutton's categories above. Similarly, logging a player's thoughts and responses lies between all of these categories in gameplay because it is impossible to separate them in/from the individual game player's stream of consciousness. A strict adherence to the categories could be used as a tool for writing up a description of a videogame, but this description would be inherently contradictory to player in-game experience. As such, it seems

best to integrate elements of intertextuality, story analysis, and procedural rhetoric when they arise in an analysis rather than limit a discussion to when these concepts confer with Consalvo and Dutton's categories. With these provisos in mind, it may be best at the end of an analysis to ask additional questions such as these:

- Is there an overall message conveyed by the game from all of the elements via procedural rhetoric that you would not have noticed without reflecting on it?
- Did considering all of the elements above in relation to the problem(s) you identified help you to see a message conveyed via procedural rhetoric that you were not aware of when you began this project?

Even though many of Consalvo and Dutton's categories contain concepts that overlap with other categories, thinking about Consalvo and Dutton's categories, in turn, while conducting an analysis, does help to uncover aspects of a game that could be easily overlooked without a systematic approach to guide the reflection. All of these questions have been combined into a worksheet for the convenience of anyone wishing to employ the approach with her/his own classes (see Appendix).

10. Conclusion

Media literacy skills, including requisite skills to interpret videogames, are essential to any educator working in a twenty-first century environment. The discussion above has been provided to familiarize educators who are unaware of critical media literacy and practices with techniques they can use to analyze videogames. It is hoped that they will pass these concepts on to their students so that their students can be more critical about their consumption of cultural artifacts. This approach parallels Chamberlin-Quinlisk's goal of making students critique media artifacts that they like, not just those that they do not (2012). The approach offered above is not comprehensive and will require constant adaptation. It is hoped individual instructors engaged in teaching their students to critically analyze videogames will adapt and add to the questions in each of the sections above as the author has adapted and added questions to Consalvo and Dutton's categories of analysis.

The uniqueness of the approach offered above is that it attempts to integrate procedural rhetoric and Freire's process of problematizing to Consalvo and Dutton's holistic game analysis. Whether the procedural rhetoric of a videogame is effective or not is only determined by the individual player's personal reaction to the message conveyed and whether s/he changes her/his course of actions, or manner of thinking, after playing that videogame. Incorporating Freire's concept of problematizing to students' analysis of videogames is an

approach that is not extant in the literature on critical media literacy (Frasca, 2004) that attempts to bridge the gap between theory, praxis, and student concerns (see Johnson, 2009). Problematizing videogames personalizes videogame analysis for each student and carries the possibility of raising emergent issues to the attention of educators at large. It is hoped that educators will pass some of the knowledge they gain from this problematizing of videogames back to the academic community.

The greatest strength of the approach is that a typical undergraduate student could easily apply the approach outlined above heuristically to produce a fairly lucid piece of cultural criticism of a game s/he may already know intimately from hours spent in its game world. With practice, students should be able to apply these concepts to other media artifacts, not just videogames. It is hoped researchers will expand upon and develop this approach and suggest other concepts that need to be incorporated when teaching students to critically analyze videogames that have been overlooked in this approach.

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Appendix 1. Problematizing Videogames: A worksheet for students

Write down the name of the videogame that you would like to analyze: ______________________________

Procedural rhetoric: the message collectively conveyed by all of the processes and events of a game that may differ from explicit statements made in the game

Problematizing the game

What problems do you see in how this game depicts the world?

What problems do you see in how this game depicts social relations?

What problems do you see in how social relations develop around this game (the social side of gaming)?

What problems do you see in this game or do you experience through the playing of this game.

What are some problems that emerge with other players when you play this game?

Discussing Agency and Immersion: how much a player feels s/he can influence elements in the game world

At what points in the game do you feel that you are in control?

What can you control in the game?

What can you not control?

When did you feel most immersed in the game?

Why did you feel immersed in the game?

What prevents you from feeling immersed in the game?

Overall, did you feel that you possessed a lot of agency in this game? Why or why not?

Teaching multimodal meaning: how meaning is conveyed using various types of media

Can you think of some aspect of the videogame in which meaning was conveyed using a variety of multimedia sources?

How does the combination of sound/image/text/space in the videogame you are examining construct meaning beyond what could only be conveyed by one of those media sources?

How does this surplus of meaning affect your understanding of this videogame and the meanings it conveys?

The Object Inventory: all the objects in a game and what you can do with them, e.g., a potion you can obtain, buy, sell, or give away

What are some problems with objects in the game?

Can you name any objects in the game that relate to the problem you identified?

How do objects in the game relate to the problem of ________?

What messages do the objects relay that relate to the problem of ________? Can you think of any problems with these messages?

Do the objects convey any message via procedural rhetoric that relates to the problem of ___________? If so, how?

Can you think of any problems related to objects in the game? What are they?

What are the social aspects of objects in the game, both in-game and out-of-game, that relate to the problem of ________? Do the social aspects of the games present any other problems?

The Interface Study: interfaces are all the menus, screens, dialogue boxes, inventories, cut-screens, pop-up screens, in-game books, etc., that interrupt directly playing the game

What are some problems with interfaces in this game?

How do the interfaces add additional information about the problem of ____________ that could not be obtained by playing the game without consulting the interfaces?

What messages do the interfaces convey related to the problem of _________? How do they present this information?

Do the interfaces convey any message via procedural rhetoric related to the problem of ________? If so, how?

The Interaction Map: all the ways one interacts with non-player characters (NPCs) and player-characters (PCs) in the game (in-game and out)

What are some problems with interactions in the game?

How do interactions with other players relate to the problem of ___________?

How do interactions with NPCs relate to the problem of ___________?

How many game interactions did you note that are related to the problem of ___________?

Are these interactions forced by the game or are they part of emergent play?

What kind of problems do you have with other real players when you play?

What does this tell you about the problem you earlier identified of _________?

What 'story' is told by the interactions?

Does this story relate to the problem of _______?

What does this tell you about the ideology of the game?

What could you do to solve this problem or just make it less of a problem?

What messages are being conveyed by the interactions of players in-game and out-of-game?

The Gameplay Log: a record of play – your impression of the game that may have been missed in other categories; the look and feel of the game

What emergent behavior (for example, a game cheat), or behavior that is not expected by game players, have you seen?

What emergent behavior have you seen outside of the game, for example, the behavior players regularly engage in before agreeing to join a team or after a game has finished?

Are there any other kinds of emergent behavior you can think of?

Is any of this emergent behavior a problem?

Have you noticed any intertextuality in the game?

Does this intertextuality relate to the problem of _________ identified earlier? If so, how?

Are there any aspects of the game in general that relate to the problem of _________ that have not been discussed?

How many intertextual connections did you see in the game related to the problem earlier identified of _________?

Is anything gained by the overall playing of the game, and using the gameplay log, that relates to the problem of ________ that has not been discussed?

Is there an overall message conveyed by the game about the earlier identified problem of ___________ via procedural rhetoric that you would not have noticed without reflecting on it.

Additional questions:

Is there an overall message conveyed by the game from all of the elements via procedural rhetoric that you would not have noticed without reflecting on it?

Did considering all of the elements above in relation to the problem(s) you identified help you to see a message conveyed via procedural rhetoric that you were not aware of when you began this project?

THE APPLICATION OF VIDEO CLIPS WITH SMALL GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE YOUNG LEARNERS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This study investigated whether the application of video clips with small groups or with individual teaching-learning activities improved the speaking skills of young EFL learners the most; accordingly a quasi-experimental study with a pre-test, post-test design was done. The instrument used in this study was a test in the form of an oral test or interview. The results showed that the mean score from the students in the Small Group Activities group at 67.27 was higher than the mean score from the Individual Activities group at 51.29 with a level of significance 0.00 < 0.05. This meant that the application of video clips and teaching-learning Small Group Activities gave better results than teaching with Individual Activities. The results suggested that teaching-learning speaking ESL with video clips using Small Group Activity techniques could be one of the best alternatives to improve young learners' speaking performances.

Keywords*:* individual and small group activity; speaking performance; young learners; video clips

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the English language skills taught and learnt by young learners in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, as required by the 2013 curriculum. In order to improve young learners' speaking performances (Muslem & Abbas, 2017) English teachers have used various methods such as "communicative language teaching, information gap techniques and audio-recorded media strategies", however, the level of their speaking skills is still not satisfactory. They still have difficulty using English to communicate with their peers and their teachers, and with foreigners who use English for communication (Hosni, 2004). The ability to use and speak English fluently and accurately indicates that a student is proficient in English. However, it is difficult for an EFL student to master the language as their exposure to the language is limited by their environment. Educational institutions in Indonesia have made various efforts to

resolve the problem faced by these students in mastering the language (Muslem & Abbas, 2017). One of them is the implementation of the new 2013 Indonesian Curriculum. This new national curriculum, created by the National Education Department, will be implemented in High Schools throughout the nation. Curriculum is the foundation of the teaching-learning process which covers subject matters and student learning experiences at school. Curriculum in Indonesia refers to a set of planning and organization guidelines about the aim, content, and learning materials for learning activities to achieve a particular educational objective.

Based on the 2013 Curriculum (K-13), the primary purpose of teaching English at Junior High School is to enable students to communicate fluently and acceptably. Students are expected to be able to speak and communicate in English in daily life, both in written and spoken forms (Depdiknas, 2013). However, students still consider English as a difficult subject to be mastered and speaking is considered the hardest of the four skills to learn at school, compared to the others (Hattingh, 2014). Students at Junior High School levels (classes VII, VIII and IX) have been found to have problems related to their lack of participation, inhibition, and lack of ideas (Hosni, 2004). That is the same as similar problems are found with other college students (Heriansyah, 2012). Heriansyah also added that the English speaking ability of some English teachers at both junior and senior high schools was still low and the causes were very little exposure to both spoken and written English and, in particular, the absence of models from which to learn speaking skills.

In order to overcome these problems at university level, teachers should consider the needs of the students and modify the teaching and learning materials so that students achieve the learning objectives (UNESCO, 2004). Since nowadays students associate themselves with media and technology, the researchers consider that the learning materials should also include new technology media, in this case video clips. Berk (2009) has argued that film and video are multimedia products that can facilitate both verbal and non-verbal communication and learning. Both of them can be easily found on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, which 92% of school-age children use for communication (Lenhat et al., 2015). In addition, the Internet has unlimited resources of films and videos that can be easily found on YouTube and Google Video and especially for speaking English on TED and on Toastmasters International.

Many previous studies conducted by different researchers from different parts of the world have been related to the use of film and video clips to examine their effect on the speaking skills of students (Muslem & Abbas, 2017; Ismaili, 2013; Sihem, 2012; Silva, 2013). Nguyet and Mai (2012) conducted research into the use of video clips with small group activity and reported that the speaking skills of the students improved, especially their

fluency. Cole and Vanderplank (2016) conducted some linguistic and English proficiency tests on individual learners and on classroom learners. The individual learners scored significantly higher than the classroom learners in all assessments. The use of technology really helped the teachers, students, and other parties in improving the speaking skills. There are two really effective ways of developing ESL speaking skills, namely staying abroad in an English speaking country and learning through media (Youtube, Video, live programs, TED, Toastmasters) (Muslem & Abbas, 2017).

Staying abroad in an English speaking country such as Australia, India, the UK or the USA is one of the best ways to improve EFL speaking skills. In this case, students are sent to a country where English is used as the medium of communication. For example, they go there for three to five months and are involved in many activities in the English-speaking country. Within that period, they can master English well. However, this strategy is not economical.

In conclusion, the previous research findings above reported that the combination of video clips either with small group activity or with individual activity can significantly influence the ESL/EFL speaking skills of students. Nevertheless, the researchers thought that it would be important to investigate these two different combinations to find out which one is better for effective teaching-learning of speaking EFL. Hence the research question was formulated as follows: "Will there be any significant difference in the ability of students to speak EFL after teaching-learning with video clips using Small Group Activity compared with the results using video clips with Individual Activity?"

2. Literature review

Speaking can simply be defined as conveying messages verbally from one to another (Richards, 2008). Unlike writing and reading, speaking involves "verbal and non-verbal signals" to which the listener needs to pay attention to understand what the speaker is saying (Chaney 1998, in Kayi, 2006, p. 1). This means that in face to face oral communication, a listener not only receives and hears what the speaker says but can also give feedback or a response in terms of what has being heard.

In addition, speaking is also a multi-sensory activity because it involves paralinguistic features such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, tempo, pauses, voice quality changes, and variations in pitch (voice projection and vocal variety), which affect the flow of conversation (Thornbury, 2007). Speaking is very important; it is considered the most difficult skill when compared to writing, reading or listening (Oradee, 2013). Despite the

difficulties, the ESL learners still put listening on the top of their lists of skills to acquire since they believe that mastering speaking means mastering all the skills of ESL (Sihem, 2012).

2.1. Video clips as the source of L2 input

Real models of speaking English can be obtained from video clips. According to Richards & Renandya (2004), video is an 'extremely dense' medium, in which there are combinations of visual elements, sound effects, and audio. Video is a powerful teaching aid since learners can experience things they have never seen before (Isiaka, 2007). In addition, Canning-Wilson (2000) defines video as "the selection and sequence of messages in an audio-visual context" that can portray settings, verbal and non-verbal signals, and paralinguistic features of speaking which can provide important "visual stimuli" for language practice and learning.

However, today a new trend has emerged: videos for education nowadays are presented with only short duration; these are called video annotations or video clips (Trebor Scholz, 2013). This accords with what Richards & Renandya (2004, p. 365) advocate that it is better to serve students with "short (3-5 minutes) segments of video thoroughly and systematically" rather than showing them "long sequences" which may lead students to be less active in observing and noting the activity.

Harmer (2001) has claimed that off-air program videos, real-world videos and language learning videos are three kinds of video that can be used in the EFL classroom. Nevertheless, he suggests that teachers should prefer the language-learning videos since they are accompanied by course books. Besides, language-learning videos have other advantages such as good comprehensibility, design for education purposes and multiple other functions.

Many studies have investigated the effects of video clips on language learners. Bravo et al. (2011) found that video increased the motivation of students since they could see how native English speakers talked with their paralinguistic features. Studies carried out by Brewster et al. (2004) found that video brought several benefits. Psychologically, students find them fun, stimulating, and motivating whilst video can also be used as a means for enhancing and developing positive attitudes, success in learning processes, and confidence in learning (Cakir, 2006; Joint Information Systems Committee, 2002). Linguistically, videos can help revise new words and expressions, show all paralinguistic features and make learning more open and extraordinary (Canning-Wilson, 2000), while culturally videos take students to a world beyond their classroom and can provide a different insight about the importance of cultural awareness (Canning-Wilson, 2000).

In terms of cognitive aspects, videos can help improve students' curiosity, providing up-to-date information, maximizing abilities to infer from contexts, developing skills such as motor skills, information and research skills as well as communication skills (Brewster & Girard, 2004). Finally yet importantly, videos also provide real models since they include all the characteristics of naturally spoken English in realistic situations and they allow students to experience and feel a certain situation without going there. Therefore, students do not have to visit England just to know how they order food at a restaurant there.

2.2. Small Group Activity

Indeed, there is no fixed definition of a small group. The term 'small group' means different things to different people. Some experts call it 'seminar teaching' (Gibson, 2010) while some others call it 'small group teaching' or 'small group discussion' (Mills & Alexander, 2013; Gibson, 2010; Surgenor, 2010). Small group learning is a situation in which students sit in a small group of students (10-30 students) to discuss a topic given by their teacher. These discussions lead to the production of arguments which are important to enhance critical thinking. In discussions, students will develop their own thoughts and ideas and also will get feedback as responses from their classmates or their teacher.

Small groups prompt people to discuss a topic or idea among their participants with specific guidelines which allows everyone to contribute as many ideas as they have under the direction of a presenter (Brewer, 1997). Mills and Alexander (2013, p. 4) define small group teaching as "circumstances where dialogue and collaboration" among the group members are essential and fundamental to learning. In this circle, the teacher acts only as a moderator to help the students to communicate. Unlike Gibson, who states that a small group contains at least 10-30 students, Mills and Alexander say that there is no obligation to put a specific number of students as a limitation, what matters is the use of small group techniques as a way of separating a larger class to put them together {in small groups) in order to get them all involved and working together with members of their own (small) group. Ideally, from personal experience a small group is from 3 to 8 and best is only 5 or 6 in a group where everyone participates repeatedly, larger groups tend to become dominated by only a few speakers .

Without ignoring the positive impact of traditional methods of teaching-learning, there is an increasing number of teachers who use collaborative instruction with their students. This rapid increase has taken place because of the benefits provided by the small group itself. Small group activity has been proven to have positive impact for the students concerned. In

Japan, the research carried by Sugino (1994) has shown that small group work has helped students to enhance their vocabulary and pronunciation as well as producing "longer and more accurate utterances" with fewer errors in grammar. Moreover, as long as the students interact with one another in a group or have a discussion about a topic, their level of thinking can be developed since there are more brains who can state their ideas, which also leads to active learning (Raja & Saeed, 2012).

However, there are usually many students in a classroom and not all might like having discussions. Therefore, Raja and Saeed (2012) recommend combining small group activities with other strategies to provide variety in teaching-learning. This idea is supported by Baker & Westrup (2000), who suggest that teachers should teach-learn with regular language practice and they should try to make their lessons more interesting, getting all their students to participate, involving them all in the lessons through a variety of activities and encouraging them to practice real communications. All these suggestions can also be done with the help of video clips which, as discussed earlier, provide lots of benefits such as providing real models of people speaking good English as well as motivating the students to learn more English.

2.3. Individual Activities

Individual learning, which is also called student-centered learning, autonomous learning or independent learning, is an approach to teaching-learning which emphasizes the role of the individual student a lot more (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2012; Meyer et al., 2008). The responsibility for the teaching-learning process is focused on the individual students rather than on the teacher (Chong et al., 2012). However, individual learning is not a teaching-learning process without a teacher nor does the teacher relinquish his responsibility as classroom manager, but he has a lesser role compared to the teacher running small group activities (Little, 1991).

The teaching-learning process in this kind of activity puts more emphasis on the students, so that teaching needs to be more focused to hit the target, and then such obstacles as gaps between the "learning" and the real life should not arise (Little, 1991). Besides, the students can make an agenda for learning that consists of skills that they need to improve so that the teaching-learning process is done based on what they need and desire, which will further encourage them in the process of teaching-learning (Dofs & Hobbs, 2011; Meyer et al., 2008).

Individual learning has also been proven to improve skills in English such as writing and speaking. Students are more willing to share their thoughts and ideas in conversations,

discussions and speaking practice and to write more during the implementation of individual learning, sharing their own materials with other students and helping their classmates with spontaneous answers (Chou & ChanLin, 2015).

3. Methodology

This research was quantitative in nature with a quasi-experimental design; a non-equivalent control group and a pre-test/post-test design. The purpose of this research was to find any significant difference between the two combinations. This research employed two kinds of experimental groups which were similar in terms of student achievements and classroom environment. A non-random sampling method was used to select the experimental groups. Later, both groups were given a pre-test followed by four periods of treatment and a final post-test.

There were two types of experimental groups in this research viz: (1) The Small Group Activity group where small groups were taught using the combination of video clips with Small Group Activities and (2) the Individual Activity group which was taught by using the combination of video clips with individual activities.

The population was all the seventh grade students from Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) Rukoh Banda Aceh (Islamic Junior High School at Rukoh) which consists of six classes (totalling 208 students) in the academic year 2015/2016. Two of the six seventh grade classes at MTsN Rukoh were chosen as the sample. In order to find two classes as the sample with about equal ability in English and equivalent classroom environment, the researchers asked the teacher of English which classes had an equal capability in English as well as of classroom environment. The researchers also looked at the scores of all the students in English. Based on all of that, they chose class 7-2 with 33 students, as the experimental group, which received the treatment of video clips as the Small Group Activity group and class 7-4 with 34 students, as the experimental group which received the treatment of video clips as the Individual Activity group. Both classes can be categorized as noisy classes where the students actively speak in their first language.

Two tests, the pre-test and the post-test, were given in this study. The researchers provided the questions for the pre-test and for the post-test. During the pre-test and the post-test activities the students' scores were measured by using a speaking rubric which was adapted from Brown (2000). The elements of speaking which were measured were fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and comprehensibility. In order to produce a credible and reliable research finding, one researcher and a partner evaluated the speaking

performance of each student. Each evaluator gave each student a score based on Brown's rubric for speaking. Cohen's Kappa statistical measurement was used to measure the inter-rater reliability, which generally ranged from - 0.1 to +1.0.

There were three stages in analyzing the data. In the first stage, there were two steps. First, the researchers did a normality test. This was done using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test in order to find out how normal the distribution of data was. The second step of the first stage was the homogeneity test, which was done to determine the variance in the data. In the second stage, the researchers calculated the average score or the mean. The pre-test and post-test results from both experimental groups were analyzed to get the mean score from each test. The last stage was testing the hypotheses by using a t-test. All the processing and data analysis used SPSS.

4. Findings and discussion

In parametric statistics, there are two requirements that have to be fulfilled. These requirements include the test of distribution normality and the test of variance or homogeneity. The requirements and results for both tests are presented below:

Table 1. The result of the test of distribution of normality between the two groups

	Small Group Activity		**Individual Activity**	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**	**Pre-test**	**Post-test**
N	33	33	34	34
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.217	.548	.325	.410

Table 1 shows the results for the Normality test from the Small Group Activity (SGA) group and the Individual Activity (IA) group. The index (sig 2-tailed) from the SGA group in the pre-test and post-test results with N (number of sample) = 33, were .217 and .548. On the other hand, the index (sig 2-tailed) obtained from the IA group in the pre-test and post-test results with N (number of sample) = 34, were .325 and .410. Since all scores were beyond the Alpha level of 0.05 (α: 5%), the data from both groups were normally distributed.

Table 2. The result of test of variance homogeneity

Levene Statistic	**df1**	**df2**	**Sig.**
2.168	1	65	0.146

Table 2 above shows the results from the homogeneity test. The Levene Statistic was 2.168, while the P-value (sig) obtained from the test of variance or homogeneity of the post-

test was 0.146 > 0.05 (α: 5%). Since the P-value was more than Alpha level 0.05 (α: 5%), the data used in this research was homogeneous.

Table 3. Comparison of mean scores between the two groups

	N	Mean of Pre-test	Mean of Post-test	Change	Std. Deviation	
					Pre-test	Post-test
Small Group Activity	33	41.82	67.27	25.35	6.33	11.93
Individual Activity	34	39.65	51.29	11.64	8.66	13.94
Difference	-1	2.17	15.98	+13.71		

Table 3 shows that students in the SGA group had a mean score of 41.82 in the pre-test with standard deviation (SD) = 6.332 and 67.27 as their mean score from the post-test results with SD = 11.93. Students taught in the IA group got a mean score of 39.65 in the pre-test with SD = 8.66 and 51.29 as their mean score from the post-test results with SD = 13.94. The difference between the pre-test and post-test means was 25.35 for the Small Group Activity students and 11.64 for the Individual Activity group students.

Table 4. Comparison of mean scores for all speaking aspects measured for the two groups

	Small Group Activity group			Individual Activity group		
	Pre-test	**Post-test**	**Change**	**Pre-test**	**Post-test**	**Change**
Vocabulary	2.06	3.63	1.57	1.91	2.47	0.56
Fluency	2.21	3.21	1.00	1.91	2.41	0.50
Grammar	2.12	3.33	1.21	2.02	2.52	0.50
Pronunciation	2.33	3.66	1.33	2.08	2.76	0.68
Comprehension	1.72	2.96	1.24	1.97	2.64	0.67
Totals	10.44	16.79	6.35	9.89	12.80	2/91

Table 4 shows that the mean scores for the SGA group were higher than the means for those in the IA group in all 5 aspects of speaking skills measured namely vocabulary, fluency, grammar, pronunciation and comprehension. These findings clearly indicate that the achievements of those students in the Small Group Activity group were significantly higher when compared with those in the Individual Activity group. The table shows that there was improvement by students from both groups, moreover, the increase in the mean score for each of the 5 speaking components in the post-test results of the Small Group Activity students was significantly higher than the increases for the Individual Activity students, as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 5. The results from the independent t-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					
	F	**Sig**	**T**	**Sig.(2-tailed)**	**Mean Score**	**Mean Difference**
Equal variances assumed	2.168	.146	5.032	.000	67.27	15.97

Equal variances not assumed	5.044	.000	51.29	15.97

Table 5 shows the results from the independent t-test. It can clearly be seen that the level of significance (sig. 2 tailed) is 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, it has been proven that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. In conclusion, there was a significant positive difference between the results from the tests of speaking ability of students in the group that used video clips with Small Group Activity compared to the results from the students in the group using video clips with Individual Activity.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this research was to investigate whether there would be a significant difference in the results for speaking skills between the use of video clips with students studying in a Small Group Activity mode compared to students studying using video clips in an Individual Activity mode. The results from the use of video clips with small group activities were much better in terms of speaking skills for young learners than the results from learning with individual activities mode. The mean improvement in one group compared to the other was tested by using the independent t-test to see if there was a significant difference between the use of video clips with small group activities and the use of video clips with individual activities on students' speaking skills – the alternative hypothesis: Or if there was no significant difference - the null hypothesis.

The results showed there was a significant positive difference between the use of Small Group Activity compared to the use of Individual Activity for teaching-learning speaking skills. This suggests that even though the implementation of video clips with small group activity or individual activity could help students improve their speaking skills, the use of video clips with Small Group Activity is better than the use of video clips with Individual Activity since all the aspects of speaking measured improved to a higher degree.

It is suggested that teachers of speaking in English should use the combination of video clips as a supportive learning media with Small Group Activity teaching-learning. Furthermore, teachers can try techniques such as slowing down the speed of the videos, having comprehension sessions pre- and post-viewing and repeating important scenes and/or pausing screenings in order to help students get a better understanding of the language in each video.

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THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DICTIONARIES FOR PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE BY UNIVERSITY EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore how Slovak learners of English use electronic dictionaries with regard to pronunciation practice and improvement. A total of 24 Slovak university students (subjects) completed a questionnaire which contained pronunciation-related questions in connection with the use of electronic dictionaries. The questions primarily concerned electronic editions of monolingual learner's dictionaries, dictionaries intended for native speakers, and specialized (special-purpose) pronunciation dictionaries. The main objective of this small-scale study was to identify the frequency, manner, and types of electronic dictionaries used by the subjects in order to practice and improve their pronunciation. The findings indicate that the subjects of the study use electronic dictionaries for pronunciation practice relatively often, learner's dictionaries being the most preferred choice. The study also recommends that EFL learners exploit the pronunciation conveniences of electronic dictionaries extensively.

Keywords*:* electronic dictionary; online dictionary; English pronunciation, pronunciation practice; university student; EFL learner

1. Introduction

"Learning vocabulary is crucial in mastering a foreign language as it is a backbone of any language" (Vasbieva, Klimova, Agibalov, Karzhanova, Bírová, 2016, p. 1196). Pronunciation of a particular word is something EFL (English as a foreign language) learners need to know about when they have actually learned the new word; therefore, it is of immense importance since it plays a major role in communication, and mispronunciation may result in communication breakdowns. Giba and Ribes (2011) explain that English pronunciation appears to be a rather difficult aspect for most non-native speakers because its phonological system is quite complex, and somewhat differs from the majority of European languages. Moreover, this language system is frequently neglected because teachers themselves may regard their knowledge of this area as insufficient, or they are unsure about the quality of their own pronunciation (Brown, 2014). However, if the teachers take the risk of teaching this language system, they may feel rather surprised how enjoyable and useful classroom work it

is (Scrivener, 2011).

Nowadays, English as a second language or English as a foreign language learners have, among other technological advancements, electronic dictionaries at their disposal. These ought to facilitate teaching and learning pronunciation (particularly on a segmental level) as they offer a wide range of handy features. Therefore, learners of English have been recently provided with new opportunities for pronunciation practice. However, the question arises as to whether or not the learners of English use electronic dictionaries for pronunciation practice. This article attempts to throw more light on this matter since relatively little research has been conducted in the area of practicing and improving pronunciation though electronic dictionaries, especially as far as the frequency of use is concerned. Furthermore, electronic dictionaries, offering numerous conveniences (including pronunciation features), have become an inseparable part of the learning process of a learner and hence deserve fairly careful attention of teachers and researchers.

The purpose of this article is:

- to discover the frequency of using electronic dictionaries to practice pronunciation by Slovak university students (subjects);
- to examine what type of electronic dictionaries the subjects use for pronunciation practice;
- to explore the manner of practicing pronunciation concerning electronic dictionaries.

2. Types of (electronic) dictionaries

Using a dictionary has become an inseparable and indispensable part of successful language learning, and the digital era we live in makes dictionaries, particularly the electronic ones, readily and easily available to the vast majority of EFL learners.

Zykova (2008) explains that all linguistic dictionaries belong to two categories according to the information they provide: explanatory dictionaries and specialized (special-purpose) dictionaries. A good explanatory (monolingual) dictionary contains useful and valuable information; it does not merely provide definitions of entries, but it also supplies its users with information on grammatical, lexical, and pronunciation particulars (Ingels, 2006).

Carter (2012) indicates that it is important to differentiate between monolingual dictionaries for native speakers such as *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2003) *or Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2011) and monolingual dictionaries for second or foreign language learners such as *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2014) or

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2015). Dictionaries for EFL learners are written explicitly for non-native speakers and hence contain simpler definitions in comparison to the definitions found in monolingual dictionaries intended for native speakers. Furthermore, the learner's dictionaries lay a stronger emphasis on vocabulary and aspects which may be difficult for the learners of English (Meyer, 2009).

Specialized dictionaries concern the lexical unit only in relation to some of their features, such as etymology, usage, frequency, or pronunciation (Zykova, 2008). As far as pronunciation is concerned, *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary* (Roach, Setter, Esling, 2011) and *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* (Wells, 2008) are the typical representatives of specialized (pronunciation) dictionaries. Such dictionaries offer more information on pronunciation phenomena such as graphs demonstrating the preferred pronunciation by British and American speakers, essays on various aspects of pronunciation, searching for a word according to phonetic symbols, etc.

The questionnaire which was designed for this study includes explanatory and special-purpose dictionary questions. As far as the explanatory dictionaries are concerned, both types are included in the questionnaire. The reason for this is that learner's dictionaries such as *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2015), *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2014), or *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2013) seem to be rather popular among EFL learners (Metruk, 2016). However, dictionaries designed for English native speakers may also be used by L2 learners, especially by students who have already achieved a good command of L2, and aim to become proficient users of English. Therefore, dictionaries intended for the native speakers of English were included in the questionnaire too.

3. Electronic dictionaries and pronunciation

Electronic dictionaries appear to be a useful tool for practicing and improving pronunciation. "An electronic dictionary has the potential to provide an instant access from within a given entry to a key to the symbols used in the relevant phonological transcription and also, at the click of a button, to model the pronunciation of any given word in audio mode" (Singleton, 2016, p. 208). Therefore, English learners can actually see, hear, and model the pronunciation of any word within seconds, when working with electronic and online editions of modern dictionaries. Moreover, the dictionaries typically offer pronunciation of the two most widely taught pronunciation varieties: BBC pronunciation (Standard British Pronunciation) and General American (Standard American Pronunciation). Thus, EFL learners can hear how the

words and phrases are pronounced in the variety they speak (or wish to speak) themselves, and they also have an opportunity to notice the essential difference between the BBC and GA accents. Another noteworthy feature which deserves attention is the possibility to record one's own pronunciation of a word and compare it to the pronunciation in a dictionary. However, this feature is normally available only on CD-ROM/DVD-ROM editions of electronic dictionaries.

Several studies on pronunciation in regard to electronic dictionaries have been carried out, largely indicating that EFL learners do not feel highly enthusiastic about using electronic dictionaries for pronunciation. Alfallaj (2013) indicates that an electronic dictionary is one of the media which helps students with pronunciation as nearly 60% of the subjects claimed that they use electronic dictionaries also for pronunciation. According to Kent (2001), half of the respondents in his study claimed that audio pronunciation was the most useful feature of electronic dictionaries. However, respondents which participated in other studies suggest that they use audio pronunciation to a low degree (Zheng & Wang, 2016). The experiment conducted by Weschler and Pitts (2000) also indicates that subjects' enthusiasm for hearing the pronunciation in an electronic dictionary was not great. While a few respondents regarded this feature as very important, the overwhelming majority considered this function as "somewhat important" or "not important". Moreover, only few respondents had any intention of repeating the words they have just acquired. Similarly, the study of Dashtestani (2013) demonstrates that EFL students scarcely or never listen to the pronunciation of words, and rarely check the phonetics of a dictionary entry. Another study by Alhaisoni (2016) shows that the majority of learners check dictionaries for word meaning and spelling, but devote little attention to other information such as pronunciation. Finally, according to Dwaik (2015), only 20% of students use the electronic dictionaries in the context of speaking (pronunciation being an inseparable part of the speaking skills), what might seem fairly strange as it was pronunciation which posed problems for the subjects who participated in the study, and electronic dictionaries would apparently prove helpful in this respect.

To summarize, it appears that EFL learners are predominantly concerned with other aspects of electronic dictionaries rather than dealing with pronunciation features. EFL learners have a large number of dictionaries at their disposal in this day and age. Special attention needs to be devoted to electronic dictionaries which are developing rapidly due to the digital era we live in. It is reasonable to assume that the features electronic dictionaries have should possibly facilitate pronunciation teaching and learning, and result in improved pronunciation.

4. The study

4.1. The objective of the study

The aim of the study is to discover whether and how frequently students use electronic dictionaries with regard to pronunciation practice and improvement. Furthermore, the study attempts to examine which types of electronic dictionaries (out of the various types discussed in section 2) are used for pronunciation practice. Finally, the manner of pronunciation practice is explored in order to discover how the subjects actually exploit electronic dictionaries.

4.2. Participants

The participants were 24 full-time university students of a bachelor study programme Teaching English Language at a Slovak university. On average, they were 21 years of age, and their level of English was at B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The L1 of all the subjects was Slovak.

4.3. Data collection and procedure

A questionnaire was implemented as a research instrument in order to obtain the data about the use of electronic dictionaries to improve and practice pronunciation. The questionnaire consisted of 7 multiple-choice statements and was distributed in English. It was anonymous in order to improve the response rate and the validity of gathered data.

5. Results and discussion

Question 1: *I use electronic/online learner's dictionaries (such as Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary etc.) to practice or improve my pronunciation (circle one option).*

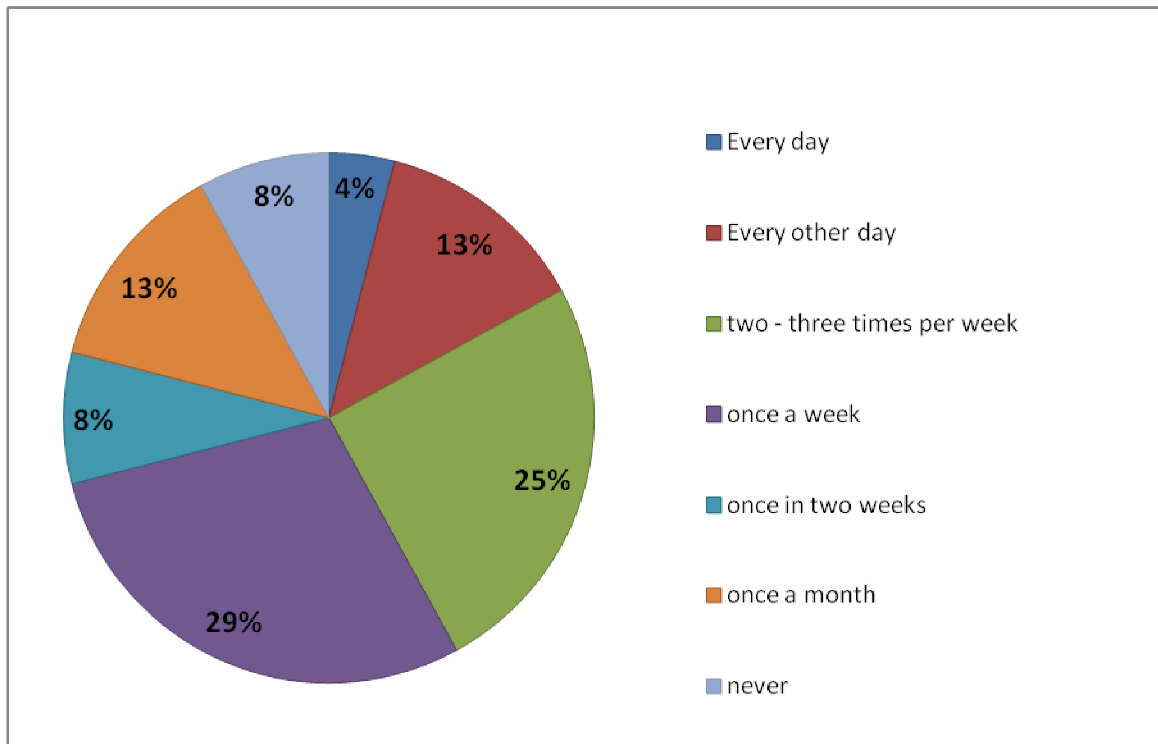

Figure 1. The frequency of using electronic dictionaries for pronunciation practice

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of use of electronic dictionaries for pronunciation practice expressed as a percentage. The results, ranked in the descending order, demonstrate that 7 subjects (29%) used online electronic dictionaries for pronunciation practice once a week, 6 subjects (25%) two – three times a week, 3 subjects (13%) every other day, 3 subjects (13%) once a month, 2 subjects (8%) once in two weeks, 2 subjects (8%) did not use the dictionaries for pronunciation practice at all, and 1 subject (4%) used them on a daily basis.

Surprisingly, only one subject exploited electronic dictionaries every day, which means that electronic dictionaries as such might not represent the most frequently used way of pronunciation practice. The data indicate that Slovak university students are more likely to practice pronunciation by means of electronic dictionaries two to three times a week or once a week.

Question 2: *For pronunciation practice, I use the following types of electronic/online dictionaries (you can circle more options).*

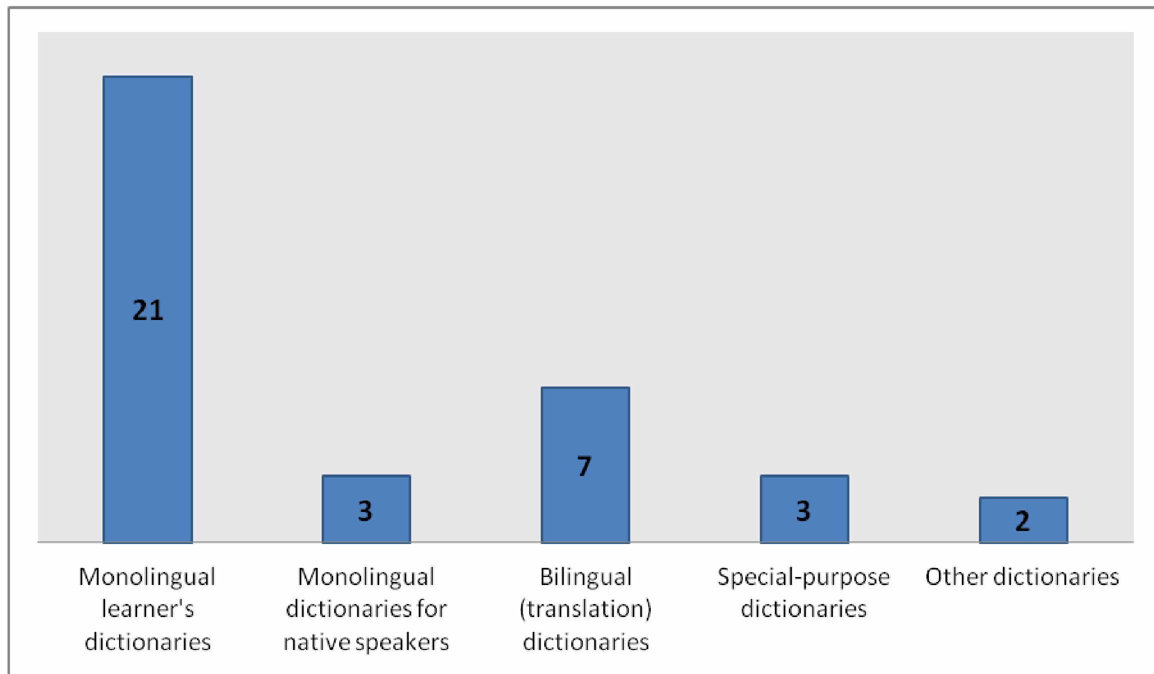

Figure 2. Types of electronic dictionaries used for pronunciation practice

The types of electronic dictionaries identified by the subjects are displayed in Figure 2. The use of monolingual electronic learner's dictionaries was marked 21 times, followed by bilingual translation electronic dictionaries – 7 times. Monolingual electronic dictionaries intended for native speakers, specialized electronic dictionaries, and other electronic dictionaries (unspecified electronic dictionaries for handheld devices) were identified to a lesser degree – 3, 3, and 2 times respectively.

The majority of subjects regard monolingual learner's dictionaries as a primary source of pronunciation practice. It appears that learner's dictionaries still remain overwhelmingly popular with EFL learners as they are specifically designed for non-native speakers. Therefore, they are carefully tailored to meet the needs of L2 learners. 29% of the subjects found bilingual translation dictionaries appealing in terms of pronunciation practice, perhaps because they can also see the translation of a word (translation dictionaries have always been popular with EFL learners as far as learning vocabulary is concerned). In spite of the fact that the subjects were university students whose major was English Language Teaching, a relatively low number of subjects used either special-purpose dictionaries or monolingual dictionaries intended for native speakers to practice pronunciation. Finally, only 2 subjects used other (unspecified) electronic dictionaries installed in their handheld devices to improve their pronunciation.

Question 3: *When I check a word in electronic/online dictionaries, I also check its pronunciation (circle one option).*

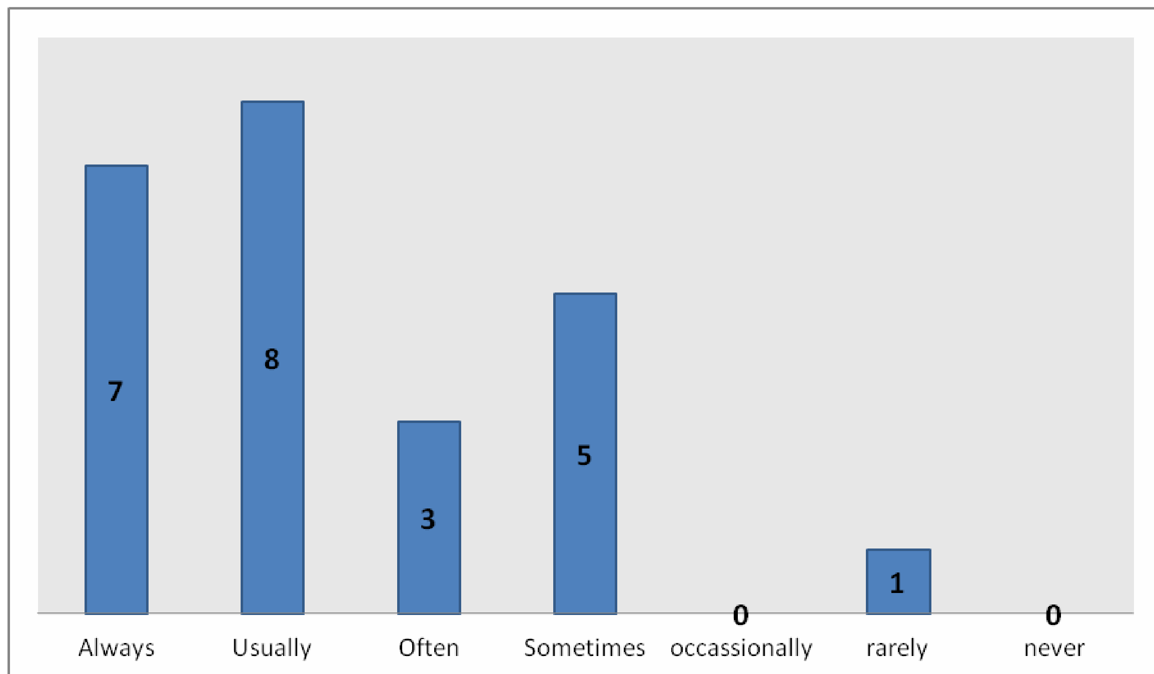

Figure 3. Checking the pronunciation of a word when the word itself is checked

Figure 3 shows the frequency of checking the pronunciation of a word when the word itself is checked. This procedure was always followed by 7 subjects, usually by 8 subjects, and often by 3 subjects. Five of them checked the pronunciation sometimes, and only 1 subject did it rarely.

On the whole, it seems that the subjects do not neglect the pronunciation of words when they check them in an electronic dictionary. EFL learners have to understand that when learning a new word they ought to devote special attention to pronunciation, because if they learn incorrect pronunciation of a word, it might be difficult for them to get rid of it in the future. Moreover, intelligibility may be negatively influenced. Similarly, when checking a word which might not be completely new to EFL learners, they are still advised to ensure their familiarity with the appropriate pronunciation of such a word.

Question 4: *When I check the pronunciation of a word, I do it by doing the following (circle one option).*

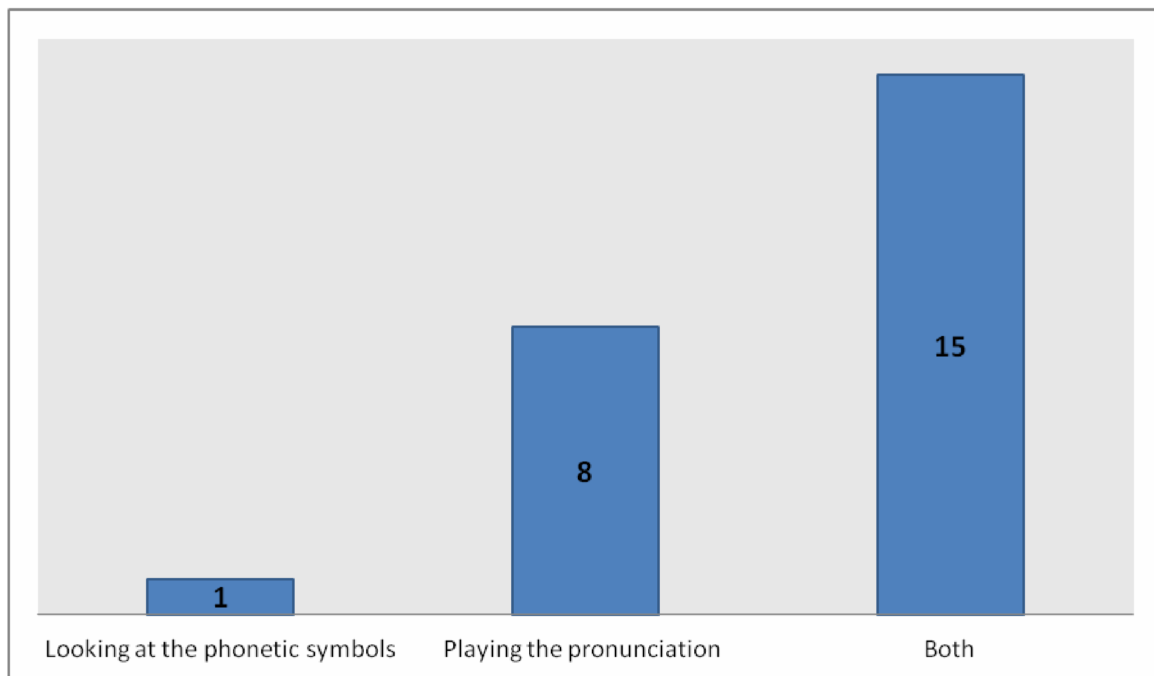

Figure 4. The manner of checking the pronunciation of a word

Figure 4 demonstrates that 1 subject used merely phonetic symbols as a way of checking pronunciation, 8 subjects did it by playing the pronunciation of a word, and most of them (15) both looked at the phonetic symbols and played the pronunciation of a word.

The use of phonetic symbols regarding pronunciation instruction has always been a hotly debated issue. One of the solutions was that L2 learners should only be able to read the phonetic symbols in order to check the pronunciation in paper dictionaries (perhaps it did not seem necessary for them to use the symbols actively). However, modern electronic dictionaries provide L2 learners with the audio pronunciation of both BBC and GA accents. Thus, EFL learners can, at a click of a button, hear and model the L2 pronunciation without the necessity of reading phonetic symbols. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that 63% of the subjects checked the pronunciation by both looking at the phonetic symbols and playing the pronunciation of a word.

Question 5: *I repeat the pronunciation of a word when I have clicked the play button and heard how the word should be pronounced (circle one option).*

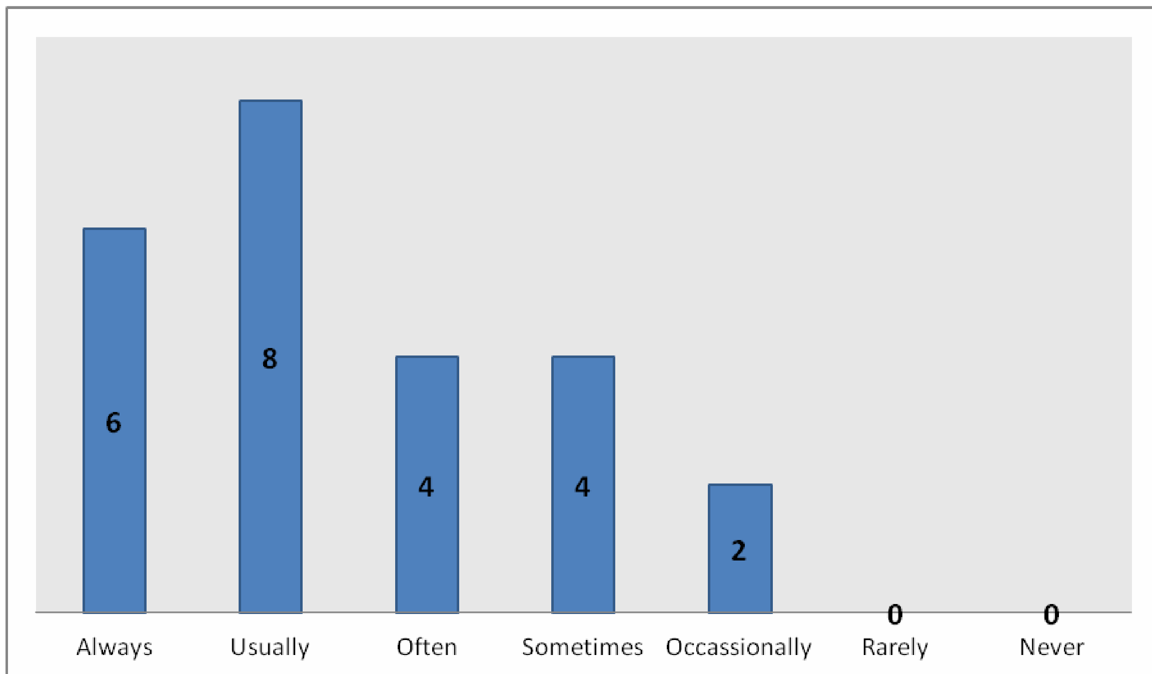

Figure 5. Repeating the pronunciation of a word

Figure 5 demonstrates how frequently the subjects repeat the pronunciation of words after they have heard it in an electronic dictionary. It can be concluded that the subjects do repeat the pronounced word to a greater or lesser degree. Repeating the pronunciation of words might be a useful way of practicing and improving one's pronunciation, which increases the possibility of pronouncing the words properly and appropriately. Therefore, EFL learners should be encouraged to perform the act of repetition when they come across either new or already known words.

Question 6: *When I check pronunciation of a word, I check (circle one option).*

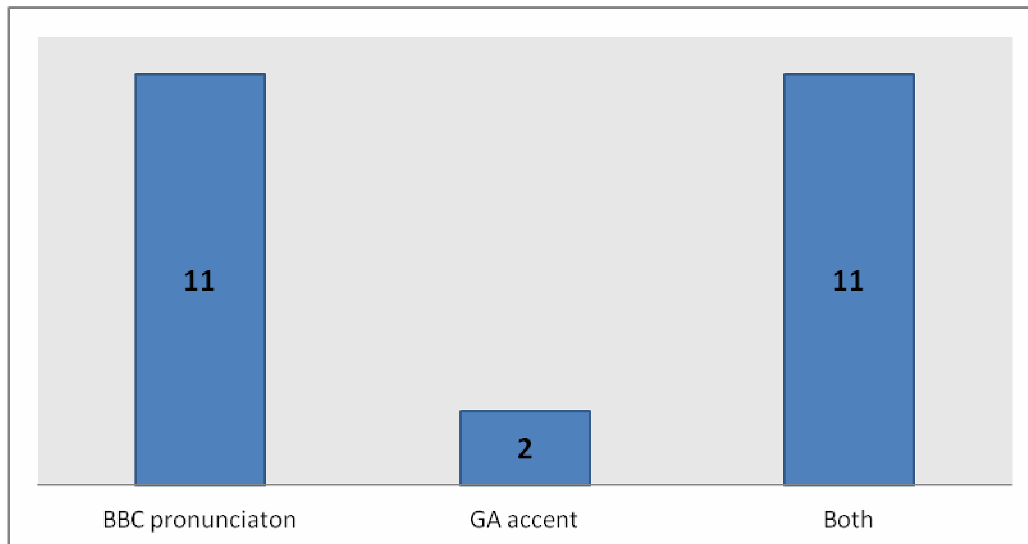

Figure 6. Pronunciation variety

According to Figure 6, only 2 subjects checked how words are pronounced in the GA accent, 11 of them paid attention to BBC pronunciation, and the remaining 11 subjects checked both accents. Slovak learners of English are typically taught from British textbooks, hence the prevalence of Standard British Pronunciation variety among the subjects. Nonetheless, 46% of them also explored the GA accent, which shows that Slovak learners of English also seem to be interested in Standard American accent, possibly due to the considerable influence of the US entertainment industry.

Question 7: *I use electronic/online specialized (special-purpose) dictionaries (for example Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary or Longman Pronunciation Dictionary) to practice or improve my pronunciation (circle one option).*

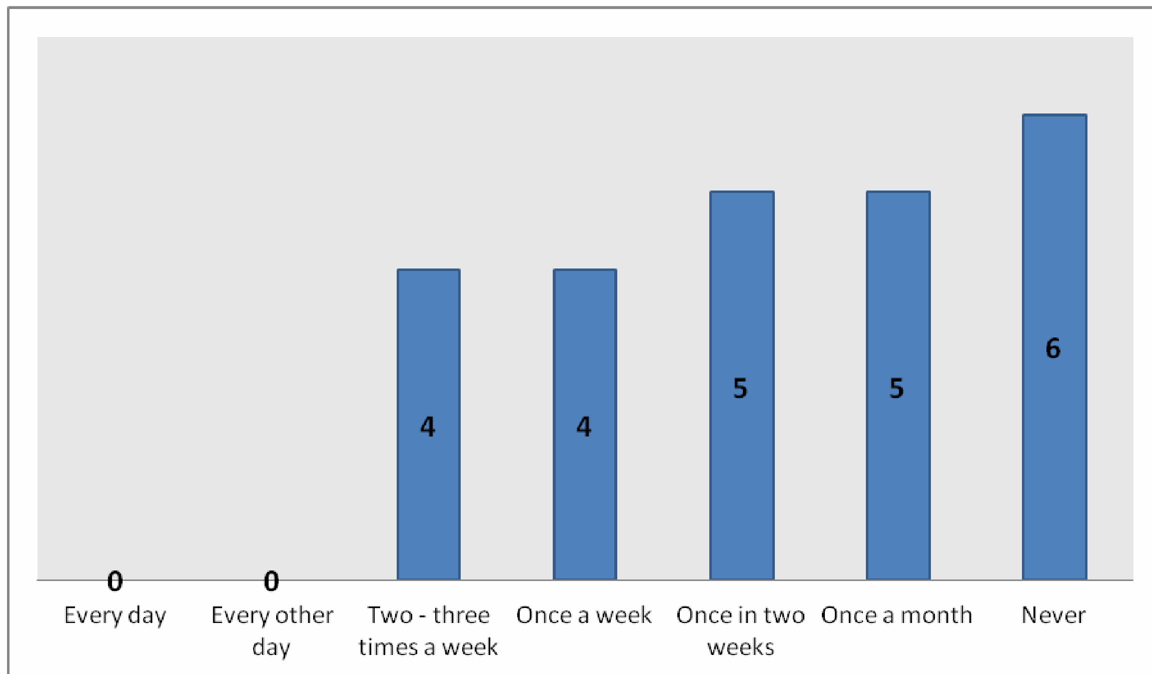

Figure 7. The use of specialized pronunciation dictionaries

Figure 7 shows that none of the subjects used special-purpose dictionaries every day or every other day. Four subjects used them two to three times a week, 4 once a week, 5 once in two weeks, and 5 once a month. Interestingly, 6 subjects never used special-purpose electronic dictionaries. It seems reasonable to assume that monolingual learner's dictionaries typically offer adequate amount of information on pronunciation, and special-purpose dictionaries are possibly used to a greater extent by more advanced learners with increased interest in pronunciation.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

This small-scale study investigated how and to what degree various types of electronic dictionaries are used for pronunciation practice by Slovak university students whose major is English.

As far as the frequency of using electronic dictionaries for practicing pronunciation is concerned, the study indicates that the subjects use the dictionaries for pronunciation practice fairly often. Therefore, it can be concluded that the subjects feel quite interested in using electronic dictionaries for pronunciation practice. Moreover, it should be also noted that this finding is not concordant with the findings in similar studies which have been conducted in this field as the majority of them suggest that EFL learners do not feel particularly enthusiastic about using electronic dictionaries for pronunciation purposes.

The results demonstrate that the subjects primarily use monolingual electronic learner's dictionaries for pronunciation practice. Such dictionaries are explicitly designed for EFL learners so that they can suit their needs. It seems that special-purpose dictionaries have not achieved the popularity of monolingual learner's dictionaries. However, it should be stressed that the monolingual learner's dictionaries can be generally regarded as sufficient for L2 learners, and that specialized pronunciation dictionaries possibly attract the attention of the students who are keenly interested in English phonetics and wish to achieve a relatively advanced command of the English pronunciation.

The subjects have a tendency to check the pronunciation of a word when the word itself is checked, and most of them do it by both looking at the phonetic symbols and listening to the pronunciation of the word. Furthermore, the students are likely to repeat the correct pronunciation and usually check either BBC variety only, or both BBC and GA accents. This finding is also inconsistent with other findings carried out in this research area which indicate that L2 learners are hardly likely to check the phonetics of an entry and repeat the pronunciation of a word.

To summarize, electronic dictionaries have secured their place within pronunciation instruction as they seem to have become an effective tool in practicing and improving the pronunciation of EFL learners. The results reveal that EFL learners have become fairly interested in practicing their pronunciation through modern electronic dictionaries. These outcomes, however, cannot be generalized as the sample consisted of a relatively small number of subjects. Therefore, conducting the study on a larger number of respondents might be of considerable benefit to the field of EFL pronunciation in regard to electronic dictionaries.

The pedagogical implications arising out of the questionnaire results offer two recommendations. Firstly, taking all the pronunciation conveniences of electronic dictionaries along with their potential benefits into account, EFL learners ought to be advised to use them to an even larger degree with increased frequency. Secondly, EFL teachers should realize that modern electronic dictionaries constitute a powerful tool not only for enlarging one's vocabulary, but also for pronunciation practice, and that the electronic dictionaries indeed represent a vital part of the language learning process.

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BUILDING UP THAI EFL STUDENTS' POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR NON-NATIVE ENGLISH ACCENTED SPEECH WITH THE USE OF PHONETICS WEBSITE

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Abstract

This paper examined the hypothesis that Thai EFL students' positive attitudes toward their non-native English accented speech could be promoted by the use of University of Iowa's *Sounds of American English* website, known as the "number 1 phonetics website". Fifty-two undergraduate students in the field of sciences participated in the investigation, which took place at two different stages. The findings of both stages mirrored non-native-like identity they perceptually obtained and native-like identity they socially aspired to possess. The findings of the second stage confirmed the hypothesis to some extent because of their synchronous feelings of slightly decreased embarrassment and increased pride and offer two insightful directions for EFL teachers. Firstly, irrespective of students' actual English accented speech, there is a need to promote their positive attitudes toward their own accent at an early age. Secondly, helping them understand that speaking intelligibly is more important than sounding like a native speaker.

Keywords: Thai EFL learners; language attitude; non-native English accented speech; phonetics website

1. Introduction

English has been commonly used as a lingua franca among non-native speakers in many social contexts. In Thailand, it is thus the language nationally recognized as a compulsory subject at all educational levels. Thai students must study English for years, yet their ability to speak English is rather poor due to affective, linguistic and socio-cultural factors. Affectively, they tend to possess high anxiety in and negative attitudes toward speaking English (Akkakoson, 2016; Toomnam & Intaraprasert, 2015) and lack confidence and pride when interacting with foreigners (Tananuraksakul, 2012). Linguistically, there are mother tongue interference and sound system differences between English and Thai (Wei & Zhou, 2002), and only English major students are required to take linguistic courses. Socio-culturally, English is learned and used as an EFL, and they personally and/or socially aspire to speak like

a native because a native-like sound is attached to prestige, privilege and power (Tananuraksakul & Hall, 2014). British English and American English as norm providers remain preferred accents to many Thais.

The affective, linguistic and socio-cultural factors argued above appear to be dichotomous, raising a question or a concern about English language teaching in Thailand. Khamkhien (2010) found that Thai undergraduate students in the field of sciences had limited competence in English pronunciation and further suggested that teachers of English should focus more on pronunciation features in the classroom. This suggestion aligns with Wei and Zhou's (2002) personal observations that teaching pronunciation is normally neglected in a Thai EFL classroom because non-native teachers do not have enough confidence with their limited linguistic knowledge. In terms of a variety of English, Smith and Nelson (2006) highlight the importance of speaking the language fluently and intelligibly rather than speaking it like a native tongue. In the same vein, Jenkins (2005) stresses that non-native English accented speech should be promoted and treated as acceptable varieties since a larger number of non-native speakers frequently adopt English as a medium of international communication.

As a result, speaking English with a Thai accent and clear English pronunciation should be promoted among Thai adult learners who have a tendency to speak English less like a native. In addition, intelligible pronunciation allows international communication among both native and non-native English speakers and among non-native speakers themselves to be easier (Wei & Zhou, 2002), which may concurrently promote EFL learners' positive attitudes toward their own non-native accent. Positive language attitudes can greatly influence EFL learners' social behaviours in general and language learning in particular (Castro & Roh, 2013). Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate to what extent using a phonetics website can help promote EFL undergraduate students' positive attitudes towards their non-native English accented speech.

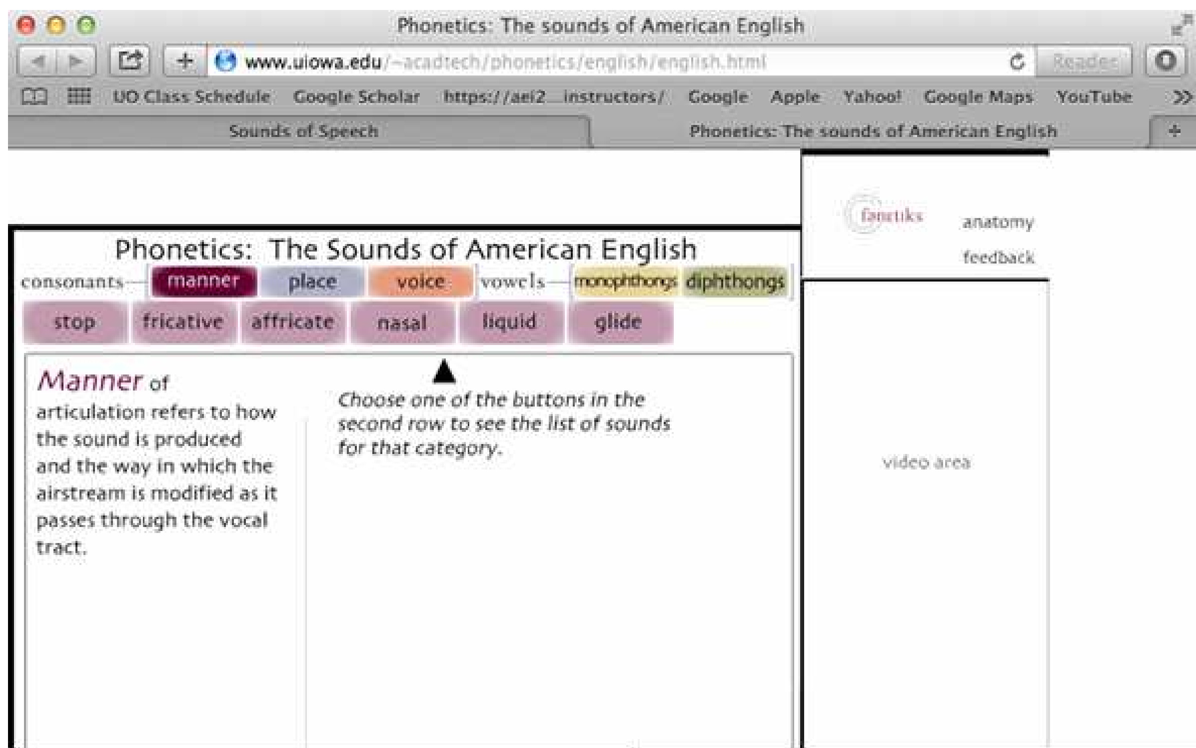
2. Related literature review and hypothesis

One of the most important factors of foreign language learning achievement is language attitude, which is inescapably included in many studies into English language teaching and learning, target groups of people, and accented speech (e.g. Liontou, 2015; Prakaiborisuth & Trakulkasemsuk, 2015; Castro & Roh, 2013; Arishi, 2012). In Thailand, it appears that there is no investigation into promoting EFL learners' positive attitudes toward their own non-native English accented speech. Many have studied learners' attitudes toward a variety of

English accents. For example, McKenzie, Kitikanan and Boriboon (2016) examined Thai nationals' evaluations of specific varieties of English speech while Snodin and Young (2015) surveyed Thai perceptions of and attitudes towards varieties of English.

It is therefore worth finding a useful teaching tool to boost Thai learners' positive attitudes toward their Thai English accented speech with intelligibility. The University of Iowa's *Sounds of American English*, known as the "number 1 phonetics website", was reviewed favorably as a teaching tool to enhance learners' English literacy (Eller, 2015) and perhaps positive attitudes towards their own accented speech because it is learning technology that young people may identify themselves with (Tananuraksakul, 2014, 2015). In other words, it is a kind of new technology that may motivate new generations to learn. EFL teachers can use the phonetics website as a language model for pronouncing English consonant sounds systems in their classroom while learners can further self-practice in their leisure time. It gives a comprehensive understanding of how American English speech sounds are formed, including videos, audio samples and animations describing the essential features of the consonants and vowels. Figure 1 shows the website with manner and place of articulation of each English consonant sound.

Figure 1: The phonetics website



Evidently, Thai learners have English pronunciation problems due to the fact that both languages have more sound systems differences than similarities. The most obvious difference are the consonant sounds that do not exist in Thai but are used or do exist in English: /g/, /v/, voiced /th/, voiceless /th/, /z/, /sh/, /zh/, /ch/, /j/ and /r/. Unlike English, Thai has fewer voiced consonants, and final voiced consonants are silent. It is also hard for Thais to pronounce words with initial and final consonant clusters. When Thais are unaware of these problematic differences, they tend to speak English with substituted Thai sound systems (Wei & Zhou, 2002), producing unintelligible accented speech. However, Kanokpermpoon (2007) concludes in his research that they can speak English with more confidence if they are aware of the differences and practice pronouncing those sounds. Moffatt (2006) also suggests that Thai learners need to understand the importance of developing good English pronunciation and want to self-improve it. These arguments led the researcher to hypothesize that inclusion of teaching English pronunciation features in an EFL classroom through the use of the phonetics website could build up Thai EFL learners' positive attitudes toward their non-native English accented speech.

3. Methods

3.1. Participant recruitment

Fifty two students studying in the field of sciences and taking the English Listening and Speaking for Professional Purposes course with the researcher during August and December 2015 were purposively recruited. Regardless of the students' actual English proficiency, they were required to take this course in their third year. Since the study primarily investigated the students' attitudes toward their own English accent, they were not asked to take a placement test.

3.2. Research tool

A questionnaire consisting of two parts was the main tool employed to examine the participants' positive attitudes toward their English accent. The first part was related to demography (age, opportunity for communication in English and preference for English communication). The second part had ten questions adopted from Episcopo's (2009) questionnaire on attitudes toward non-native English accents using five-point semantic differential scales, Likert scales, and frequency Likert scales. All ten questions reflect the participants' attitudes toward their own accent and others' in general because in this study attitude refers to "feelings people have about their own language or the languages of others"

(Crystal, 1997, p.215). Since embarrassment and lack of pride when interacting in English with foreigners are negative feelings that can render non-native English speakers self-worthless (Tananuraksakul & Hall, 2011), feeling proud of one's own English accented speech marks positive attitude. On the other hand, feeling embarrassed marked negative attitude.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

In order to test the hypothesis, the investigation consisted of two stages: at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Data collected in those stages were analysed statistically by IBM SPSS 20 software and interpreted based on the following scales, percentage and ratings:

5-rating Scale	Descriptive Rating
4.20 – 5.00	crucial/ always
3.40 – 4.19	very important/ often
2.60 – 3.39	neutral/ sometimes
1.80 – 2.59	sometimes important/ rarely
1.00 – 1.79	not important/ never
Percentage	**Descriptive Rating**
more than 80	strongly agree
61 - 80	agree
41 - 60	neutral
21 - 40	disagree
Less than 20	strongly disagree

During the first week of the semester, the researcher initially surveyed the participants' attitudes toward their own accent and others' in general by asking them to complete the questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously. Since the findings revealed that they possessed negative attitudes toward their own non-native English accent and that they were not English majors, the researcher encompassed sound system differences between English and Thai in the regular lessons. During the first 5-10 minutes of each lesson, the researcher introduced one English consonant that does not exist in Thai and demonstrated how to pronounce it properly through the phonetics website. Additionally, the researcher mimicked possible accents and minimal-pair activities with them (e.g. *rice / lice, vow / wow, thorn / dawn, chair / share, jam / yam, zoo / sue, vision / fashion*). The researcher also informed the participants of the findings, explained this project to them and emphasized the

importance of pronouncing English words as clearly as they could for the purpose of international communication. The second stage took place at the end of the semester, the researcher asked the participants to complete the same questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously.

4. Findings and discussion

In Stage One, 51 participants, 10 males and 41 females, returned the questionnaire. The first part indicated their common range of age between 20 and 25 as well as different levels of frequent opportunity and preference for English communication detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' demographic information

Items	n	Percentage
Students sometimes had a chance to use English.	41	80.4
Students never used English for communication.	3	5.9
Students preferred to communicate in English at a neutral level.	24	47.1
Students preferred to communicate in English at a high level.	9	17.6
Students preferred to communicate in English slightly.	4	7.8
Students preferred to communicate in English least.	4	7.8
Only one student liked to communicate in English most.	1	2

As evidenced in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5, the participants thought it was very important for them to sound like a native English speaker ($\bar{x}$ = 3.8431) and they thought they possessed negative attitudes toward their own accented speech because they agreed they felt embarrassed about their accented speech when speaking in English (70.6%). Similarly, they agreed their English accented speech was heavy (68.6%) with strong agreement of clearly non-nativeness (96.1%), though a few of them perceived their English accented speech as native-like (3.9%).

When talking to native English speakers, their attitudes toward their own accent tended to be negative because they felt embarrassed about their own accent (72.5%), reflecting symbolic relations of power and identity between non-native and native speakers (Norton, 2000). On the one hand, the findings supported the arguments about dichotomy between affective, linguistic and socio-cultural factors. On the other hand, they reflected non-native-like identity the participants thought they had and native-like identity they socially and/or personally desired to possess (Tananuraksakul & Hall, 2014, pp. 261-262).

In addition, the participants also thought that it was very important for their non-native interlocutors to talk like a native English speaker ($\bar{x}$ = 3.5686). They seemed to have better attitudes toward their own accent when talking to those non-natives because they neutrally agreed they felt proud (41.2%) of and embarrassed (56.9%) about their accent.

Table 2. Students' views about their own accent and others'

Questions	**N**	**Means ($\bar{x}$)**	**SD**	**Meaning**
1. How important is it for you to sound like a native English speaker?	51	3.8431	.80926	very important
2. When you are speaking to another non-native speaker, how important is it to you that he or she has a native-like accent?	51	3.5686	1.02479	very important
3. When you are speaking to native speakers, how often are you completely understood?	51	2.8627	.84899	sometimes
4. When you are speaking to a non-native speaker, how often are you completely understood?	51	3.1765	.79261	sometimes
5. When you listen to a non-native speaker, how often do you pay attention to his or her accent?	51	3.1961	1.03961	sometimes

Table 3. Students' feelings about their own accent

Questions	**N**	**Feeling of Pride (n)**	**Meaning**	**Feeling of Embarrassment (n)**	**Meaning**
6. How do you feel about your accent when you speak English?	50	27.5% (14)	disagree	70.6% (36)	agree
7. How do you feel about your accent when you speak to another non-native speaker?	51	41.2% (21)	neutral	56.9% (29)	neutral
8. How do you feel about your accent when you speak to a native speaker?	50	25.5% (13)	disagree	72.5% (37)	agree

Table 4. Students' views about their own accent

Question	**N**	**Lightly Accented (n)**	**Meaning**	**Heavy Accented (n)**	**Meaning**
9. How would you rate your English accent in terms of degree?	51	31.4% (16)	disagree	68.6% (35)	agree

Table 5. Students' views about their own accent

Question	**N**	**Native-like (n)**	**Meaning**	**Clearly Not Native (n)**	**Meaning**
10. How would you rate your English accent in terms of nativeness?	51	3.9% (2)	Strongly disagree	96.1% (49)	Strongly agree

In Stage 2, all 52 participants returned the questionnaire, and its demography was similar to those of Stage 1. As can be seen in Tables 6, 7, 8 and 9, the participants still thought

that it was very important for them to speak English like a native ($\bar{x}$ = 3.4314) and strongly agreed that their English accented speech remained heavy (80.8%) and clearly non-native (94.2%). These findings reflect non-native-like identity they perceptually possess as well as native-like identity they socially and/or personally aspire to have, so that they may socially gain prestige, privilege and power (Tananuraksakul & Hall, 2014, pp. 261-263). One person (1.9%) thought he had a native-like English accent, which accords with the number of students preferring to communicate in English most (2%). Since none of the participants spoke like a native, this particular outcome indicates that having a native-like accent may not necessarily mean sounding like a native (Tananuraksakul & Hall, 2014, p. 262) as long as he/she enjoyed using the language.

As compared to the first stage, the participants' attitudes toward their own accent when speaking English to native speakers remained negative because the level of their feelings of pride and embarrassment were the same as those of the first stage in Question 8. However, when talking to non-native English speakers, their attitudes toward their own non-native English accented speech tended to be slightly more positive because the degree of their embarrassment about their own accent was lower while the pride of their own accent was higher shown in Questions 6 and 7. The analytical findings therefore confirm the hypothesis only to some extent that the phonetics website usage can help promote Thai EFL undergraduate learners' positive attitudes toward their own non-native English accented speech. In one sense, the outcomes mirror their positive attitudes toward developing their English speaking skills (Tananuraksakul & Hall, 2011, p. 198) they may gain through the phonetics website usage and the emphasis of speaking English with a Thai accent and clear pronunciation. The outcomes also disclose a group identity the participants may begin to perceptually share with only non-native English interlocutors because the result from Question 5 reveals that it was very important for them to listen to non-native speakers' accented speech with attention ($\bar{x}$ = 3.4231).

Table 6. Students' opinions about their own accent and others'

Question	**N**	**Feeling of Pride (n)**	**Meaning**	**Feeling of Embarrassment (n)**	**Meaning**
6. How do you feel about your accent when you speak English?	48	34.6% (18)	disagree	57.7% (30)	neutral
7. How do you feel about your accent when you speak to another non-native speaker?	49	51.9% (27)	neutral	42.3% (22)	neutral
8. How do you feel about your accent when you speak to a	49	25% (13)	disagree	69.2% (36)	agree

native speaker?					

Table 7. Students' feelings about their own accent

Question	N	Lightly Accented (n)	Meaning	Heavy Accented (n)	Meaning
9. How would you rate your English accent in terms of degree?	48	11.5% (6)	strongly disagree	80.8% (42)	strongly agree

Table 8. Students' opinions about their own accent

Question	N	Native-like (n)	Meaning	Clearly Not Native (n)	Meaning
10. How would you rate your English accent in terms of nativeness?	50	1.9% (1)	strongly disagree	94.2% (49)	strongly agree

Table 9. Students' opinions about their own accent

Question	N	Means ($\bar{X}$)	S.D.	Meaning
1. How important is it for you to sound like a native English speaker?	51	3.4314	.90011	very important
2. When you are speaking to another non-native speaker, how important is it to you that he or she has a native-like accent?	48	3.2500	.88726	sometimes
3. When you are speaking to native speakers, how often are you completely understood?	52	2.8846	.92150	sometimes
4. When you are speaking to a non-native speaker, how often are you completely understood?	52	2.8077	.74198	sometimes
5. When you listen to a non-native speaker, how often do you pay attention to his or her accent?	52	3.4231	.95684	very important

5. Conclusion

This study quantitatively examined to what extent the use of the University of Iowa's *Sounds of American English* in an EFL classroom could promote Thai undergraduate students' positive attitudes toward their non-native English accented speech. The results from two stages of investigations reflected their perceptual non-native-like identity and desired native-like identity. In the second stage, after the use of the phonetics website in the classroom, the results indicated their better attitudes toward their non-native English accented speech due to their synchronous feelings of slightly decreased embarrassment and increased pride. It was therefore proven to some extent that the phonetics website could help build up Thai undergraduate students' positive attitudes toward their non-native English accented speech. It may be the case that they were slightly motivated to learn through the use of the website.

Although the number of the participants was small in relation to the target population, which may limit the study, the results revealed some insightful directions for EFL teachers. Firstly, irrespective of Thai EFL learners' actual English accented speech, there is a need to

promote their positive attitudes toward their own English accent so as to influence their social behaviours and language learning positively. Secondly, English has been used as a lingua franca in many social contexts, so sounding like a native English speaker is not as important as speaking with intelligibility.

The study may also be limited by the duration of the use of the phonetics website with adult learners of 20-25 years of age or new generations. The phonetics website should be introduced to students at an early age or included in regular English lessons. A larger number of participants and in-depth interviews are recommended for future research.

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THE USE OF *SOCRATIVE* IN ESL CLASSROOMS: TOWARDS ACTIVE LEARNING

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Abstract
The online student response system (SRS) is a technological tool that can be effectively implemented in English language classroom contexts and be used to promote students' active learning. In this qualitative study, *Socrative*, a Web 2.0 software, was integrated with active learning activities and used as an SRS to explore English second language learners' (ESL) perceptions of the use of this tool. The results showed that both techniques (SRS and active learning activities) contributed to increasing the students' level of engagement, promoted their critical thinking, and stimulated their collaboration. This current research describes the benefits of SRS in supporting ESL students' active learning.
Keywords: *Socrative*; active learning; critical thinking; SRS

1. Technology in education

The increased use of computer technology in our daily life has its influence on education (McGrail, 2005). General educational reforms to institute innovations have been a goal of the U.S. federal government for more than a century; the overall goal is to enhance students' academic achievement, and educational technology has been considered as part of the reforms (Fullan, 2007). The Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) defines the term 'educational technology' as the "ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources" (Januszewski & Molenda, 2008, p. 1). Many scholars believe that one of the interesting developments in the language education field is the use of educational technology in language learning (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). The effective integration of technology may bring about significant positive outcomes to students' learning. For example, the use of technology could (a) transform the traditional classroom environment from a teacher-centered to a student-centered environment (Drexler, 2010), (b) lead to learners' autonomous learning (Terrell, 2011), (c) help teachers create a more engaging and interactive learning environment (Egbert & Neville, 2015; Stanley, 2013), (d) provide second language learners with the opportunity to interact via speaking and writing in the target language, and (e) motivate

"learners to produce more language than they otherwise might have done" both outside and inside classrooms (Stanley, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, as educators such as Stanley (2013) suggest, the incorporation of technology in education could be a valuable asset to the academic development of students to equip them with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the 21st century. This preparation would include, but is not limited to, communication skills, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Student response system (SRS), for instance, is one of those educational technology tools that instructors could use during classroom instructions to engage students into active learning roles. SRS facilitates interaction between students and instructor using hand-held electrical devices (Hunsu, Adesope & Bayly, 2016). Through the effective use of SRS, both instructors and students have access to the students' responses on data show screen (Figure 1) shows.

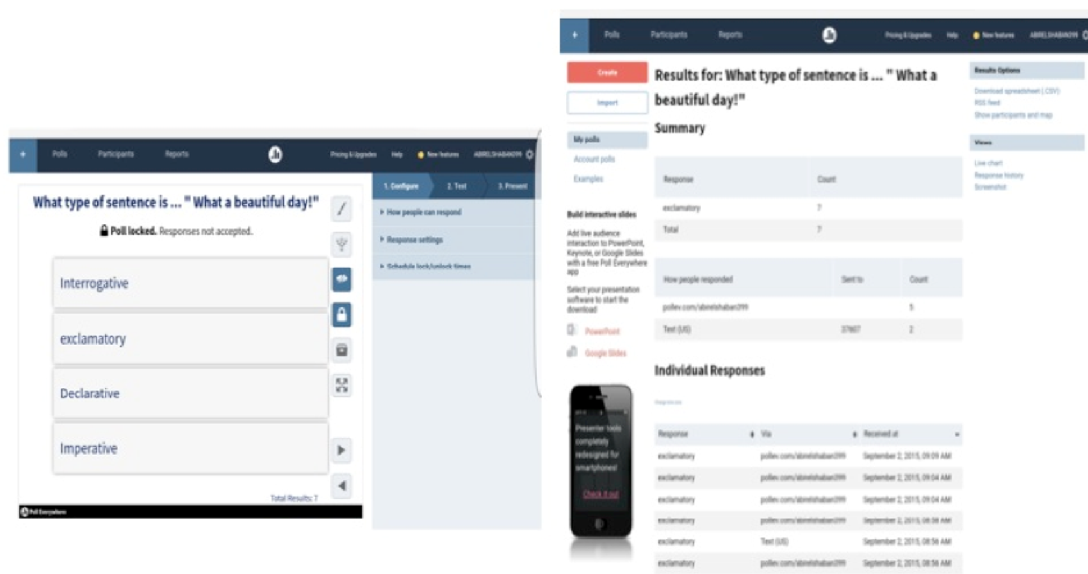

Figure 1. An example of ESL students' responses to an MCQ on the SRS technology software *Polleverywhere*

Instructors can gather students' responses on multiple-choice (MCQ), true-or-false, closed-ended and open-ended questions. Further, some SRSs can be included within a presentation software, such as *Microsoft PowerPoint*, to increase the students' engagement throughout the lecture (Nelson, Hartling, Campbell & Oswald, 2012). The SRS is widely

known with different names such as classroom response system (CRS), audience response systems (ARS), electronic response systems (ERS), polling systems, Clickers, Zappers…etc. Fortunately, in the recent years, with the development of technology, more cost-efficient and advanced SRS tools became available in market. Some of these tools are *Socrative* (Socrative, 2017), *Poll Everywhere* (Poll Everywhere, 2015), and *Kahoot* (Kahoot, 2017). Figure 2 shows some of the popular clickers in the market.

Figure 2. A collection of SRS tools that language teachers can use to promote ESL students language learning

This section is an attempt to provide a quick overview of the impact that technology has had on the academic achievement of many of today's students. Their adoption of technology has changed how these students learn, adding more expectations on how teachers should teach. With the integration of education technology in classroom settings, teachers are not only making their students' learning experiences more enjoyable, but they are also preparing them for better future employment opportunities.

2. Benefits of using SRS in the classroom

SRS tools have received attention in the educational field when many instructors started integrating them in schools and universities. Some studies showed that faculty and students

from a wide range of disciplines perceived the incorporation of SRS in classroom instructions as fruitful. For instance, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) at one of the U.S. universities conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of using SRS in classrooms. Four faculty members from science, art, language, and education along with 74 students were the participants of this study. The findings revealed that the faculty had a positive experience using SRS and they showed willingness to continue using them in future. Additionally, the survey data indicated that the students perceived the use of SRS positively. SRS enhanced the students' in-class discussion, encouraged classroom participation, and facilitated students' learning of new terminologies (Crews, Ducate, Rathel, Heid & Bishoff, 2011).

Furthermore, in another research study, Stagg and Lane (2010) surveyed undergraduate students taking Information Systems course to investigate their perceptions of the use of clickers to support information literacy instruction. Results showed that the use of clickers was effective in engaging and facilitating students' learning. The students also perceived the use of clickers as easy and fun. In a similar research study, Johnson and Lillis (2010) evaluated students' experiences of the use of an audience response system (ARS) in the laboratory setting. Results revealed that the use of ARS enhanced the students' motivation, attention, and provided the instructors with instant feedback regarding the students' understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, many instructors felt enthusiastic about using clickers. It helped their students with the fade-in-attention phenomena during long lectures (Keller, Finkelstein, Perkins, Pollock, Turpen & Dubson, 2007; Morales, 2011).

In addition to the positive perception of SRS by students, some other studies indicated that the incorporation of SRS in teaching could promote and stimulate peer collaboration (Kulikovskikh, Prokhorov & Suchkova, 2017). For example, McDonough and Foote (2015) studied the impact of individual and shared clicker use on students' collaborative learning. The research results showed that shared clicker activities resulted in a more collaborative learning and stimulated students' collaborative reasoning. This means that the effective incorporation of SRS could foster students' collaborative learning.

In other studies, scholars highlighted the effectiveness of SRS in enhancing students' focus and in engaging them. For instance, Johnson and Lillis (2010) incorporated the use of SRS in small lab groups. Results showed that the use of SRS can increase students' academic focus and performance. Further, in a cyclical action research, Habel and Stubbs (2014) found out that the use of SRS in the classroom created more engaging lectures than traditional ones. The encouraging results reported by many scholars reflect the reliability of incorporating SRS in classroom settings (Habel & Stubbs, 2014; Johnson & Lillis, 2010).

The specific SRS technology that this paper addresses is the software called *Socrative*. This Web 2.0 tool was developed in 2010 by Boston-based graduate students for response formative assessment. The tool provides instructors with a flexibility to engage students in classroom activities using any of the available personal mobile technological tools such as smart phones, laptops, or tablets. To integrate *Socrative* into teaching, an instructor can design a multiple-choice (MCQ), true/false, or open-ended short questions. To be used as a response system, an instructor needs to create multiple-choice questions and have the students select what they think of it as the right answer. Student responses are sent wirelessly and can be displayed on a data-show screen for prompt feedback. What is really interesting about this tool is that it is cost-effective and does not require administrators' decisions to use them, unlike the traditional clickers which require administrators' funds. It is important to note that the maximum number of students who can participate in a single Socrative free classroom is 50, while the pro version can accommodate up to 150 participants and different private and public rooms (see Table 1).

Table 1. The comparison of free and pro features of *Socrative*

Socrative Free	Socrative PRO
On-the-fly Questioning	Everything with Free, plus all the following:
1 public room for your classes	Up to 10 private or public rooms
50 students per session	150 student capacity
Space Race Assessment	Space Race countdown timer
Formative Assessments	Roster Import via CSV or Excel
Visualize Real-time Results	Restricted access to rooms with students ID# requirement
Device Accessibility	Personalized header for students
Reporting	Instant quiz share to colleagues with unique link
Share with an SOC code	Merge quizzes
Help Center Access	Silent Student Hand Raise
State and Common Core Standards	Shareable links for easy student login

With that being said, access to the Internet and any of the technological tools such as tablets, laptops, or smartphones are necessary for teachers and students to participate in any activity that involves the integration of *Socrative*. Also, students do not need to create an

account in order to participate. All they need is to get an access to the instructor's classroom code. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to provide examples of some of the best pedagogical practices that can inspire teachers to use and to think of similar activities that could promote students' active learning through the use of this SRS.

3. Active learning

Effective teaching and learning entail the use of different instructional and methodological strategies to meet the learners' needs and stimulate their critical thinking and creativity (Prince, 2004). One of the effective approaches to meaningful learning involves students' participation in active learning activities. The key characteristic that is associated with active learning instructional strategies involves students "in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. iii). Guthrie and Carlin (2004) maintained that today's students are expressly attracted to learning in a more engaging environment. Thus, active learning instructional strategies could increase students' engagement levels. In other words, when students are involved in active learning, this means that they are participating in active roles in the learning process and are not only a passive recipient of information (Petress, 2008). Collins and O'Brien (2003) define active learning as:

> The process of having students engage in some activity that forces them to reflect upon ideas and how they are using those ideas. Requiring students to regularly assess their own degree of understanding and skill at handling concepts or problems in a particular discipline…The process of keeping students mentally, and often physically, active in their learning through activities that involve them in gathering information, thinking, and problem solving. (p. 5)

Therefore, instructors who tend to use active learning strategies are the ones who promote specific active learning features in their students' learning. They incline to engage learners in meaningful active tasks instead of solely transmitting information, provide the learners with the opportunity to bring their learning into reality, prompt instant feedback, enhance the learner's critical thinking, and promote peer and class collaboration. For instance, Kim, Sharma, Land and Furlong (2013) designed active learning modules to enhance students' critical thinking. To achieve that goal, the authors planned three active learning strategies, namely, "small-group learning with authentic tasks, scaffolding, and individual writing" (p. 230). Findings showed a development in the students' average critical thinking level. This implies that the active learning strategies could promote students' critical thinking.

Other scholars claimed that the adoption of Bloom's Taxonomy would promote students' active learning. The effective use of Bloom's Taxonomy could assist instructors to

deliver the class and textbook materials in a meaningful and engaging approach that would maximize the learners' understanding, synthesis and evaluation (Weigel & Bonica, 2014). Further, it requires students to go beyond memorization by promoting their cognitive thinking to develop skills that require remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Learning is by nature an active process and students' learning is not straightforward. Learners tend to learn differently (Meyers & Jones, 1993). In fact, humans are curious by nature as can be clearly seen in children who try hard to explore and make sense of the environment surrounding them. Therefore, instructors are expected to promote the learners' curiosity, spontaneity, and feed them through adopting strategies that encourage students to enthusiastically make sense of the subject matter by relating learning to the learners' prior experiences, the real world, families, cultures and communities (Dewey, 1899; Nesin, 2012). These strategies should include "problem-solving exercises, informal small groups, simulations, case studies, role playing, and other activities, all of which require students to apply what they are learning" (Meyers & Jones, 1993, p. xi).

Some other studies have shown that it can be more effective to teach using different active learning strategies than by using traditional teacher-centered pedagogies (Bojinova & Oigara, 2011; Michael, 2006). For instance, Freeman, Eddy, McDonough, Smith, Okoroafor, Jordt and Wenderoth (2014) conducted a meta-analysis on 225 studies comparing active learning with traditional lecture. Findings showed that active learning is superior to traditional methods of teaching. Active learning strategies increased the students' test scores by 6% and decreased their failure rates by more than 50%. Additionally, Michael (2006) assessed various active learning methods and confirmed that active learning is one of the pedagogies superior to traditional teaching.

In a similar context that reflects on the use of active learning and clickers at the same time, Martyn (2007) questioned whether the use of clickers or active learning strategies had the greatest impact on students' learning outcomes. To reach an answer, the author introduced clickers as an active learning method to one group of students and she encouraged class discussion as a different active learning method with the other group. The analysis of pre- and posttest data that compared the learning outcomes of the two groups showed that the group that used clickers slightly outperformed the group that used class discussions. However, statistical analysis revealed no significant difference in the outcomes of the two groups. Different studies show that classroom approaches that actively involve students result in noticeably better learning than lecturing does.

However, many researchers claim that there are many barriers to active learning (Crews, Ducate, Rathel, Heid & Bishoff, 2011). For instance, Michael (2007) found out that faculty have different perceptions of barriers to active learning. She classified these barriers to "student characteristics, issues directly impacting faculty, and pedagogical issues" (p. 43). Michael believes that understanding teachers' perception of the barriers would make them embracing active learning in the classroom. Similarly, Geske (1992) thinks that one of the teachers' greatest barriers to active learning exists in teaching in large classrooms that would disengage students' from class participation. In such large classes, students might not know one another and that would increase the students' concerns to verbally participate in classroom activities.

In order to eliminate one of the above-mentioned barriers, the large classrooms barriers and increase students' active learning, Crews, Ducate, Rathel, Heid, and Bishoff (2011) recommended the use of SRS in the classrooms. The researchers conducted a study that involved four faculty members and 64 students as research participants, examining their perception about the effectiveness of students' response system in their courses. Findings showed that students perceived the use of SRS technology positively as it increased their engagement "due to hands-on interaction" (p. 5). Furthermore, the four faculty who used the SRS reported their use of the tool as an active learning method encouraged students' participation, facilitated peer discussions, engaged the students into the learning process and assisted them in learning new terminologies.

Many research studies have used SRS to explore their usefulness within the educational field. However, the review of the relevant literature shows that several gaps emerge. First, none of these studies explored English as second language learners' perceptions of the use of *Socrative* in the classroom. Second, none of the previous studies incorporated the use of *Socrative* with the active learning approach to teaching ESL learners. Thus, to address these two gaps, the current study incorporates *Socrative* with some practical activities to promote students' active learning and to explore English second language learners' (ESL) perceptions of the use of *Socrative* as an educational tool.

4. The study

The selected SRS, *Socrative*, was integrated into reading comprehension class activities to increase students' engagement and examine their perception of incorporating SRS in a classroom setting. Other different educational technology tools such as Breaking News English on iPads were also implemented to increase the students' digital literacy and to

prepare them for college demands; nevertheless, a special focus was given to the use of the SRS.

4.1. Participants and the research context

The context of the study was an intensive English program in the United States of America. The program's classrooms were equipped with a TV, computer, document camera, and projector. iPads were available upon request. Also, a computer lab at the university was assigned to the program for instructors to use with their students when needed.

The participants of the study were 14 international students. They were learning English as a second language to improve their language proficiency skills and to enroll as undergraduate students at one of the U.S. public universities. Their age ranged from 18 to 20. They all had a different linguistic and cultural background – the majority were Chinese, Vietnamese, and Middle Eastern students.

4.2. Procedures

4.2.1. Activities facilitating independent and collaborative critical thinking

The kinds of SRS activities that were used to promote the ESL students' critical thinking, engaged students in higher-order thinking both individually and collaboratively and they were usually followed with a meaningful and enjoyable classroom discussions. In case-based problem-solving exercises, students developed their analytical skills and brought theories to the real world and transferred their previous skills into different contexts. For instance, students were engaged in a range of problem-solving thinking activities that required them to use their analytical skills to come up with a solution. Within such activities, the researcher tried to bring problems from different cultural backgrounds. In the following example, an activity that is from the Arabic heritage was used.

> Once upon a time, there was a man who wants to cross a river with a sheep, hay, and wolf and reach to the other side. However, his boat is small and it can only carry one thing at a time. As you know, if he leaves the wolf with sheep, the wolf will eat the sheep, and if he leaves the sheep with hay, the sheep will eat the hay. What can he do? Can you, as a team, think and decide which of the three things the man should carry first and leave on the other side?
>
> a. Wolf
> b. Sheep
> c. Hay

To respond to this activity effectively, students were divided into groups of three and were given the freedom to discuss their solutions in or outside the classroom setting. Each group was assigned a name, so the students could know which team chose the right answer and would win a treat as an incentive. Following solving the problem, the whole class got involved in a meaningful discussion and a reflection about how each group reached that specific solution. After interviewing the students, all of them reported that *Socrative* activities encouraged them to interact and think more critically and collaboratively. Most of the students reflected that the use of such activities using *Socrative* made learning more fun and gave them the opportunity to work collaboratively and competitively.

4.2.2. Activities facilitating different teaching styles and course feedback

Instructors who teach English as a second language to international students are the ones who are more aware than any other instructors of the many obstacles that would face when trying to meet the needs and wants of all of their students who are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As a platform, *Socrative* worked wonders with students who feared conferencing and yet would like to share their opinions frankly. This software can provide instructors with the opportunity to gather their students' feedback anonymously and hear from them about the kinds of class activities that they like the most, express their learning style that is desired freely, and provide the teacher with everyday evaluation. Some students commented that one of things they liked about using *Socrative* is their ability to answer without the fear of having their names attached to the wrong answer, encouraged them to keep trying. It also motivated some Chinese students who used to be silent most of the time to have a voice in the class during and after using the SRS.

4.2.3. Activities facilitating instant feedback

An interesting feature that is attached to the SRS and is important for the active learning of instructional strategies is its capability to provide students with instant feedback. Providing students with instant feedback is hard to accomplish in large classroom contexts. However, with the use of SRS (*Socrative*), instructors are able to provide their students with instant feedback in an innovative, effective and efficient way. Students perceived the feature of prompted feedback as priceless. They believed that there was nothing like the instructor's real time and clear explanation when a student chooses the incorrect answer. Also, when the screen displayed the correct responses, one of the students commented, "I will never forget the feedback that I got for my wrong ones [answers]. I will always see them and avoid them."

5. Reasons for using Student Response System in the classroom

1. Students' academic engagement leads to academic success. The use of SRS (e.g., *Socrative*) would increase students' engagement.
2. It is important that each student should have a voice in the class and share his/her opinion regarding the course content. The use of SRS (e.g., *Socrative*) would provide shy and less involved students (e.g., some Asian students) with the opportunity to have a voice during the class.
3. Critical thinking and collaboration are two of the most important 21st century skills that most of the Common Core State Standards emphasize. The effective use of class tasks with SRS could promote these two skills.
4. SRS (e.g., *Socrative*) has become more accessible and efficient to use. Language teachers should take advantage of it.
5. SRS (e.g., *Socrative*) is an effective tool that can provide ESL students with instant feedback and help the teacher to evaluate students' understandings of the subject matter.
6. With the use of SRS (e.g., *Socrative*), language teachers can set up students' responses as anonymous. Doing so would encourage even more hesitant students to respond without the fear of embarrassment or intimidation in case their answers were not right.
7. *Socrative* as a SRS can be used as an assessment tool inside and outside the classroom confines.
8. The use of SRS can meet the passion of the tech-savvy new generation and, if it is used efficiently and effectively, it can break up the dullness of traditional classroom settings (Johnson, 2005).

6. Conclusion

There is no doubt that most teachers care about their students' learning; however, a devoted teacher should also care about his/her students' perception of the course content and the tasks that support the course outcomes. Teachers need to ask themselves if they want their students to leave the class with positive and encouraging attitudes. If they want their students to feel positive toward the subject matter they teach, and their learning experiences, then, they need to consider the use of various educational technology tools and instructional approaches that would promote those positive attitudes. SRS is one of these tools that has shown to be effective in positively impacting the ESL students' learning experiences during classes. The students perceived the selected SRS, *Socrative*, as a valuable tool that facilitated their critical

thinking, encouraged their effective collaboration, and engaged them into the learning process. They developed a favorable attitude towards using it and expressed their desire to use it throughout the course activities. They had even expressed their desire for it to be used by instructors in other language classes.

As a limitation, the current study did not examine the students' language learning achievement regarding the use of the SRS. Its main goal was to explore ESL students' perception of the integration of SRS during language classes with the support of active learning activities. The tool sounded effective in engaging students into the learning process, prompting their higher thinking order skills, and enhancing the ESL students' collaboration.

The use of SRS requires language teachers to devote more time to prepare the activities and set them up on the software. To do so, language teachers' perceptions of integrating technology into classroom settings and their willingness to adopt the student-centered approach need to be considered. Language teachers need to be trained on how to integrate this tool effectively and efficiently in different ways so that they can perceive it as easy to use and embrace its relative advantages.

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I would like to thank my students with whom I keep learning and growing.

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IMPROVING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS USING *GRADECAM GO!*

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers' perceptions and experience regarding their use of *GradeCam Go!* to grade multiple choice tests. The results of the study indicated that the participants overwhelmingly valued *GradeCam Go!* due to its features such as grading printed forms for multiple-choice questions as well as the immediate feedback provided to both teachers and their students. The results of the study also indicate that *GradeCam Go!* might be a very useful tool for teachers working in schools with large classrooms where technological resources are rare. *GradeCam Go!* seems to pave the way for an easy and efficient tool for teachers to use regular assessment through frequent quizzes, give immediate feedback, and monitor student progress.

Keywords: formative assessment; grading; test

1. Introduction

Assessment plays an important role in teaching contexts and in teachers and students' lives since it is vital to inform students of their progress in addition to determining their strengths and weaknesses and providing feedback (Richards, 2015). Benefiting from assessment practices, known as formative assessment or assessment for learning, teachers can modify their teaching practices based on the results (Johnston, 2003; Lee & Norbaizura, 2016). In his review of the definitions of assessment for learning, William (2011) underscores the importance of providing feedback to both students and teachers and adjusting teaching activities accordingly. Therefore, the main purpose of formative assessment is to provide feedback to the learner as well as to the teacher to use it in order to extend and facilitate learning and teaching (Powell, 2010; Gordon & Rajagopalan, 2016; Hamp-Lyons, 2016; Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016).

As a lecturer of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), I have held several seminars with English language teachers working in lower secondary schools and talked about the importance of formative assessment in the language classroom. The teachers in the seminars acknowledge the benefits of the information obtained through formative assessment as providing feedback and adjusting their teaching strategies accordingly. However, many

teachers raise the issue of conducting formative assessment in large classes where the number of students exceeds thirty-five and of the limited time to cover both the curriculum and the assessment.

Technology can be one way to help the teachers willing to conduct formative assessment but facing work with a large number of students. There are several applications and Web 2.0 tools that help teachers create online quizzes and/or tests which are graded automatically such as *QuizStar* (Kılıçkaya, 2010) and *Socrative* (Sprague, 2016). Especially in low-resource contexts, it might not be possible to benefit from these resources, and teachers might have to rely on paper and pencil tests and grade them manually. However, *GradeCam Go!* is a Web 2. 0 tool that allows teachers to grade multiple-choice questions using the cameras of several portable devices such as smart mobile phones and tables on printed forms, rather than special optic forms (Kılıçkaya, 2016). This study aimed to investigate ten EFL teachers' perceptions on their use of *GradeCam Go!* to grade multiple choice tests which they created to assess their students' progress, to give feedback and act accordingly over the six weeks of the spring semester at lower-secondary schools in Turkey.

2. Literature review

Large classes make it difficult, if not impossible, to provide timely grading and feedback since large classes lead many teachers to deal with "an overwhelming amount of grading and feedback" (Brady, 2012, p. 291). One of the uses of technology in the classrooms, as proposed by several authors, is for evaluation and assessment purposes (Brown, 2013; Skorczynska, Del Saz Milagros, & Carrio-Pastor, 2016). Brown (2016, p. 151) lists some of the benefits of computer-assisted testing such as "data storage, remote scoring, and immediate feedback". Thus, technology can help teachers make assessment more efficient, enabling them to use cheaper markers since computers and software provide the opportunity to mark the recognition types of tests such as multiple-choice, true/false, and gap-filling items. Computers or specific software can easily compile, store and analyze the results of the exam to provide feedback to the teachers, who will use them to inform the students on their current progress (Walker & White, 2013). It is possible then to conduct regular assessment to benefit from formative assessment since regular assessment through frequent quizzes as well as informal observation gives feedback on strengths and weaknesses (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2010; Fulcher & Owen, 2016). To the best knowledge of the author, there is not any study conducted on the use of grade markers, and it would be useful to discuss some of the studies conducted on practices of formative assessment in the classroom as well as online testing.

Mumm, Karm and Remmik (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 student teachers and found that teachers used summative assessment as the main way of assessing student teachers, which occurs only at the end of the semester in the form of examination. Johnson (2006) investigated the effects of optional online quizzes on 112 college students' academic achievement. The participants were not limited in terms of the number of the quizzes to be taken, or how many times they could take the quizzes. The results of the study indicated that optional online quizzes were linked to the increased academic achievement; however, it was not clear whether the quiz caused the increased academic achievement. In a similar study, Pennebaker, Grosling and Ferrell (2013) studied the effect of frequent online testing and immediate feedback on college students' academic performance in an introductory psychology course through short-internet based quizzes given before every class. The experimental group took the online quiz before every class, while the control group at another university was only assessed with four class-long exams. The results indicated that the participants in the experimental group obtained higher grades compared to the control group. The results also suggested that frequent quizzes could be used in large lecture classes to improve students' academic performance.

Fageeh (2015) investigated EFL students' and the faculty members' attitudes and perceptions on the use of online assessment through survey method at King Khalid University. The results of the study revealed positive attitudes towards the use of online assessment and further indicated that web-based assessment and practice were valued due to the opportunity to provide immediate feedback and automated scores to the students.

The studies reviewed here indicate that online assessment, as well as the other various tools, helps teachers create e-learning materials including online quizzes (Krajka, 2003; Beaven et al., 2010) and enables them to provide immediate feedback to determine strengths and weaknesses in large classes and to act accordingly. The current paper aims to determine EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers' perceptions as well as experience regarding their use of *GradeCam Go!*, an online and mobile application to grade multiple choice tests.

3. Grading Marker: *GradeCam Go!*

GradeCam Go! provides an easy and unique way of grading multiple-choice tests easily. The main benefit of using this application is that the responses can be provided on a regular printed form similar to a special optic form, and the printed forms can be graded using a camera of a mobile device such as a smartphone. An account must be created by registration on the website available at https://gradecam.com. The free account allows 60-day trial use of

the website, which will change into the basic use. The basic use allows creating an answer key for up to 10 questions, while the trial use allows up to 1000 questions. Upon registration, teachers can immediately create different classes, a list of students for each class, and the optic forms. Using the 'Assignment' links, a new assignment (a quiz or an exam) can be created, and the number of the questions can be determined (Figure 1).

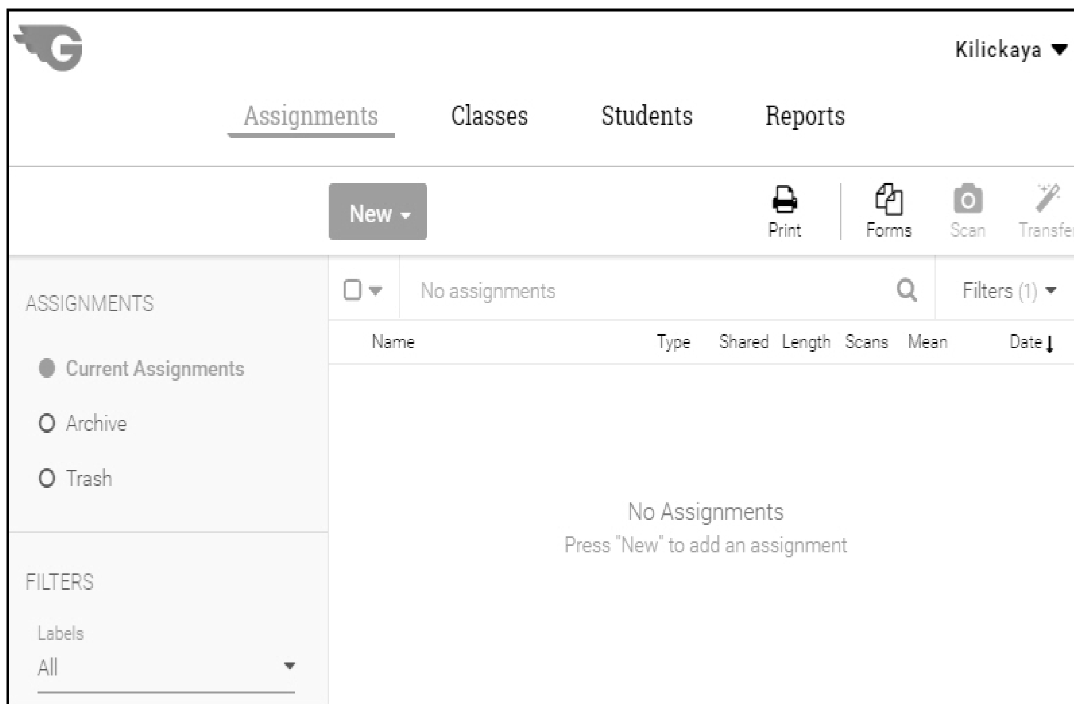

Figure 1. The main screen of *GradeCam Go!*

Then, the answer key will be generated for the previously-created assignment, which is to be used for grading the students' responses provided on the optic form printed (Figure 2). *GradeCam Go!* scans the forms when you focus your camera on them and, in seconds, *GradeCam Go!* presents the results of the exam, providing detailed information on each student's performance as well as item analysis (detailed information on each answer choice, percentages and the number of responses) and item summary (detailed information on the percentage of students' correct and incorrect answers provided to each question). The results are also stored on the website for later analysis or use. Thus, *GradeCam Go*! not only serves as an efficient marker of multiple-choice exam papers but also a statistical analysis tool, which relieves teachers of the burden of analyzing the results by hand.

Figure 2. The optic form created by GradeCam Go!

4. Methodology

This study aimed to determine EFL teachers' perceptions as well as experience regarding their use of *GradeCam Go!* to grade multiple choice tests. The study adopted a mixed-method approach involving a survey and a face-to-face interview with the participants. To this end, the following research questions were devised:

1. What is the EFL teachers' experience while using *GradeCam Go!,* an application to grade multiple choice tests?
2. What are the advantages /disadvantages of using *GradeCam Go!* in the classroom?
3. Which skills were assessed while using *GradeCam Go*!?
4. What are the limitations/challenges faced?
5. What do the EFL teachers suggest regarding the use of *GradeCam Go!* in the classroom?

The data collection instrument included an anonymous survey (Table 1), which was completed by ten participants following the use of *GradeCam Go!* over the 6 weeks of the spring semester at lower-secondary schools in Turkey. The survey was created by the lecturer and included a five-point Likert scale used to allow the participants to express how much they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement. The survey statements were checked by an expert in the field for clarity of the statements as well as the appropriateness of the content. The pilot study could not be undertaken as the items included statements requiring familiarity with the application. Moreover, a face-to-face interview was conducted with all the participants to gain further insights regarding their perceptions.

4.1. Participants

The participants included ten EFL teachers working at lower-secondary schools in Burdur. They were all graduates of English language teaching departments in Turkey. 4 of the participants were male, while 6 were female. The participants were aged between 28-45 and their experience of teaching English varied from 5 to 15, with the average of 10.5 years. The participants' workload of teaching ranged from 20 to 30 hours each week, with an average of 23.5 hours.

4.2. Procedure

GradeCam Go! was introduced to the participants by the researcher after a seminar held on language assessment. The participants were provided with hands-on experience regarding the use of the tool. They were first shown how to create an account to use the tool and practiced creating assignments and optic forms for the assignments created. Since all the participants had smartphones, they were shown how to download the software for the mobile devices working on *Android*. Moreover, the participants practiced grading the multiple-choice questions that they created and each participant answered each other's exams, checking the exam results and getting detailed information on each item on their exams. The training lasted for about two hours and ended with a question-and-answer session. After the training, the participants agreed to use the tool in their classrooms for six weeks and to share the results with the researcher. Both the participants and the researcher shared their contact information for future help and for data collection purposes. The participants were later contacted for a brief survey and a face-to-face semi-structured interview regarding the participants' perceptions towards the use of software, challenges, and other issues as raised by the participants.

4.3. Data collection

After the six weeks during which the participants used *GradeCam Go!* in their classrooms, all the participants were asked to complete the brief survey published on *Google Docs* (Table 1). The survey included five statements on the use of the tool as well as the possible benefits. As a further step, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the participants. The questions were prepared before the interviews, which included four core questions:

1. What was your experience regarding the use of *GradeCam Go!*? Was it easy/difficult to use? Why?

2. What areas of language use did you assess? (Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading, etc.)
3. In your view, what are the benefits of using *GradeCam Go!* in your classroom? (Grading papers easily, giving immediate feedback etc.)
4. Are there any suggestions or comments that you would like to add?

The interviews were conducted in Turkish, and the scripts were translated into English by the researcher, which was checked by a translator by applying a translation-retranslation method. The interviews were conducted with individual interviews with all the participants in the study. The interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recorder with the consent of the participants; however, as three participants did not agree to be recorded, the researchers tried to take notes in detail of the responses. The average number of words transcribed was 655 words. The interviews were conducted in the school where the participants work, and the duration of interviews varied from 10 to 24 minutes, with an average of 14 minutes.

4.4. Data analysis

The responses obtained through the survey were subject to descriptive statistics using *IBM SPSS Statistics 24*. The data collected throughout the interviews were analyzed using inductive content analysis, which followed the processes as suggested by Creswell (2007). The interviews were word-processed, and transcripts were checked for units of meaning. Then, the responses were analyzed through open coding and the codes determined were noted down. Finally, the codes obtained were clustered and ranked in order to identify the emerging themes and codes, which were checked for consistency and credibility by another expert in the field of research methods. The themes and the codes, as well as the examples of responses that emerged from the interviews, have been provided in Table 2.

5. Results

The statements on the online survey were more related to the basic features of the application and the participants' views. Therefore, the survey provided basic data about the participants' perceptions and experience, which were later analyzed in detail in face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

The participants' responses to the online survey showed that they highly valued the use of *GradeCam Go!* in their classroom. Table 1 shows that the participants indicated it was easy to use *GradeCam Go!* (20% agree; 80% strongly agree) and that *GradeCam Go!* helped them grade the papers easily (10% agree; 90% strongly agree).

Table 1. The participants' views on using GradeCam Go! in the classroom

Survey Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/Nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
It is easy to use *GradeCam Go!*	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	80.00
GradeCam Go! helps me grade the papers easily.	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00	90.00
GradeCam Go! provides detailed information on students' performances.	0.00	0.00	0.00	30.00	70.00
GradeCam Go! helps me give immediate feedback to my students.	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00	90.00
Item analysis and summary are easy to do with *GradeCam Go!*	0.00	0.00	10.00	20.00	80.00

One of the features of *GradeCam Go!* is that it provides detailed information based on students' responses to the multiple-choice questions. Therefore, it seems to be quite natural that all of the participants agreed that *GradeCam Go!* helped them obtain detailed information about each student's performance and give immediate feedback. Another important finding regarding item analysis and summary is that almost all the participants found it easy to do item analysis and summary through *GradeCam Go!*, which provides the percentage as well as the number of responses on each answer choice and shows the percentage of students that have correct and incorrect answers. To sum up, these results underscore the fact that *GradeCam Go*! was highly valued by all the participants since it allowed them to benefit from easy grading, access to the exam results, and item analysis on the results. The themes and the codes, as well as the examples of responses that emerged from the interviews, have been provided in Table 2.

Use of the application. Under this theme, two codes have emerged: simple menu and user-friendly. When the participants were inquired about their use of the application, almost all of the participants (n=9) expressed that the application was user-friendly and easy to use. As the participants were teachers of English, they had no problems in referring to the support desk of the website provided in English while trying to get answers to their questions. One of the participants expressed this as follows:

> The application was easy to use since each menu option was self-explanatory. During the training I learned the basic settings and to me it was like using Microsoft Word (Interviewee 8, Male).

Major benefits. Under this theme, several codes have appeared: easy scoring, cost-effective, detailed item analysis, prompt feedback, and allowing more frequent assessment.

Table 2. Emerging themes and codes

Themes	**Codes**	**Example responses**
Application use	simple menu	*The application has a simple menu, and I can find the settings easily.*
	user-friendly	*The application is very easy to use. You can learn the features quickly without spending much time.*
Major benefits	easy scoring	*I graded more than 100 papers quickly, and the results were in my hand in less than seconds.*
	cost-effective	*Expensive devices are needed to assess the papers, but using this application I can do the same thing almost free.*
	detailed item analysis	*The application provides me with the detailed information on my students' performance such as the number of correct and incorrect answers.*
	prompt feedback	*I can provide immediate feedback to my students after the exam.*
	frequent assessment	*It is almost impossible to give frequent exams, but using this application, I can now use more quizzes in the class.*
Limitations	number of questions	*The application only allows 10 questions for each test in the free version.*
	one type of questions	*Only multiple-choice questions are possible. There are no other types of questions to assess.*
	internet connection	*I have to be connected to the internet while using the application. It would be great to have an offline version.*
Skills assessed	grammar & vocabulary	*I used the software to grade my students' grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Multiple-choice questions are more suitable to assess grammar and vocabulary.*
	reading	*Multiple-choice questions worked very well to grade my students' reading comprehension.*
Practical suggestions	Reinforcement	*The application can be used to assess the students' performance on previously-learned subjects to assess the weaknesses and strengths. In this way, the teacher can do extra activities based on the results.*
	Quizzes as review games	*I think that at the end of each week, short quizzes including 3 or five multiple-choice quizzes can be given to students. They can work in groups and answer the questions together. This can also be done as a game.*

The three examples below indicated the participants' views on the major benefits of using the application:

> I could easily grade the papers through the forms I created. I just showed the paper to the camera of my mobile device and in seconds *GradeCam Go!* stored the results together with detailed item analysis and summary, which was great (Interviewee 7, Female).
>
> After the exam was over, I graded the students' papers during the break easily. The next class I shared the results with the students, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses, which was very motivating for my students (Interviewee 4, Male).
>
> Calculating each student's correct and incorrect answers is really difficult if you do it through hand calculation; however, *GradeCam Go!* does it easily, enhancing the results with figures (Interviewee 3, Female).

Limitations. This theme had three codes: number of questions, one type of questions, and internet connection. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study provided positive experiences regarding the use of *GradeCam Go!* in the language classroom. However, several issues were raised by the participants. Most participants (n=8) expressed that the possible number of multiple-choice questions is limited to ten items in the free version of the software, while at the same time admitting the fact that this number was actually sufficient to conduct regular review quizzes in the classroom. Moreover, all the participants expressed that another limitation was the type of questions. Four of the participants shared some problems with the Internet connection at their schools and expressed that they, in a few cases, failed to provide immediate feedback to their students regarding their performance due to the lack of connection.

In the following two examples, the participants shared their views on the limitations:

> The application allows only ten questions in the free version. Moreover, it is not possible to ask different types of questions, only multiple choice questions (Interviewee 2, Female).
>
> Although it was possible to create optic forms only for 10 questions, it was sufficient for me to assess my students. Since I aimed to assess my students through review questions, I did not include more than this number (Interviewee 4, Male).

Skills assessed. When being asked the question "What areas of language use did you assess? (Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading, etc.)" while using the application, a great majority of the participants (n=8) stated that they used the application to conduct assessment of grammar and vocabulary as multiple-choice questions were suitable for young learners as they did not have to produce the language. However, two participants expressed that they also benefited from the application in assessing reading comprehension based on the texts of the coursebook units. The following examples indicate the participants' main views on this issue:

> I conducted assessments on grammar and vocabulary using GradeCam Go!. There are several reasons for this. First, I believe that it is easier to assess grammar and vocabulary through

multiple-choice questions. Second, since my students are preparing for a multiple-choice based examination, they are more eager to answer the questions (Interviewee 2, Female).

Practical suggestions. When the participants were asked about their suggestions regarding the use of *GradeCam Go!*, two codes emerged: Reinforcement of previous topics (formative assessment) and quizzes as review games in groups. 8 participants suggested using the application to give short quizzes to review the previously learned items, to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the students, and to act accordingly, e.g. reviewing the weak points and doing extra work. In the following example, one of the participants provides two suggestions regarding this:

> As a teacher, I spent a great amount of time in assessment-related procedures, and most of the time I cannot give regular quizzes or assessments to my students to check their progress as especially scoring takes a lot of time. I teach 26 hours a week and I have more than 200 students. I believe that *GradeCam Go!* is very beneficial in large classes to review the previous topics or in game-like activities in groups (Interviewee 9, Female).

6. Discussion and implications

Teachers can determine the strengths and weaknesses of their students through traditional and alternative assessment methods. However, especially in large classes, this cannot be feasible and may urge them to try several options such as using online websites to create quizzes so that students can check their progress through rapid and detailed feedback. Using these resources may not be possible in all contexts, especially low-resource ones, and teachers might have to use paper and pencil tests, requiring scoring to be done manually.

In this study, the primary objective was to determine the EFL teachers' perceptions on their use of *GradeCam Go!*. The results indicated that the participants highly valued the application, as it was user-friendly, had a simple menu and provided detailed tutorials. The participants also had positive attitudes towards using the software as, in addition to other benefits, *GradeCam Go!* allowed grading the exam papers without the need for a professional marker, which is often too expensive to be available, especially in a state school.

Regarding the major benefits of the application, several factors were voiced by the participants such as more frequent assessment and prompt feedback to learners. As indicated by previous research on providing immediate feedback (Jonson, 2006; Chappuis & Chappuis, 2010; Pennebaker, Grosling & Ferrell, 2013; Fulcher & Owen, 2016), learners can benefit more from feedback on strengths and weakness, and in this perspective, the application was found to be highly efficient. Most assessment is in the form of summative assessment (Mumm, Karm & Remmik, 2016). However, as formative assessment is believed to be providing more detailed feedback on the learners' progress when compared with the summative approach,

GradeCamGo!, based on the participants' views and experience in the classroom, seems to help teachers conduct formative assessment to determine students' weaknesses and strengths by automated scores, which was in accord with Fageeh's study (2015).

Regarding the limitations and the skills assessed, the participants expressed the view that the number of the questions was limited to ten items in the free version and added that only multiple-choice questions were allowed to be graded with the application. Therefore, the application can be used to assess receptive skills through multiple-choice questions rather than productive ones. Therefore, the participants in the study conducted assessment of grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

This study focused on 10 English language teachers' perception and practice of using *GradeCam Go!* in the classroom. While it is acknowledged that the small number of participants limits the study's findings as it prevents them from being generalizable to larger English teacher populations, the instructional procedure and experience of using this application as an aid to the formative assessment in the classroom does have the following practical implications considering the participants' suggestions:

1. *GradeCam Go!* can prove to be useful in terms of doing regular assessment through multiple-choice questions, especially in situations in which teachers have to teach large classes.
2. Learners need to know their progress, strengths, and weaknesses. In addition, teachers also need to "determine the effectiveness of their teaching and the materials they are using" (Richards, 2015, p. 666). *GradeCam Go!* can be used to review and reinforce the previously-learned/discussed topics as well as concepts for 'diagnostic' purposes (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010) and to encourage learners to get prepared for the coming classes (Kılıçkaya, 2017). Therefore, it can be used to provide rapid and detailed feedback to both teachers and learners without dealing with manual analysis, which is at the same time cost-effective.
3. Rather than an official or formal assessment, quizzes can be given to students in game-like group-work activities to make assessment attractive and enjoyable for learners, and scoring can be easily done by teachers, or in some cases, by students.
4. Moreover, the technological tools that teachers can benefit from while assessing their learners such as *GradeCam Go!* can be infused into teacher education programs in courses such as *Technology and Language Learning*, and *Computer Assisted Language Learning* (Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez & Akayoğlu, 2015; Kessler & Hubbard, 2017; Akayoğlu, 2017).

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to determine EFL teachers' perceptions on their use of *GradeCam Go!* to grade multiple choice tests. The results of the study indicated that the participants overwhelmingly valued *GradeCam Go!* due to its features such as grading printed forms for multiple-choice questions as well as the immediate feedback provided to both teachers and their students. The results of the study also indicate that *GradeCam Go!* might prove to be a useful tool for teachers working in schools with large classrooms where technological resources are rare. It is known that professional markers on the market may cost too much for schools to afford them, not to mention the need to have special optic forms required for different needs. Therefore, *GradeCam Go!* seems to pave the way for an easy and efficient tool for teachers to do regular assessment through frequent quizzes and give immediate feedback and monitor student progress.

The current study is small in scale and only reflects the practice of ten EFL teachers that used the tool to grade multiple-choice questions on grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, the study was aimed at investigating the participants' perception on the use of the tool. Therefore, further studies could also examine the effects of using this tool on the possible changes in students' performances. Specific aspects of using this tool such as monitoring students' progress and giving immediate feedback can also be taken into consideration in further research.

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TEACHING IN A DIGITAL AGE - BOOK REVIEW

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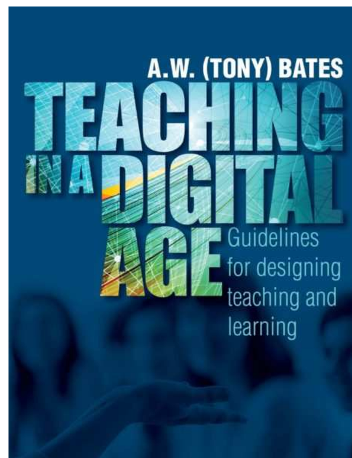

Textbook Details

Teaching in a Digital Age

A.W. (Tony) Bates

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1. Introduction

The rapid development of technology has led massive changes in every aspect of our life, one of which is the way we teach in classroom. The volume *Teaching in a Digital Age* is aimed at providing a base theory and knowledge to teachers and instructors. It also offers alternative classroom procedures that both teachers and instructors could employ to teach their students within a digital environment.

The volume is written by A.W. (Tony) Bates, a well-known author, practitioner, and professor in educational media research. It is one of Bates's extraordinary works on

educational technology, online and distance learning; and it has been translated into such languages as French, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Serbo-Croat (p. viii). Although the volume was first published in 2015 and specifically does not discuss the incorporation of technology in language learning classroom, the discussion is still relevant to the field as it provides fundamental principles about instructional approaches and methods and the use of technology in both online and offline modes of instruction.

The volume is published in an electronic book (ebook) format and is intended as an open textbook for university teachers and instructors. It comes with various formats like epub, pdf and mobi that allow readers to read the volume from their personal computer, laptops, tablets and smartphones. Together with these ebook versions, the author also provides additional podcasts to support the book contents.

2. Sections and chapters

The volume comprises an "About the book" section, twelve chapters, four appendices and a feedback section. Some important keys, references, and bibliography are also provided in the volume. Each of the chapters in the volume is typically structured with a section explaining the purpose of the chapter, activity and "what-if" scenario. This chapter structure helps the reader not only to comprehend the materials discussed but also to allow them to establish a relation between "theory" and the actual "classroom practices". More importantly, the "what-if" scenarios which reflect ten semi-fictional cases of the corporation of technology in classroom settings "stimulate imagination and thinking" of the teachers about their current conditions and alternatives improvement in the future (p. 4). Throughout the scenario, the author seems to encourage readers (teachers) to be more critical towards technology and its incorporation in the classroom.

Chapter One discusses the changes in society and economy that influence education in the digital age. Some interesting topics covered in the chapter include the changes of work and workers, skills required in the digital age, the interface between education and the labour market, and the effect of development of technology on the teaching method. Chapters Two-Five are concerned with the epistemology of teaching and teaching methods. The discussion in Chapter Two mainly focuses on the nature of knowledge and how our understanding of the knowledge would affect the way we teach. Chapter Three emphasises the teaching method within a campus-based environment while Chapter Four is concerned with the teaching method in an online setting. Chapter Five describes MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) as a product of technological innovations in higher education.

Media and technology are the themes of Chapters Six-Eight. Chapter Six explains the role of media and technology in education while in Chapter Seven the pedagogical characteristics for the utilisation of media and technology in the classroom are detailed. The chapter also offers a framework that teachers can employ to examine the pedagogical characteristics of educational media. Although the author offers criteria that teachers could consider in selecting technology for classroom use (see Chapter Eight), such criteria seem to be universal one, and accordingly readers need accompanying reference. In the field of English language teaching (ELT), readers could use either Chappelle's or Hubbard's evaluation framework (see McMurry, Williams, Rich, & Hartshorn, 2016). The practical implementation of Chappelle's framework, for example, can be found in journal *Teaching English with Technology* (see Mulyono, 2016).

Chapter Nine focuses on the mode of instructional material delivery, such as face-to-face, blended and full online learning. The role of technology in blended learning may include the use of technology as classroom aids, flipped learning and hybrid mode of instruction. Considerations to help teachers (instructors) to decide types of modes of delivery are also offered in the chapter. Chapter Ten presents trends in open education, and the discussion focuses on open learning, open education resources (OER), open textbooks, open research and open data. The implications of this openness in learning are highlighted in the final part of the chapter.

Chapter Eleven offers a framework that teachers (instructors) and principals can employ to develop, apply and ensure quality in teaching in the digital age while in Chapter Twelve the author suggests institutional strategies to support teachers (instructors) to incorporate technology in their teaching. The need for teachers' professional development and training on how to incorporate technology into teaching practices is also highlighted in the final chapter.

3. Evaluation

Personally, my colleagues and I have been using this volume as a textbook in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English Language Teaching course in a second language teacher education (SLTE) at University of Muhammadiyah Prof DR. HAMKA (UHAMKA), Jakarta, Indonesia. Not only does the volume inform me, my colleague, and my students about the epistemology of teaching in the era of technology, but it also provides us with some alternative procedures of incorporation of technology for classroom practices. As an instructor and a teacher educator at SLTE, I found this book really useful. The author's thoughts,

suggested activities and scenarios have helped develop my understanding of the nature of teaching English in the digital age. Most importantly, it helps improve the quality of my classroom teaching within which I incorporate digital tools (see my classroom practice with technology in Solihati & Mulyono, 2017). In addition, my students who are in-service teachers found this volume worth reading. They perceive the volume as a valuable reference for their professional development activity. Readers who are interested can download the volume at http://opentextb.ca/teachinginadigitalage.

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