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Editorial

## The role of cheating – Part 2

Donald G. Perrin

When you don't know how to answer the question, do you call your friends for help? Or peek at the answer in the back of the book? Or Google it? Edgar Dale coined the word COIK – Clear Only If Known when he recognized that once you understood the context, you knew or learn the answer. Maybe you just needed a cue to get you going. Either way, this is learning, not cheating. In a similar manner, programmed learning poses a question, solicits a response, and provides the correct answer. Immediate knowledge of results is a powerful reinforcement for learning. How and where you get that knowledge may not make a lot of difference.

Language-teaching-in-context triangulates images, text and sounds with experiences and interaction to facilitate learning. Most teaching is less thorough, so that a unique context, like a multiple choice test question, can confuse the learner. When exposed to the correct answer there is an *ah-ha* reaction and the correct answer is either known or learned. Failure at the first attempt stands as a failure on a student's record, even though the correct answer has now been learned. Mistakes are an important part of learning and we can learn a great deal from our mistakes.

So long as failure stigmatizes a student, cheating becomes an option. Cheating is about bending, breaking or flouting rules. I once spent an evening with a designer of parlor games and war games. Instead of a speech he invented a game, assigned us to teams. We played the game three times. The rules were loose, and it was apparent after the first game that the only way to win was to cheat. We played the game a second and third time, and by that point all teams were cheating. And it became a totally different game! Competitive environments foster cheating to increase the opportunity to win. Too much emphasis on competition may have negative effects, like in *musical chairs*, where there is only one winner and everyone else is a loser. Competition should be used judiciously in educational environments.

In collaborative environments, students help each other. There are learning and social benefits. Success is a collective rather than individual achievement. Deming proved the effectiveness of collaboration when he changed the Japanese auto industry and made it a model for the world. For many industries, team skills are now an essential characteristic for new hires.

In academic research, plagiarism is stealing the works of others and presenting it as your own. It can be avoided by referencing quotations and sources, and integrating data and interpretations in your own words. Industrial research demands fast response and minimal cost. It is acceptable to cut-and-paste excerpts from key documents with minimal references rewriting and integration. Fortunately, software can now automatically reference articles that are cut and pasted together.

In education we teach ethical behavior, compassion, and how to distinguish right from wrong. In the real world there is a disconnect. Why do we pay homage to perpetrators of amazing deeds like the great train robbery? Why is political pandering or influence peddling that is "within the law" acceptable? Why are marginally legal business deals considered OK? Why is strategy, creative interpretation of laws, and denigration of witnesses the basis of success in court? Why did so many sports heroes use illegal drugs? Why is it acceptable for organizations or individuals to act dishonestly or unfairly, to trick, distort, deceive, swindle, or fraud, to enhance their power, reputation, or profit? Why does war permit such awful aberrations of human behavior. Cheating at any level is unacceptable and must be stopped.

It is the opinion of this author that education has placed too much emphasis on detecting and punishing cheaters instead of mitigating the need to cheat. Collaboration, tolerance of mistakes, creative activities, measuring higher levels of learning through actual performance, and reduction of so called "objective" testing, would be a good start.

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**Editor's Note:** Successful adoption of the computer by both teachers and students to mediate language learning is increasing effectiveness of language programs.

## **Jordanian EFL students' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation of CALL in TEFL**

**Nedal Awwad Bani-Hani**

**Jordan**

### **Abstract**

The central focus of this research was to investigate the attitudes of university instructors and students towards the implementation of CALL in teaching English compulsory courses (E.099, E.101, and E.102) at Al-Balqa Applied University. To accomplish the objectives of the study, two instruments were employed: a teacher questionnaire (consisted of 15 items) and a student questionnaire (consisted of 15 items). Two samples were purposefully chosen: the first was the instructors' sample which consisted of (30) instructors. The second was the student sample which consisted of 450 students.

The findings revealed that achievement was significantly affected by the utilization of the computer in the classroom. Both teachers and students prefer using the computer rather than the textbook. Instructors feel more comfortable because the computer provide immediate feedback, help students in learning, make students feel excited during the class time, help them understand the instructions, improve their achievement and save time and effort. The results further revealed that almost all the instructors and students confirm that they will continue using the computer in teaching and learning English. Based on the study results, some recommendations were put forth.

**Keywords:** CALL, TEFL Classroom, teachers' and students' attitudes, Jordan.

### **Introduction and background**

Technology has an important position in our society, affecting our life more and more intensively. A worldwide increase in the demand for foreign language instruction and learning has stimulated interest in how technology can help meet students' need. The use of technology in teaching foreign language has been increasing dramatically over recent decades as the merits of technology in language learning and teaching are becoming more widely acknowledged worldwide. Moreover, teaching and learning foreign language through technology has become a new trend in foreign language teaching and learning at universities all over the world.

Technology is playing a greater role during lecture and home study. Therefore, the increasing connection between teaching English and technology creates new demands for College English education (Zhan, 2003). In Jordanian universities, English as a foreign language is taught as a compulsory course for all the undergraduates regardless of their majors.

Computers have become very widespread in social institutions, banks, schools and homes, and their use has expanded so dramatically in a way that motivates some language institutions and universities to use CALL in TEFL. From the beginning of recorded history, there exists no invention that brings about considerable changes the way the computer did. Meanwhile, it changes the world into a global village through the Internet and related technologies.

Universities and other educational institutions have realized that the rapid increase in the availability and accessibility of computers and other related technologies in today's world highlight the value of educational technology within these institutions. There is a great deal of support for technology integration (Marcinkiewicz, 1994), and many universities today have started investing considerable amounts of money in technology resources to improve the quality

of teaching and learning, and are now looking at ways of successfully incorporating these tools into their curriculum, syllabi, and classrooms. The role and responsibility of teachers is becoming more crucial as they are expected to integrate technology in their instruction. Unfortunately, not all teachers have the inclination to incorporate computer and the associated technologies into their classroom instruction. Under the circumstances, Al-Balq'a Applied University has launched Al-Balq' Applied University Academy (AAUA) for TEFL via the computer in the fall semester of the academic year 2009/2010. This academy was distributed to all the university colleges included the three Colleges in the north of Jordan: Ajloun, Al Huson and Irbid University colleges. Each college was provided with three computer labs each of which consisted of 50 computers. The textbook was digitized in the center of the university in Al-Salt city in 2008 to be implemented the year after. To actualize the implementation of CALL in TEFL and in August 2009, Al-Balq'a Applied University issued a new decision to teach English compulsory courses (En.099, En101 and En.102) in the academy computer labs in all colleges of the university. Increasing funds has been spent recently on language labs, computer multimedia equipment, and wireless network on campus to meet administrative and teaching purposes so as to improve the situation throughout the university. It is generally believed that a highly motivated teacher with the right attitude would always strive for excellence in his/her teaching practice. Professional development not only motivates but helps teachers to keep up to date with new and effective practices in teaching and learning.

However, substantial and effective professional development is rare, and many teachers naturally gravitate towards the more familiar methods they remember from their own experience as students (Sparks, 1998). These conventional teaching techniques often conflict with new instructional strategies introduced in any education developmental programmes that require teachers to use cooperative learning, deploy solving activities and of late, to use the computer in their teaching.

Moreover, the success of any initiatives to implement technology in an educational program depends strongly upon the support and attitudes of teachers and students involved. It has been suggested that if teachers believed or perceived proposed computer programs as fulfilling neither their own or their students' needs, they are not likely to attempt to introduce technology into their teaching and learning. Among the factors that affect the successful use of computers in the classroom are teachers' attitudes towards computers (Huang & Liaw, 2005). Attitude, in turn, constitutes various dimensions. Some examples of these are perceived usefulness, computer confidence (Rovai & Childress, 2002), training (Tsitouridou & Vryzas, 2003), gender (Sadik, 2006), knowledge about computers (Yuen, Law & Chan, 1999), anxiety, confidence, and liking (Yildirim, 2000). Therefore, the per se of this research was to highlight the attitudes of university instructors and students towards the implementation of CALL in teaching English compulsory courses (E.099, E.101, and E.102) at Al-Balqa Applied University.

### **Statement of the problem**

The researcher has been teaching English as a Foreign Language at colleges and universities for almost 20 years. He has rarely noticed rapport established between English language and students who are mostly antipathetic to learning. Thus, it comes as no surprise that scant attention is paid to highlight this indelible phenomenon. This study is an attempt to investigate this prevailing problem. However, with the advent of the computer and its applications in teaching, it is hoped that negative effects of this problem will be reduced. Consequently, can the use of the computer in teaching English minimize the effect of this intrinsic problem? Can the computer change the students' attitudes positively? These considerable questions will be addressed in this study.

However, the English literacy of the college students has generally been seen as unsatisfactory although most of them have learned English for over 12 years, and the approach to teaching English has been seen as ineffective, far from satisfying social and academic needs.

Moreover, as a result of prevalent, immense and rapid changes in technology, the interaction between education and technology has become more profound than ever. When the roles of computers in education are considered, this rapidity and immensity become crucial for education. Due to similar changes in computer technologies, it has now become more and more difficult to make predictions about the future of education. For instance, some, taking computers into consideration, foresee a future without schools and teachers (Sonmez, 1998); some others predict a future education without computers as we know them today (Ipek, 2001: 338). Nevertheless, taking the present conjunctures into account, it is now impossible to talk about contemporary education without mentioning computers. Therefore, attitudes of instructors and students towards the computer use in teaching and learning English at the university level will shape the main problem of this study.

### **The purpose of the study**

The central focus of this study is attempting to unveil instructors' and students' attitudes towards the use of the computer in teaching compulsory English courses at Al-Baalq'a Applied University. It is no doubt true; however, that unveiling these attitudes will help in knowing what modifications to make and to which direction to move in the future. Apart from that, the purpose of this study is to investigate students' motivation towards learning English through the use of computer in classroom. In other words, can the computer improve the students' attitudes towards learning English? Additionally, do the students have the intention to continue using the computer in learning English in the future?

### **Questions of the study**

The study will explore the following questions:

What are the university students' attitudes towards learning English via the computer?

What are the university instructors' attitudes towards teaching English through the computer?

To what extent can the computer motivates the students to learn?

Do the instructors and the students have the intention to continue using the computer in learning English in the future?

### **Significance of the study**

One pushing impetus for conducting this study is the dire need to convince policymakers, educators and methodologists that the computer is no longer an expensive luxury item at universities. Consequently, this may well encourage Al-Balq'a Applied University to continue subsidizing the supplement of the computer in teaching EFL. Therefore, this study can furnish further evidence that may testify to the fact that the computer may be indispensable in teaching EFL in the classroom in Jordanian higher institutions.

The second pressing motive behind the use of the computer in the language classroom may be to help learners participate in the learning process. The teaching process in the classroom is mostly implemented by the teacher who is to select the techniques, activities and visual aids to be used in the classroom. The time has come for learners to take part in their own learning. This is not a call for obviating the need for the teacher in the classroom; rather, it is for diminishing his\her role.

Another driving motive behind carrying out this research is to persuade other Jordanian universities that the implementation of CALL at universities can be beneficial and sufficient for both English instructors and students. Jordanian universities are always reforming its systems but rarely improving, therefore, the utilization of computers may be helpful in establishing authentic, steady, systematic, professional, and continuous improvement.

## Review of related literature

This study examines how instructors and students at Al-Balq'a University perceive the incorporation and use of the computer technology in teaching and learning English. The study specifically investigates teachers' and students' attitudes towards the application of CALL in TEFL at Al-Balq'a Applied University.

Attitudes towards CALL and other types of technology have been extensively investigated. In most cases, positive attitudes towards CALL were documented. For example, Robert (2002) reports positive Emirati students' attitudes towards and perceived relevance of the use of CALL in EFL. Similarly, Klassen and Milton (1999) report positive attitudinal changes as a result of a multimedia-enhanced English language learning program at a Hong Kong university. Along the same lines, Ayres (2002) maintains positive students' attitudes towards the use of CALL and a link between students' attitudes and their level of computer literacy, language level, and age. Similarly, Lin and Chen (2008) report positive effects for different types of computer-generated visuals (static vs. animated) and advance organizers (descriptive vs. question) on Chinese EFL learners' reading proficiency, comprehension and retention of a content-based lesson.

Following the same path, Bataineh and Baniabedelrahman (2006) and Baniabdelrahman, Bataineh and Bataineh (2007) emphasize positive perceptions by Jordanian EFL university learners of their computer and Internet literacy. In the same vein, Mahfouz and Ihmeideh (2009) report that Jordanian EFL students have generally positive attitudes towards using video and text chat discourse with anonymous native speakers of English to improve their English proficiency, albeit more so for speaking than listening, reading, and writing, respectively.

Moreover, multimedia research has not always been consistent in its results. Some studies reveal positive effect (see for example, Soboleva and Tronenko, 2002; Moreno, Mayer, Spires and Lester, 2003; James, 1999; Buckley 2000, Wydra, 2001; Cairncross and Mannion, 2001; Almekhlafi, 2001; Lee, 2008; Liu, 2009; Birisci, Metin and Karakas (2009), while others did not (see for example Smith and Woody, 2000; Mckethan, Everhart, and Sanders, 2001).

Holmes (1998) investigates the influence of CALL in teachers' language classroom and on language education in Japan in general. Similarly, Robert (2002) examines students' attitudes towards the use of CALL, and their perceived view of its relevancy to their course of study. The results of all these studies revealed that the students' attitudes toward CALL are positive.

Following the same path, Noriko (2002) develops a language tutor program to improve learners grammatical and sentence production skills in Japanese language. The study revealed that students' achievement improves tremendously. To measure their attitude towards the program, the researcher designed a questionnaire. The results indicted an enthusiastic student response.

Cuban (2001) reports that surveys conducted at Stanford University in 1989 and 1997 indicated that the overhead projector and VCR were the two most frequently used machines in the classroom. The findings further revealed that computers, while used in the preparation for instruction, are very rarely utilized during the instructional process.

Moreover, Cuban further finds that : (1) teachers were not technophobes, (2) most teachers do not use computers during class time, (3) most high school students do not have a "tech-heavy" experience; (4) most teachers are not serious users of technology,(5) when computer use

occurred, it was most often peripheral to instructional tasks; (6) there is no concrete evidence of gains in academic achievement as a result of using computers; (7) the majority of teachers using computers maintain existing practices of teaching; and (8) few students used technologies at the invention level. Cuban also reported little to no use of computers in American foreign language classrooms.

Finkbeiner (2001) presents the results of a research project on CALL and on cooperative learning in CALL, conducted as a democratic joint venture between teachers and students in the university setting over the last couple of years. The project consisted of several sub-studies, all of which deal with the three-folded perspective which were considered as most crucial for 21st century students: learning, moderating, and doing research. This was particularly true for those students who have decided and who are willing to commit themselves into the endeavor of a life-long and never-ending learning and training process in order to, in the near future, become and, in the more distant future, be a 'good' teacher.

The objectives of the survey were to find out: (1) about the students prior experiences, prior knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and interest as far as CALL is concerned; (2) whether CALL can contribute to a change in students' computer skills; (3) whether CALL can contribute to an awareness of the different roles the term professionalization implies.

Bollin (2003) and Ravichandran (2000) argue that language teachers can be more comfortable with textbooks because it is what they are used to do, and there is the idea that the use of computers threatens traditional literacy skills since such are heavily tied to books. They claim that this problem stemmed in part because there is a significant generation gap between teachers (many of whom did not grow up with computers) and students (who did grow up with computers). It is worth noting that teachers who are not technologically competent tend to think that computers are worthless. On the contrary, some teachers who are technologically competent think that computers are very helpful to facilitate language learning.

Abdullah, Abidin, Luan, and Atan (2006) report on the study undertaken to elucidate the level of the attitude and motivation of English teachers in the usage of the computer for the delivery of the English course and the associated problems and constraints faced by them. The study is qualitative and quantitative in nature and involved 62 English teachers from 12 schools in a selected district in Malaysia. The findings reveal that the majority of the teachers have a positive attitude, are highly motivated towards the use of computers to teach English and actually use them for teaching and learning purposes. The findings also reveal that intrinsic rewards, such as responsibilities, a sense of self-worth and accomplishments, played an important role in enhancing the positive attitude and motivation.

Tilfarlioglu and Unaldi (2006) conduct a study which aims at revealing faculty attitudes towards computer assisted instruction at University of Gaziantep, Turkey in a multifaceted way. Additionally, it tries to determine underlying factors that shape these attitudes. After a pilot study, the questionnaire was applied to a sample population of 145 faculties that were chosen randomly. The results revealed that faculty attitudes towards computer assisted instruction are positive. Age, sex, teaching experience, level of proficiency in English and computer usage skills have no or little effects over these attitudes. According to the results of the study, faculties who have prior knowledge on computers expose rather positive attitudes towards computers in education. Another important outcome of the study is the existence of a gender gap in terms of computer assisted instruction. Although there seems to be no difference between male and female faculty concerning their background education regarding computers, male faculty feel confident about the matter, whereas female faculty feel uncomfortable about using computers in their lessons.

Thelmadatter (2007) claims that the reluctance on the part of teachers can come from lack of understanding and even fear of technology. Often, CALL is not implemented unless it is required

even if training is offered to teachers. Thelmadatter also contends that administrators and teachers have the mistaken belief that buying hardware by itself will meet the needs of the educational constitutions (ignoring software and training needs). He maintains that obtaining well-computerized programs for teaching is an extremely important step in using CALL for the language classroom.

Teo (2008) examines the attitudes towards use of computers among preservice teachers. A sample of 139 pre-service teachers was assessed for their computer attitudes using a Likert type questionnaire with four factors: affect (liking), perceived usefulness, perceived control, and behavioral intention to use the computer. The results of this study showed no gender or age differences among pre-service teachers on computer attitudes. However, there were significant differences for computer attitudes by the subject areas that pre-service teachers had been trained during their university education: Humanities, Sciences, Languages and General (Primary). Correlation analyses revealed significant associations between years of computer use and level of confidence, and computer attitudes. Implications for teacher training and suggestions for further research are provided.

Mahfouz and Ihmeideh (2009) investigate Jordanian university students' attitudes towards using video and text chat discourse with anonymous native speakers of English to improve their English proficiency. To achieve this aim, a questionnaire is designed. The study sample consists of 320 university students enrolled in two Jordanian universities. The results of the study revealed that students' attitudes towards using video and text chat with English native speakers for improving their English language skills were higher concerning speaking skills, followed by listening skills, reading skills and finally writing skills. Furthermore, results indicated that there were statistically significant differences amongst students, which are attributed to their gender, the faculty they are enrolled in, the chat messenger mode they use most frequently and their seniority of study at university.

Lui (2009) attempts to investigate college non-English majors' attitudes toward the integration of Information and Communication Technologies into English learning and factors contributing to their attitudes so as to provide some constructive information and suggestions for the adoption of technology in foreign language education. The participants for this study were 140 third-year non-English majors out of the approximately 7000 population at Yangquan College, Taiyuan University of Technology. The study findings reveal that college students have taken positive attitudes toward ICT and ICT integration into education although ICT are scarcely seen being used in English classrooms on a daily basis and far from being incorporated into curriculum. The study further reveals that female college students adopt more favorable ICT attitudes than males and students majoring in the liberal arts are more positive than science students toward ICT.

Abdul Razak, Zainab, and Jeyavany (2010) investigate teachers and students attitude and motivation towards the use of computer in an ESL classroom. The respondents in this study are six English language teachers and thirty form two students from one of the rural school in Kota Tinggi district. The methodology used in this study is two sets of questionnaire. The data in this study have been analyzed using SPSS 12.0 software (Statistical Packages for Social Science) and presented in the form of frequency and percentage. The findings of this study illustrate that most of the teachers and students have a positive attitude towards the use of computer in an ESL classroom. Also, this study proves that students have high motivation when computers are used in an ESL classroom. Through this study, it could be concluded that the use of computer in an ESL classroom should be encouraged because it helps to motivate students and generate a positive attitude towards English language learning.

Korobili, Togia and Malliari (2010) attempt to give an insight to the computer anxiety levels and attitudes toward computers of the students of the Library and Information Systems (LIS)

Department of Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Thessaloniki using Computer Anxiety Rating Scale (CARS) and Computer Attitudes Scale (CAS). Both constructs were examined using explanatory factor analysis. Internal consistency of the factors of each construct was satisfactory. The findings reveal that there was a strong negative relationship between the two concepts. Canonical correlation analysis demonstrated that anxiety explains more variance of the attitudes than vice versa. Another finding was that most of LIS students were not anxious toward computers and with positive attitudes. Factors correlated negatively with anxiety and positively with attitudes, were knowledge of English language, PC ownership, access of students to computers at younger ages, perceived advanced computer skills and computer experience as reflected by frequency of computer use.

To tabulate, the use of CALL may be very beneficial for language teaching and learning and students' and teachers' attitudes towards CALL may be positive, particularly if CALL applications are well-designed and implemented. For example, CALL effectiveness and students' and teachers' positive attitudes towards it are documented in many research studies (see for example; Ayres, 2002; Bayraktar, 2002; Jung, 2002; Noriko, 2002; Robert, 2002; Choen, 2003; Almekhlafi, 2006; Eswaran, 2007; Teo, (2008); Liu, 2009) ; Abdul Razak, Zainab and Jeyavany, 2010).

### ***Sampling, Instrumentation, data collection and analysis***

To achieve the purpose of the research, two samples are purposefully chosen: the first is the instructors' sample which consists of (30) teachers of English in the three colleges (Irbid n=14), Al-Huson n=4 and Ajloun n=12). The second is the student sample which consists of three sections from each college. The average number of students in each section was 50, so, the total number of students in the study sample is 450 students. The population of the study is about 13,000 students studying different majors at the three colleges in the fall semester in the academic year 2012-2013.

To accomplish the objectives of the study, two instruments are employed: a teacher questionnaire (consists of 15 items) and a student questionnaire (consists of 15 items). The two questionnaires are adopted from Bani Hani (2009).

### ***Teacher questionnaire***

The literature suggests that teachers have varying attitudes and perceptions about the benefits of computer technology (Rother, 2004). Many teachers often feel that they do not have the know-how to properly integrate computers into their instruction (Charp, 2003b; Romano, 2003; Rother, 2004), even though many abhor the additional burden of computer training on top of their other responsibilities (Cook, 2006). Furthermore, empirical evidence abounds about how teachers may perceive the computer as an obstacle, distraction, or even a threat to their job security (Romano, 2003). The authors incorporated this questionnaire into the instruments of the study because it may bring forth invaluable data in this regard.

It is worth noting that the teacher questionnaire aimed at (1) determining overall teachers' attitudes about the use of CALL in TEFL, (2) examining teachers' inclination to use CALL in the future, and (3) measuring the extent to which teachers are qualified to implement CALL in their classes.

### ***Student questionnaire***

A good number of TEFL experts in TEFL methods, instructional technology and psychology advocate a learner-centered approach to instruction, which entails a more effective learner role in his/her own learning. To this end, this questionnaire was designed to examine the students' attitudes concerning the use of the computer and their inclination to use it in the future.

The 15-item questionnaire was constructed to examine the students' attitudes about the use of the computer in learning English. Since most students are essentially weak in English, the

questionnaire was translated into Arabic to avoid any obstacles brought about by the students' limited language ability. To collect data, the questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality of the information they provide in the questionnaires.

## Findings and discussions

In this section, findings are presented and discussed according to the five research questions posed in this study. Table 1 presents frequencies and percentage of responses of the instructors:

**Table 1**  
**Frequencies and percentages of the responses of the instructors**

Item	Response			Chi		
		Frequency	Percent	Square(a)	df	Sig.
I prefer to teach English via the computer rather than the textbook	Yes	27	90%	13.000	1	0.000*
	No	3	10%			
I felt more confident when I used the computer in my class.	Yes	23	76.6%	24.923	1	0.000*
	No	7	23.4%			
I think that computer could help my students learn by themselves	Yes	22	73.3%	11.077	1	0.001*
	No	8	26.7%			
I think my students understood the instructions on the computer.	Yes	15	50%	11.077	1	0.001*
	No	15	50%			
I believe the computer can bring the activities closer to real life.	Yes	13	43.4%	27.769	1	0.000*
	No	17	56.6%			
My computer skills help me in using the computer to teach.	Yes	24	80%	24.923	1	0.000*
	No	6	20%			
When using the computer, I did not need help from the technician.	Yes	18	60%	7.692	1	0.006*
	No	12	40%			
My students were positively interacting with the computer.	Yes	27	90%	37.231	1	0.000*
	No	3	10%			
My students' achievement improved after using the computer.	Yes	26	86.6%	40.692	1	0.000*
	No	4	13.4%			
I prefer testing on the computer rather than on the papers.	Yes	27	90%	7.692	1	0.006*
	No	3	10%			
The computer provides my students with immediate feedback.	Yes	25	83.3%	44.308	1	0.000*
	No	5	16.7%			
I think the computer can be a teaching tool	Yes	26	86.6%	48.077	1	0.000*
	No	4	13.4%			
A course on CALL should be provided at universities.	Yes	28	93.3%	44.308	1	0.000*
	No	2	6.7%			
I advise my colleagues to use the computer in their classes.	Yes	26	86.6%	48.077	1	0.000*
	No	7	13.4%			
I will continue using the computer in teaching English.	Yes	29	96.6%	48.077	1	0.000*
	No	1	3.4%			

Table 1 reveals that 90% of the respondents prefer using the computer rather than the textbook. This indicates that the instructors at the university are comfortable with the computer. In addition, 76.6% of the respondents maintain that they felt confident when they used the computer in their class. This implies that the instructors are not afraid of technology i.e they do not suffer from technophobia.

Furthermore, 73.3% of the study subjects emphasize that the computer can help their students learn by themselves. This infers that instructors are making less effort i.e. the computer is being helpful for them. On the other hand, 50% of the study sample could understand the instructions on the computer. This relatively low percentage may be due to some deficiencies in the digitization process. The findings further reveal that 43.4% of the respondents maintain that the activities in the classroom were close to real- life situation. This may indicate that the digitization should be modified in this respect. As it is expected, 80% of the respondents claim that their computer skills help them implement CALL in the TEFL classroom. It is possible to put forward a point of view that possessing the adequate computer skills is feasible for the application of CALL. For, in our view, the better the computer skills the better the teaching will be.

Additionally, 60% of the instructors report on asking for help from the computer technician. Although the need for the computer technician during the class time is indispensable, we should avoid asking for his/her help too many times because this is considered time- consuming. The results also show that 90% of the instructors in the sample emphasize that the computer enhances positive interaction in the classroom. Language classroom cannot be successful without authentic interaction and if the use of the computer can supplement and amplify interaction then we may claim that the use of the computer is sufficient.

The previous table also reveals that 86.6% of the respondents maintain that their students' achievement has improved when utilizing the computer. This result may be logical because students have self-confident, capable of learning by themselves and can understand the instructions. 90% of the respondents assured that they prefer testing on the computer rather than on the papers. This may be due to the fact that exams are automatically corrected which will definitely save time and effort.

Concerning feedback, 83.3% of the study subjects reveal that the computer can provide students with immediate feedback. This may be due to the fact that if the textbook is well-digitized, the computer will never forget. On the contrary, human beings, no matter how cautious he/she is, may sometimes forget. In addition to the previous results, 93.3% of the respondents maintain that a course on CALL should be provided at universities. This indicates that our instructors are aware of the importance of pre-service training on the use of the computer. The researcher believes that if the universities have the inclination or the ability to improve the teaching process, providing courses on using the computer in teaching should be a major cause of concern.

The findings further reveal that 86.6% of the instructors maintain that they will advise their colleagues to use the computer in their classes. This implies that teachers are fully aware of the usefulness of the utilization of the computer in the language classroom. Finally, 96.6% of the respondents emphasized that they will continue using the computer in their classes. This infers that the instructors are convinced of the significance of the computer in teaching English.

To conclude, the results of this study ascertain the fact that obtaining lasting and sustainable development in teaching English should be a priority for the Jordanian universities. This is due to the fact that instructors at the Jordanian universities are aware of the importance of the digitization for the teaching process. Not only that but also they are ready to be part of the whole process. Table 2 presents the frequencies and percentages of the responses of the students:

**Table 2**  
**Frequencies and percentages for the students' questionnaire**

Item	Response	Frequency	Percent	Chi Square	df	Sig
I prefer to learn English by the computer rather than the textbook.	Yes	397	86.6%	6.811	1	0.005 *
	No	53	13.4%			
I think the computer can only be a playing tool.	Yes	384	85.6%	10.919	1	0.001*
	No	66	14.4%			
I think the computer will be a useful teaching tool.	Yes	283	62.9%	4.568	1	0.033*
	No	167	37.1%			
I think my computer skills helped me learn English better.	Yes	398	88.4%	9.857	1	0.002*
	No	52	11.6%			
My achievement in English is better after using the computer	Yes	423	94%	18.892	1	0.000*
	No	27	6%			
I feel that learning English by the computer is easy.	Yes	371	82.4%	9.557	1	0.002*
	No	79	17.6%			
I think that the computer can help me learn more by myself.	Yes	339	75.3%	7.081	1	0.014*
	No	111	24.7%			
The computer brings learning closer to real-life environment.	Yes	354	78.7%	26.973	1	0.000*
	No	96	21.3%			
When I used the computer to learn English, I felt confident	Yes	426	94.7%	26.432	1	0.000*
	No	24	5.3%			
I understand the instructions better on the computer.	Yes	394	87.8%	17.892	1	0.000*
	No	56	12.2%			
When I used the computer, I needed help from my teacher.	Yes	326	72.4%	6.081	1	0.014*
	No	124	27.6%			
The computer helped me interact with my teacher and classmates.	Yes	317	70.4%	38.108	1	0.000*
	No	133	29.6%			
I think that the computer motivated me to learn.	Yes	406	90.2%	27.432	1	0.000*
	No	44	9.8%			
I would like to continue using the computer in learning English.	Yes	431	95.8%	36.108	1	0.000*
	No	19	4.2%			
I felt excited when I sat in front of the screen to learn English.	Yes	411	91.3%	34.108	1	0.000*
	No	39	8.7%			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100.0%</b>			

Table 2 reveals that 86.6% of the respondents emphasize that learning via the computer is better than learning by the textbook. This indicates that the students are more comfortable with the computer. Similarly, 85.6% of the students believe that the computer may only be a playing tool. This may be due to the fact that the new generations are raised with the computer as a game and they have never thought of it as anything else. The time has come to change this wrong image. Students are to be convinced that the computer can be a very useful teaching tool in the classroom. Following the same path, 62.9% of the respondents think that the computer will be a beneficial teaching tool in the classroom. One possible interpretation of this is that students are optimistic and aware of the growing importance of the computer as a teaching aid in the future.

The findings further reveal that 88.4% of the study sample thinks that their computer skills help them learn English via the computer. This suggests that having basics of the computer is feasible if we want utilization of the computer to be fruitful. Results also show that 94% of respondents believe that their achievement improve when using the computer in learning English. This means that most of the students are enthusiastic about the use of the computer as a teaching tool.

Moreover, the findings maintain that 82.4% of the students think that using the computer to learn is easy and 75.3% believe that it helps them learn by themselves. These results may support the idea that the students are ready to learn via the computer. Additionally, 78.7% of the respondents think that the activities on the computer are close to real life environment. Surprisingly, 94.7% of the study sample report on feeling confident when they use the computer. This infers that the use of the computer can provide students with self-confidence and motivation to learn. The findings also suggest that 87.8% of the respondents emphasize that the instructions on the computer were clear. This may indicate that the computer use can simplify the process of learning.

Furthermore, the results reveal that 72.4% of the respondents report on needing help from the teacher during the class period. The indication of this result that students can not use the computer without the help of their teachers i.e. the computer can not replace the teacher during the use of the computer for language instruction. Similarly, 70.4% of the respondents claim that the computer may enhance their interaction in the classroom. It is shown that 90.2% of the study sample believes that the computer can enhance their motivation to learn. Surprisingly, 95.8% emphasize that they will continue using the computer in their learning. Similarly, 91.3% report on being excited when using the computer to learn English.

To tabulate, students are optimistic about the utilization of the computer in the English language classroom. Their achievement has improved, they enjoy using the computer, their interaction increased, their motivation enhanced and they will continue using it in the future. Thus, students in Al-Balqa' Applied university are willing to implement CALL in their learning.

## **Conclusions, recommendations, implications, and limitations**

Findings suggest that achievement is significantly affected by use of computers in the classroom. Both teachers and students prefer using the computer rather than the textbook. Instructors feel more comfortable because computers provide immediate feedback, help students in learning, make students feel excited during the class time, help them understand instructions, improve their achievement and save time and effort. Moreover, students consider computers an important tool for learning because their achievements improve, they feel more confident, their motivation is increased, they feel more motivated to learn, and they interact more in the classroom. Almost all the instructors and students confirm that they will continue using the computer in teaching and learning. Based on the findings in this study, the researcher recommends the implementation of CALL in TEFL in the Jordanian universities. The results of this study are limited to Al-Balqa' Applied University for two reasons: the study was conducted in its colleges and it is the only university in Jordan that utilizes the computer in teaching English compulsory courses.

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Editor's Note: As social media and blogging play an increasing role in everyday life, they are being adopted for educational communications for successful teaching and learning. This study shows improvement in motivation and achievement.

## Motivating low-performing 11<sup>th</sup> graders through blogging: A case study

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Submitted December 20, 2012 to  
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Palestine

### Abstract

As low-achieving students face difficult time at school and usually experience low motivation to learn, blogging in the classroom might be used as a possible way of motivating them through its use as an e-portfolio (show-case blog) for students to show their work. The researcher used case study approach to examine 11<sup>th</sup> grade class (n=22) Arab male low-achieving students in a secondary vocational school in east Jerusalem during the first semester of 2012/2013 academic year. Through continuous observation, content analysis and interviews with teachers and students the researcher studied the students and their individual blogs that they used to submit assignments from their official curriculum. The research results show a positive correlation between student blogging and student motivation, but there is more important consideration for the setting since low-achieving students are different, like type of assignment used, authenticity of assessment, and teacher efficacy.

### Introduction

High school teachers face a challenge to keep their students motivated (Lengye, 2010), but it's more difficult to motivate low-performing students, they lack motivation more than regular students, they are at-risk of dropping out of schools, and their motivational incentives are different from regular students. High school teachers must then break the cycle of failure, they need to use creative methods to motivate their students. By offering a greater amount of choices to the students, providing more authentic assessments, and allowing students to take a more active role in their education, intrinsic motivation of secondary school students will improve (Albrecht et al., 2012). These objectives might be achieved by working with low-performing students to create personalized blogs for each one of them, a blog can serve as an online portfolio to showcase student work throughout his/her academic year. Yet there are special conditions to consider, like teacher efficacy during classroom blogging and his/her method of selecting assignments for blogging, or his method of assessment his students. These and other conditions may also play a role in motivating students to learn through blogging.

The study aims to explore the effectiveness of blogs in a high school classroom setting on the motivation of low-achieving students to be engaged in learning, it also aims to investigate the design and usability issues of the designed blog under the previous conditions. Therefore the study will try to answer the following question: Could blogging provide an opportunity to help low-performing students become more motivated and actively immersed in learning and under what conditions would blogging achieve its goals considering low-performing secondary male students? This study is significant since it investigates the conditions and the interactions of low-

achieving high school male students in a web 2.0 technology setting inside the classroom, then it studies its relationship with their motivation to learn.

### **Terminology**

**Low-performing, low-achieving and students at risk** are terms that can be used interchangeably (Barley et al, 2002), (Lengyel, 2010). In this study, the definition of a low-performing student will be based on the opinion of the participating teachers (Maele, 2006).

**Motivation** refers to “a student’s willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in learning, and to be successful in learning” (Feng& Tuan, 2005). Within Motivation there is **Extrinsic and intrinsic goal orientation** – Extrinsic where the motivators that focus on social comparison such as grades, rewards, or praise. While Intrinsic where the desire within students to want to learn for learning’s sake; the cause of an individual to complete a task because he/she finds the task interesting or enjoyable (Madrazo, 2010).

**Teacher efficacy** refers to teachers’ confidence in their ability to influence student learning and motivation (Alderman, 1990).

**Web 2.0:** Refers to a range of technologies that allow users within web-based communities to both access and contribute to website content and web-enabled events. Web 2.0’s participative and collaborative attributes distinguish it from earlier web functionality, which was largely ‘read-only’ (Wardlaw, 2010).

**Authentic assessment:** authentic assessment aims to evaluate students' abilities in 'real-world' contexts. Students learn how to apply their skills to authentic tasks and projects. Authentic assessment does not encourage rote learning and passive test-taking. Instead, it focuses on students' analytical skills; ability to integrate what they learn; creativity; ability to work collaboratively; and written and oral expression skills. It values the learning process as much as the finished product (Teacher Vision, 2012).

### **Theoretical background**

Schools have long been focused on ensuring that all students succeed in life and participate effectively in society. Yet there are students who are low-achieving due to many factors. The term “at-risk” is used to describe students who are in danger of not meeting educational goals such as graduating from high school or acquiring the skills necessary to become contributing members of society, they tend to exhibit disruptive behavior that interferes with their learning and their background characteristics may place them at or below the poverty level, other characteristics include low grades and tests scores, abundant absences from school.

At-risk students are usually overwhelmed by the content covered in high school and may also have learning disabilities that make reading and writing difficult (Madrazo, 2011). So how can we motivate these students? But first how can we know that they became motivated?. According to Palmer (2007) once they are motivated they pay attention, they begin working on tasks immediately, they ask questions and volunteer answers, and they appear to be happy and eager. Technology can be used to motivate these students (Madrazo, 2011; Barley, 2002), research reveals how feelings of autonomy, extrinsic and intrinsic goal orientation, and task value are related to increased motivation among at-risk students (Madrazo, 2011).

Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) have been widely perceived as the lever that would lead to significant educational and pedagogical outcomes and support students’ development on the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the 21st century society, where the graduates of secondary school needed to have for the digital literacy requirements (i.e. ICT skills, Critical thinking skills, and ethical skills). Web 2.0 applications including blogs, wikis, social networking, social bookmarking, RSS, podcasting, media sharing etc., have enabled students to

master many parts of the digital literacy requirements. Academics, researchers, educators and policy makers have advocated that the emerged Web 2.0 applications have the potential to offer enhanced learning opportunities for both students and educators and support lifelong competence development (Jimoyiannis & Angelaina, 2012).

Based on Web 2.0 Technology is the Blog. In fact, using blogs in the classroom can help increase student learning using student's preferred learning style, personal interest, and engagement. It also encourages self-reflection for the student and critical thinking. The online fast publication of a blog and a whole world audience increases student motivation for writing. Student blogging bridges that gap between home and the classroom and creates an unlimited learning environment. It allows collaboration which promotes constructive environment. And for low-achieving students blogging can give the "silent student" a voice by allowing them the opportunity to write on topics of interest (Sawmiller, 2010). Teachers also play a role in promoting motivation in their students, teachers who perceive themselves efficacious will spend more time on student learning, support students in their goals and reinforce intrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1993, p. 140). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy feel a personal accomplishment, have high expectations, feel responsibility for student learning, have strategies for achieving objectives, a positive attitude about teaching and believe they can influence student learning (Ashton, 1984, p. 29).

The proposed framework will combine two advantages; first it promotes motivation by using ICT and blogs specifically which is a Web 2.0 technology, and secondly it enhances digital literacy requirement for the secondary students through practicing ICT skills, Critical thinking, and self-reflection which promotes lifelong learning.

### ***What is a blog?***

A weblog, or blog, is a personalized website that is a collection of entries. The entries may be commentaries, videos, pictures, or similar to journal entries. Readers can stay updated on new entries by subscribing to the blog. Blogs allow individuals to share writing samples, pictures, and videos with friends, family, and strangers. Other people may leave comments on a blog, allowing for collaboration. Using a blog in the classroom can also increase motivation, challenge critical thinking skills, aid in differentiated instruction, extend the classroom walls, and cash in on student interest in technology (Sawmiller, 2010). As for types of blogs used in School, Zawilinski (2009) suggested four common types of classroom blogs even for elementary level; classroom news, mirror, showcase and literature response blogs.

A Classroom News blog are used by students and parents to keep everyone up to date with what the classroom is doing. This allows parents to be involved in their Childs learning to help their child stay on track. While mirror blogs are designed to allow teachers and students to post their own reflective thinking, while also allowing other bloggers to view, reflect, or add additional comments or ideas to the post. For students, Mirror blogs could be used for making comments or thoughts about lessons or content learned. This allows the teacher to see what each students thinking and also allows for teachers to respond and encourage deeper thinking. A Showcase blog is one that students post projects, podcasts and other writings for students to see. This helps students to develop a sense of pride in their work and also see their peers ideas, that could inspire other ideas of their own. Finally the Literature Response blogs is the online version of literature response journals, which are commonly used in elementary schools. The teacher can post a prompt and invite student responses. If teachers would use some form of these blogs in their classroom, it would definitely help curb this media literacy problem we are facing in our schools today (Zawilinski, 2009).

### ***Research limitation***

The Research is conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2012/2013 in a Vocational Arab, all male, school in East Jerusalem. The student blog will be used as a show case blog.

## Literature review

### ***Students' motivation***

In (Albrecht, 2009), the paper describes a program for increasing students' intrinsic motivation in an effort to increase academic achievement. The targeted population consisted of secondary level students in a middle to upper-middle class suburban area. The students of the targeted secondary level classes appeared to be disengaged from learning due to a lack of motivation. The previously mentioned issue had a tendency to lead to negative classroom behavior and a hindrance of academic progress. A review of current literature indicated significant low motivation among secondary level students as well as coexisting behaviors. Further evidence was gathered in the project supporting the existence of this problem including academic records as well as anecdotal records of student behavior. The problem as defined by professional sources and educational literature led to the development of the following three interventions: student autonomy, goal-setting, and positive teacher feedback. By offering a greater amount of choices to the students, providing more authentic assessments, and allowing students to take a more active role in their education, intrinsic motivation of secondary school students will improve and a mentality of learning for mastery as opposed to extrinsic rewards will be instilled. This result is supported by Lengyel (2010) where the study found that direct reading instruction and student choice prove to be both motivating to students as well as having a direct influence on reading comprehension. As for low-achieving students previous research done in regular education setting supported the idea that achievement among lower performing students is tied to the students' sense of autonomy and feelings of competence (Madrazo, 2010). As Deci, et al. (1992) studied 450 students from non-mainstream (self-contained) classrooms who had handicapping codes of either learning disabled (LD) or emotionally handicapped (EH), researchers examined the effect that limiting students' autonomy and sense of competence has on motivation. Findings concluded that students with learning disabilities, because of often experienced frustrations and failures with school work, need tasks that increase feelings of competence. Because students identified as emotionally handicapped are less likely to experience frustrations academically but are more likely to experience negative feedback based on self-regulation, they desire a greater sense of autonomy.

### **Preparing students for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills through ICT and Web2.0 technology**

In Larson et al. (2010) High school students spend much of their educational journeys immersed in "old" literacies of paper, pencil, and print books. But outside of the classroom, they are exposed to information and communication technologies--such as blogs, wikis, Internet browsers, multimedia, social networking sites, and a wide range of software--each of which demand new literacies. This disconnect is a serious problem for schools because it reflects a decline in school's relevancy to students' futures, and the gap between how schools teach and how students learn will only grow over time. It may be understandable for teachers and leaders to be a bit behind in the use of technology, but it is no longer adequate or appropriate to hold students back. These new required Literacies are as Davidson & Stone (2009) mentioned that each student must graduate from high school with the "new" basic skills for life in the 21st century, they include: (1) innovation and imagination; (2) communication, collaboration, team work, and critical thinking skills; (3) adaptability and agility; (4) interactivity and information analysis; and (5) initiative and self-direction<sup>1</sup>. And as UNESCO (2011) put it: ICT user skills are those that should be learnt by all citizens of the knowledge society in order to:

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<sup>1</sup>Self direction is a 21<sup>st</sup> century skill, it involves self-discipline, curiosity, independence, persistence, goal orientation, responsibility, and enjoyment in their learning (Chee et al., 2011, p.8).

- Select and apply ICT systems and devices effectively.
- Utilize common generic software tools in their private lives.
- Use specialized tools for work.
- Flexibly adapt to changes in infrastructure and applications.

The most important components of digital literacy are common for future computer users and ICT professionals: accessing, managing, evaluating, integrating, creating, and communicating information individually or collaboratively in a networked, computer supported, and web-based environment for learning, working, or leisure. These skills are directly related to basic competences; therefore, digital literacy is as relevant as traditional literacies – such as reading and writing, mathematics, or the management of social behavior (Ibid, p.4).

### ***ICT and motivation***

In (Gan, 1999) Malaysian at-risk students were trained in using computers and Internet for search activities. These activities were structured to incorporate individual accountability, positive interdependence and interaction. The study found that Motivation was improved, as well as self-confidence, learning attitudes, and achievement. But according to Madrazo (2010) Student motivation was at its highest levels when the technology present was used in creative ways that could not be done in any other form via video editing, iPod self-pacing, and/or web 2.0 project collaboration. It is not enough, therefore, to simply place work on a laptop, teachers must shift their deep rooted preferences for worksheets, lecture, and assessment to include alternative approaches to learning through meaningful creation, social media, and project driven curriculum. And for student at risk ICT can bring more to them: as Gan (1999) research showed that Malaysian at-risk students trained in information-technology skills were appointed to lead cooperative-learning groups engaged in computer-search activities. Activities were structured to incorporate individual accountability, positive interdependence and interaction, collaborative skills, and group processing. Motivation, self-confidence, learning attitudes, and achievement were improved. These results are also supported by BECTA document where Researchers have pointed to well-crafted use of technology benefiting, for example:

- increased learner effectiveness or performance gains.
- increased learner efficiency.
- greater learner engagement or satisfaction.
- more positive student attitudes to learning (BECTA, 2009, p.5).

### ***Blogs and motivation***

In (Lin et al., 2007) the study examined an electronic portfolio design based on blog services and program called blogfolio. Results showed that students expressed the feature of easy to use and their willingness to maintain their portfolios. Portfolios using Web 2.0 technology can be maintained much easier and updated much faster. It can include multimedia files like graphs and audio/video clips. It is much easier for teachers to view blogfolios to many students and provide feedback. Teacher can subscribe to RSS reader in order to get immediately updates about changes in students portfolios. It was confirmed that collaborative learning has positive impact on students' learning so viewing peers portfolios can be considered one type of collaborative learning where students have a model to reflect upon and learn. Building a portfolio with personal style in simple steps will enhance students' motivation in maintaining their portfolios. As Tekinarslan (2010) puts it: blogs can be used as supplementary mediums to promote achievement and knowledge acquisition of students, as well as information searching and sharing skills, within a learning community. The results are also supported by the research conducted by Hume (2012) where an examination of current literature found a rudimentary number of papers canvassing the

role of online blogging in advancing student learning. The research examines students over four years including six semesters and their responses to the use of blogs and discussion boards as a key part of learning and reflection. The paper adopts the classroom and the organization and looks at how the blogging process moves students from a single-loop learning process to double-loop learning and reflection and enhances the learning and reflection for the educator. The research adopts an organizational learning approach and demonstrates an increased student satisfaction as measured by student evaluations and increased self-reflection on content specific knowledge, improved individual learning and overall classroom learning. Not to mention the advantage that blogs bring to classroom in terms of differentiated instruction for diverse students which was the focus of a research made by Colombo & Colombo (2007) where the authors discuss how the instructional impact of science teachers can be extended by using blogs, which allows teachers to differentiate their instruction for students with diverse needs. It's easy for teachers to establish class blogs that contain text, audio, and video postings on a particular subject. The paper discusses how to use blogs to improve differentiated instruction for diverse students.

### ***Teacher efficacy***

According to Williams & Williams (2011) the five key ingredients impacting student motivation are: student, teacher, content, method/process, and environment. For example, the student must have access, ability, interest, and value education. The teacher must be well trained, must focus and monitor the educational process, be dedicated and responsive to his or her students, and be inspirational. The content must be accurate, timely, stimulating, and pertinent to the student's current and future needs. The method or process must be inventive, encouraging, interesting, beneficial, and provide tools that can be applied to the student's real life. The environment needs to be accessible, safe, positive, personalized as much as possible, and empowering. Motivation is optimized when students are exposed to a large number of these motivating experiences and variables on a regular basis. That is, students ideally should have many sources of motivation in their learning experience in each class.

### **Design and methodology**

This study investigates the effect of low-achieving students' individual blogging using assignments from the official academic curriculum on their motivation to learn. It explores the motivation of these students against different methods of assignments recording: writing in their notebooks, using e-mails or publishing the assignment directly to their own blogs. The students are 11<sup>th</sup> graders (n=22) all males in one class (Computer Maintenance Class) in a vocational school in Arab East Jerusalem where the academic curriculum used is the Palestinian curriculum.

Data was collected during the first semester of the 2012/2013 academic year.

Data sources for this case includes one semester's worth of blog content, Classroom observation, both students' interviews and teachers' interviews to uncover their perceptions of classroom blogging practices.

The strategies used to store data moved forward for testing them, triangulating tentative findings, identifying patterns, and work systematically in order to identify significant truths. Case studies "generate rich subjective data, can bring to light variables, relationships and processes that merit further investigation and provide good stories, human interest and a more humanistic method of delivery compared to the quantitative method" (Burns, 1994). Punch (1998) asserts that "properly conducted case studies, especially in situations where our knowledge is shallow, fragmentary, incomplete or non-existent", have a valuable contribution to make (Punch, 1998, p.155).

There was prolonged contact with informants, including continuous validation of data.

### ***Limiting bias in interpretations***

Search for negative cases is conducted, using members of the research team to critically question the analysis.

## **Results and discussions**

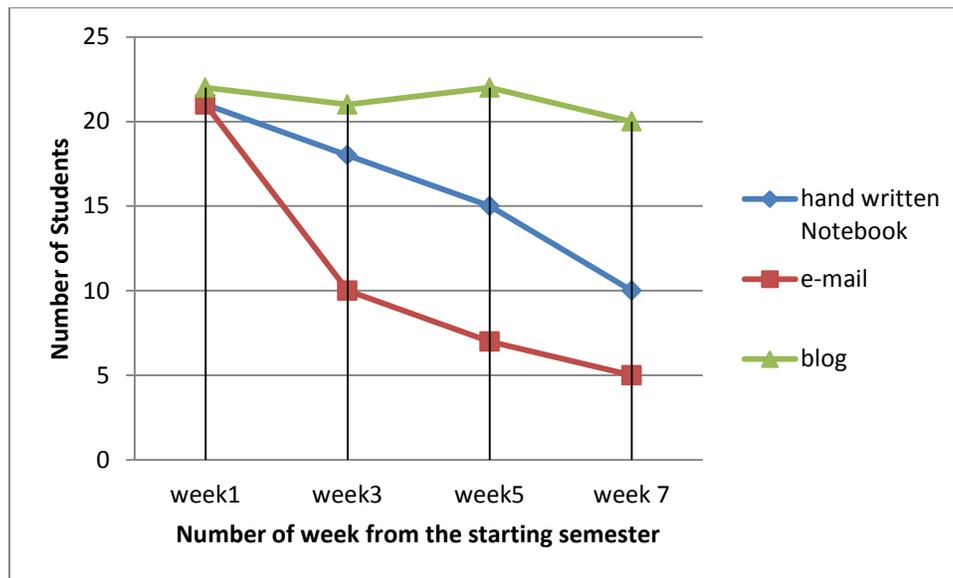
### ***Content of the blogs***

With the supervision of their teacher, the students used blogger.com to create free blogs to each one of them. They submitted 14 assignments to their blogs in September, 15 assignments in October and another 14 assignments in November. These assignments vary from drawings of PC cases, motherboards, electrical circuits, and electrical components. There are also some edited photos that demonstrate their ability to copy, merge photos, add text and manipulate size and orientation of photos. There are some assignments in word processing like edited text and tables where students were required to submit answers to text-book questions. There are some assignments that required using worksheet software to draw charts. The selection of assignments that require drawing or photo editing made them more inclined to work because differentiation between assignments is obvious, and there is a room for creativity, and self-reflection. Some students copied and pasted some of their assignments from their peers, first because these assignments are similar to each other, they are simply direct answers of textbook questions, and secondly as the students said it was easier for them. As Teacher B puts it “So blogging is great but it lacks authentication”.

At the first of the semester and before making blogs the teacher tried to make the students send the assignments by e-mail so he taught them how to make e-mail using Gmail, yet some students said that they already have e-mail accounts from other providers like Hotmail, the teacher accepted from them to send e-mail this time on the condition that they create Gmail account, he explained to them the benefits of Gmail account like being able to create blogs and upload movies to YouTube. The enforcement strategy was to let students choose the medium for the assignment without stressing on any specific one. The first assignment was to send specifications of a PC in regards to its four main features, central processing unit CPU, the main board (Motherboard), Hard Disk, and Memory. The teacher already put on the whiteboard some hints. The students got excited since the work is new to them, and they need to type the specifications and send it by e-mail to the teacher. After few days the teacher requested another assignment asking them to send another e-mail about the specifications of the CPU alone, most of them responded well. Yet after another two assignments requested to be sent by e-mail the students felt the repetition process and not all of them had sent the e-mails, little by little the students motivation to make e-mail assignment were coming down as Figure one shows the systematic decline of number of students making e-mail assignments from week1 to week 7. Surprisingly, doing the assignment on their notebooks has fewer declines. Yet once the students started sending their assignments to their own blogs they kept feeling implicitly a sense of achievement every time they view their blog, another source of motivation was the continuous systematic assessment from their teacher since it was a requirement from their teacher to give them the grade. “Show me your work today in your blog and you will get the grade” the teacher used to declare very often holding a sheet in his hand with their names and today’s date marking a check next to each name of a student who finished his work. That requirement was anticipating in the motivation to keep it running inside them; first for that sense of achievement and secondly for their fear of fail if they didn’t do the required job which can be seen easily by the supervisor, the principal, their family, their peers and the ones they care about.

**Table1**  
**Number of participating students in the specific medium of assignment**

	Hand written	e-mail	blog
week1	21	21	22
week3	18	10	21
week5	15	7	22
week 7	10	5	20



**Figure 1: Number of Students making assignments over time**

### Description of the students

Most of them don't even like to carry a pencil, may be it reminds them with bad experiences they had, but definitely they are motivated to use PCs, after all they didn't have enough chance to use it in a school setting. But if you let them open whatever (acceptable) sites or programs they want, they will choose Facebook, YouTube and then to play collectively on Counterstrike (A fighting video game). But once they choose counterstrike it will be very hard to move them away (by themselves) to something else unless it is a new interesting thing. Some students chose graphics programs like Photoshop to work on photos for themselves and add artistic modifications. So enhancing these students' learning requires training exercises that involve using their physical body once an a while: standing up versus sitting down, holding a screwdriver versus holding a pen, opening a computer case versus opening a book. Since they are low achieving students, what matters for them most is their fear of fail and not their quest for success, they need tasks that increase their feelings of competence.

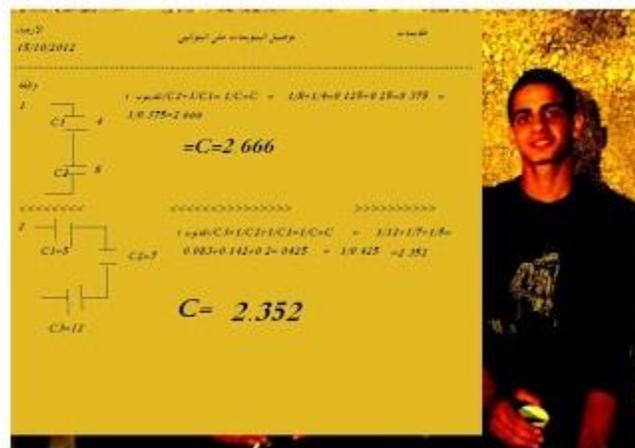
### ***Mobility, convenience and independence***

Student 2 found out that his PC is broken (is not booting) he then jumped on the next PC besides him which happened to be vacant and did his assignment and uploaded it to his blog without

teachers' intervention. One student (Student 21) turned to the instructor and explained that he will be absent the next two days and when he told he will be missing some important learning he replied that he will watch the blogs of his peers to do the missing assignments. In fact (Student 15) was sick for few days and did the missing assignments from home even without teacher's permission. Student 5 remade the assignment while he was sick, Student 9 also was sick and made the assignment later. Many students expressed their satisfaction of their digital portfolio. one student said it is a great way for students to keep a copy of their work without worrying about it getting lost, teacher A said they can keep their portfolio for years and add to what they have in order to see the progression that they have made over the semester and possibly over years.

### ***Students' personal touch in the assignments***

More choices for these students means infusing their personal feeling in their work. Student 21 liked to add his own photo (with special effects to some of assignments), same with student 15 and student 17 who changed the background and other setting for his blog.



**Figure 2 : The Personal touch made on the assignment**

### ***Promoting lifelong learning***

Student 15 opened his blog at home and without teachers requirement he then learned by himself how to change the profile and background colors, fonts and pictures. Students expressed their desire to learn about and work on these blogs even after class hours and at home, some of them improved their work at home and resubmitted it to their blogs, some of them said that they showed their work to their family members and that they felt a sense of achievement and pride of their work.

### ***Obstacles while working on blogs***

The students didn't have any idea of how to create blogs in Google so the teacher had to do it to each one of them. About 4 students forgot their e-mail password or user name the next day and they had to do the whole process again. One student kept forgetting his user name. After two months of blogging none had discovered the comments section feature or used it to comment on other blogs. And after one month of work many couldn't memorize the subdomain blogspot.com. The teacher tried to use the minimum possible specifications like using p3/256 mb with Winxp sp2 and Firefox3.6 to run blogs on, but then he said we had to send their work drawings as e-mail attachments since such an old browser is not supported fully by blogger.com. Total of three students forgot their user names or passwords in blogger so the teacher had to change their blog addresses. Many students were sending their work from paintbrush while the file is open which result of sending empty attachment.

### **Overcoming difficult tasks**

Many students perceived some of the tasks to be difficult to achieve and did not participate. One example was the design of a laptop flyer using Photoshop. For low achieving students regular assignments make them get bored very quickly. One strategy was used is to divide the same assignment into small chunks and giving them each chunk once at a time. Another strategy used was to simplify the work, reduce it, summarize it, and simplify it to let them understand and apply their learning.

### **Deprivation as a source of motivation**

In week 2 of November students had an exam in the first two sessions, and after that they were given another assignment to post to their blog which was question 1 and 2 from the exam (drawing circuits) some of them felt annoyed and didn't want to do the assignment, they didn't like to work under pressure or maybe they felt exhausted after the exam, so some of them copied the assignment from other students because the instructor warned that if they didn't make the assignment they will risk not playing on their favorite game counterstrike, hence the video game becomes a motivation to do the assignment, also their fear of failure (failing the class, expulsion from school, calling their parents) was driving them to do the assignment.

Blogs promoted motivation through the following settings:

1. **Student choice:** Students had the choice to work in their time the way they decide, at their own pace, and they have the choice to choose what to include in their blogs, and the way their blog will look like.
2. **The fast result of publishing on the Internet for all to see:** Blogging provided for these students immediate, "click-to-publish" results. Student work is available immediately for peers to review and for others on the Internet to see. All of these factors were motivating for these students to learn. In fact low-achieving students tend to have less patience than high-achieving ones, coupled with the fact that teen have less patience than adults due to their psychological development we then can appreciate the immense value of fast publishing on the students motivation to learn, besides the feeling that their work can be seen by everybody and outside class walls.
3. **Promotion of reflective-learning:** As student browse his blog he reflects upon his work which supports his engagement in learning. As confirmed by Lin et al. (2007): by viewing peers' portfolios, especially someone who has better learning performance, a kind of collaborative learning is achieved. In such a manner, students have a model to reflect upon and learn. As cited in Luehmann & MacBride (2008) The long-term and ongoing access of blog posts makes materials available for subsequent reflection and analysis, allowing for students to revise their work, thus enriching the learning experience.
4. **The enjoyable experience:** Students enjoyed blogging throughout the semester. In a study made by Wang et al. (2012) which was to explore the individual difference antecedents of perceived enjoyment and examine how they influence blogging intention through the mediation of perceived enjoyment. Based on previous literature, the Big Five personality traits (ie, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience), as well as computer self-efficacy and personal innovation in information technology, are hypothesized as potential antecedents of perceived enjoyment in the acceptance of blogging.
5. **Authenticity of Assessments:** Evaluating students in real-world context means providing students with assignment from real-world context like editing photos of themselves or

photos of their friends, designing flyers of real-life examples, and publishing real-life examples of their work for the world to see.

6. **Teacher efficacy:** Teacher efficacy is important for these students because it increases their willingness to do the assignment, teacher B said, there is another teacher who is frustrated from his students results, his disappointment was reflected on his students, they don't learn with him, they keep giving him hard time and they play on PCs all time long and do not learn well from him. As Woolfolk-Hoy (2009) put it: Greater efficacy leads to greater effort and persistence, which leads to better performance, which, in turn, leads to greater efficacy. The reverse is also true. Lower efficacy leads to less effort and giving up easily, which leads to poor teaching outcomes, which then produce decreased efficacy.
7. **Selecting proper assignments:** As was shown throughout the semester students were motivated with assignments that are not very easy or very hard to do, that vary, they were motivated with assignments that require creativity and differentiation but within their abilities. Their motivation increases when they use ICT in a different way than others.
8. **Sharing skills in a learning community:** As students were working on their blogs many of them used to seek help from their peers, first in order to understand the required assignment, and second in order to understand how to implement it. Many of them were collaborating in their effort to finish the assignment, and when they were asked, they expressed positive attitudes towards sharing skills with their peers. So blogs can be used as supplementary method to promote achievement and knowledge acquisition within a learning community. As Yang & Chang (2012) tried to assess the effects of interactive blogging on student attitudes towards Peer Interaction, Learning Motivation, and Academic Achievements, the results suggested that students showed positive motivation to learn from peer work, regardless of whether blogs were interactive or solitary.

***Other Inter-related benefits of blogging:***

1. **Capitalizing on students' media literacies:** These students had previous digital literacies that vary in depth from one to another, but by using blogs they were able to strengthen their learning by capitalizing on their media literacies and their familiarity with ICT tools.
2. **Sustaining student engagement:** During the three months the students were engaged in learning in order to be able to send their work to the blog. So blogging allows for synthesis of content and helps sustain student engagement.
3. **Preventing failures:** These students had failed several times in their lives, but when they were blogging they were achieving tasks and this in itself enabled them to go out of circles of failures in their lives.
4. **Preparing students for the 21st century skills:** As 21<sup>st</sup> century skills include ICT skills so do using blogs require the use of ICT in order to be able to design the assignments which includes using photo editing software, and dealing with e-mail client (i.e. Gmail) for uploading images. Another 21st century skill was used is self-direction.

## Conclusion

Supported by a body of evidence from Literature, it is possible to motivate low-achieving students through their use of blogs. Individual blogging inside classroom offers students more choices, fast publishing, reflective learning, and enjoyment of work, it allows them to take a more active role in their education. There is also the advantage of preparing them to be citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge society which also requires ICT skills along with critical thinking reflective learning, self-directed learning, and life-long learning. But such motivation is affected the contextual setting like types of assignments used, authentic assessment, and teacher efficacy which plays an important role in such a setting since it can enhance students learning and it can motivate these low-achieving students to work better.

## Directions for future research:

As this research was examining the use of low-achieving students of solitary blogs in their learning (i.e. showcase blog as an e-portfolio), it will be interesting to examine how these students will use the blog interactively (i.e. the use of web 2.0 tools like the comment feature, RSS..etc.) with or without teacher interventions and then relate these activities to the levels of their motivation for learning. The advantage to their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills can also be examined in details along with identifying the best settings for optimum correlation.

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## Appendix A

### List of Students blogs

1	STUDENT1	mtc1100.blogspot.com
2	STUDENT2	mtc1400.blogspot.com
3	STUDENT3	mtc26.blogspot.com
4	STUDENT4	mtc105.blogspot.com
5	STUDENT5	mtc25.blogspot.com
6	STUDENT6	mtc18.blogspot.com
7	STUDENT7	mtc850.blogspot.com
8	STUDENT8	mtc210.blogspot.com
9	STUDENT9	6mtc.blogspot.com
10	STUDENT10	8mtc.blogspot.com
11	STUDENT11	mtc100.blogspot.com
12	STUDENT12	mtc170.blogspot.com
13	STUDENT13	mtc4.blogspot.com
14	STUDENT14	mtc130.blogspot.com
15	STUDENT15	mtc1600.blogspot.com
16	STUDENT16	mtc243.blogspot.com
17	STUDENT17	mtc1600.blogspot.com
18	STUDENT18	mtc230.blogspot.com
19	STUDENT19	mtc2000.blogspot.com
20	STUDENT20	mtc17.blogspot.com
21	STUDENT21	13mtc.blogspot.com
22	STUDENT22	mtc30.blogspot.com

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**Editor's Note:** Willingness to communicate in a second language is problematic for some students and is not necessarily related to language skills. It is a challenge for the teacher to encourage students who are withdrawn to improve their participation in the class. In this study, communication is studied in a societal and individual context.

## **Willingness to communicate: A critical overview**

**Ahmad Mohseni and Sahar Niknejad**  
Iran

### **Abstract**

Willingness to communicate (WTC) has recently become an important concept across disciplines of Teaching Language (TL) and communication. It has been proposed that pedagogic goals should be to increase learners' WTC so as to facilitate language learning.

Some students seek, while others avoid, communication. Many language teachers have encountered students high in linguistic competence who are unwilling to communicate whereas other students, with only minimal linguistic knowledge, seem to communicate whenever possible. English teachers are highly suggested that they pave the way for the students to move beyond their linguistic or communicative competence as the primary goal of language instruction.

**Keywords:** Willingness to Communicate

### **Overview**

"One cannot not communicate in the presence of another"  
(McCroskey & Richmond, 1990, p.20).

To develop physically as well as mentally, a human being is born with a few basic needs, one of which can be stressed as the need to communicate. This need, unlike other certain needs, can be hardly ignored or subjected to noticeable variability. Communication (verbal or nonverbal) is required at almost every phase of life to help a human being fulfill other crucial needs. It can even determine the degree of his success or failure in different stages of life. McCroskey and Richmond (1987) believed that to be a poor communicator or not to be willing to communicate with others is one of the dysfunctional behaviors in society. MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) argued that we normally communicate with people around us for a specific purpose; we either need their assistance, their cooperation or their services. Riffle and Seiffert (1987) believed that, among all human activities communication may be the most important one. How well we communicate, how willing we are to communicate, and the degree of our apprehension about the process of communicating have profound effects throughout our entire lives.

In order to accomplish this enterprise, hence, the human being resorts to many ways from the early ages to get his self-types serve on him. He nonverbally communicates by crying, laughing, sound making, and facial expressions until the language is activated to permeate into his being. He picks up the words and phrases one by one through his folks and by exchange of expressions with other surrounding people and the media. In this way he then gradually masters this fascinating means of communication, i.e., language. This interaction, first in primitive atmospheres and then in broader domains helps him get command of the native language. Context and its role in interaction, hence, has long been the focus of scholarly attention (e.g. Clément & Kruidenier, 1985; MacIntyre, Noels & Clément, 1997) and language learning contentions (Clément, Dornyei & Noels, 1994) have been constantly recognized in tandem with the context in which they are presented. In a similar way, pedagogically-oriented research (Cummins, 2000) has

also found the active application of language inside and outside the class a strong predictor responsible for internalized language learning.

The major role of communication has been clearly stressed in modern language pedagogy and its inherent functions covering a range of individual as well as contextual characteristics have been valued more than the past. Individuals demonstrate invariable tendencies in their amount of first language (L1) talk (Borgatta & Bales, 1953; Chapple & Arensberg, 1940; Goldman-Eisler, 1951, as cited in McCroskey & Richmond, 1987), which suggests that a predisposition toward or away from communicating with others inevitably exists in all individuals' communication orientations given the choice. This personality-based orientation toward communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987) represents willingness to communicate (WTC).

Affective variables such as attitudes, motivation and language anxiety are important factors in second/ foreign language acquisition. Willingness to communicate (WTC) is related to affective variables, so it is an important factor in second/ foreign language acquisition as well. The concept was first developed in L1 communication by McCroskey and his associates (McCroskey & Baer, 1985) and was applied to L2 communication by MacIntyre and Charos (1996).

McCroskey and Baer (1985) offered WTC as a stable trait, while MacIntyre et al. (1998) believed that WTC is a situational trait and proposed a conceptual “pyramid” model designed to account for individual differences in the decision to initiate L2 communication.

### **Willingness to communicate (WTC)**

An interpersonal communication advocates the participants to engage themselves in either attentive listening or responsive production of phrases. Although talking is a critical component in interpersonal communication and the opening of interpersonal relations, people are not alike in the degree to which they actually do talk. Some individuals tend to speak only when spoken to – and sometimes not even then. Others tend to verbalize before being asked to. Context can prove to be so determining in encouraging certain people to embark on a conversation. Briefly put, the underlying tendency of talking to others which is rooted in a personality variable is what is referred to as willingness to communicate (McCroskey & Baer, 1985).

The origin of the WTC is related to the first language (L1) communication (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). WTC was first used to measure the speaker's tendency to approach or avoid starting communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). McCroskey believed that factors such as fear and anxiety play an important role in oral communication and he applied these issues as main elements of WTC in the second language context (McCroskey, Gudykunst, & Nishida, 1985).

### **Willingness to communicate:**

#### **A personality trait-like or situational state-like construct?**

Hardly can anyone deny the dominant role of personality constraints in the type of communicative situations one voluntarily engages in. Nevertheless, some perceive situational variables as more determining factors. These variables include: How the person feels that day, whether he is motivated in the topic of discussion, what might be achieved or lost through communicating, type of communication the person has had with the others recently, who their interlocutor is, what the interlocutor looks like, and even the demands of time can all have a major impact, as can a wide variety of other elements. McCroskey and Richmond (1987) held that willingness to communicate is considerably influenced by situation. All the same, individuals are inclined to exhibit consistent willingness to communicate tendencies across situations. Indeed, it is decades that the research literature has been accumulated with records of consistent behavioral tendencies with regard to the frequency and amount of the talk (Borgatta & Bales, 1953; Chappel & Arensberg, 1940; Goldman-Eisler, 1951). This systematic pattern among

communication behavior across interpersonal communication contexts suggests the presence of a personality parameter, a tendency, which is known as WTC. This personality orientation enables us to explain why one person will communicate and another will not under identical, or seemingly identical, situational constraints (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990).

Individuals proceed in a discernibly regular pattern in their frequency and amount of communication initiation which is a strong evidence of the trait-like characteristic of WTC (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). This trait-like aspect of WTC was first developed to interpret individual differences in L1 communication and was stable over time and situations. From this perspective, WTC was defined as the tendency to involve in interactions when free to do so (Kang, 2005).

A new perspective of WTC was later presented to the communication literature by McIntyre et al. (1998). They combined communication studies in L1 WTC and motivation studies in L2, and presented a schematic model of the WTC construct showing multiple layers of variables. They believed that some of these variables influence L2 learners' WTC. They defined WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (p. 547). According to their heuristic model, WTC is affected by immediate situational antecedents – the desire to communicate with a specific person and the state of communicative self-confidence – and more enduring influences, such as interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, self-confidence, intergroup attitudes, social situation, communicative competence, intergroup climate, and personality. Kang (2005), however, argues that the previous studies examined situational variables mainly through a quantitative method using questionnaires which has not been insightful enough to explore situational characteristics of WTC in an actual situation.

### **Foundations of willingness to communicate construct**

Having its roots in the works of Philips on reticence (1965, 1968), the present construct of willingness to communicate has emerged from the endeavors of Burgoon (1976) on the concept of unwillingness to communicate and also from Mortensen, Arnston, and Lustig's (1977) efforts on predispositions toward behavior as well as McCroskey and Richmonds' (1982) focuses on the construct of shyness. All of these works place an emphasis on a presumed trait-like tendency toward communication (as cited in McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). According to McCroskey (1997), this construct was operationally defined by Burgoon which was conducive to developing a self-report measure. This measure consisted of two factors, approach-avoidance and reward. McCroskey held that in place of obtaining a general predisposition of unwillingness to communicate, Burgoon's research only confirmed that fear and anxiety could negatively affect the communication among interlocutors (as cited in Matsuoka & Evans, 2005). Predisposition toward verbal behavior which was initially introduced to the literature by Mortensen et al. (1977) for the phenomenon of consistency in the amount of communication of individuals across situations was observed by the data using a self-report scale known as the predispositions toward verbal behavior (PVB) scale. According to McCroskey (1997) this scale does not function as a general predisposition of unwillingness to communicate, but supplies evidence that individuals communicate in regular amounts (as cited in Matsuoka & Evans, 2005).

In 1987, McCroskey and Richmond decided to introduce the antecedents of WTC to the communication literature. They attempted to specify the variables which were most likely to lead to the predisposition of willingness to communicate. In fact, these variables can concurrently develop with WTC and are not necessarily the causes of variability in WTC. Put differently, it is very likely that these variables be involved in mutual causality with each other, and even more likely that both the antecedents and the willingness to communicate are engendered in common by other causal elements. These variables are introversion, anomie and alienation, self-esteem,

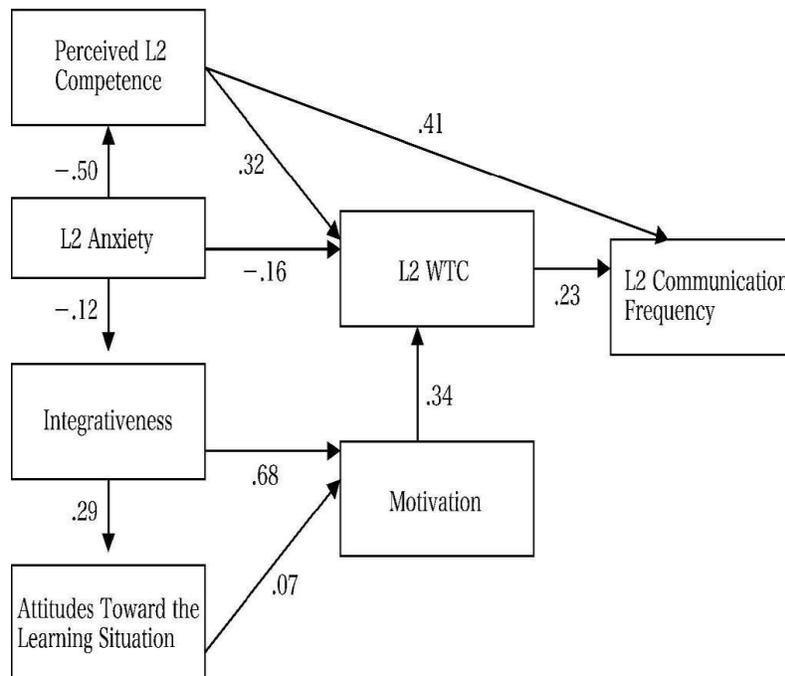
cultural divergence, communication skill level, Perceived Communication Competence, and communication apprehension (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). Three of these (anomie, alienation, and self-esteem) were reported to be statistically significant, but very modest correlations with WTC ( $r < .25$ ). Consequently, although quite sensible to presume that people who are anomic or alienated from the people around them or who have low self-esteem are less willing to initiate a conversation, the likelihood of any causal association of WTC with these antecedents would be quite small, taking into consideration the observed correlations, and these variables could be expected to account for very little variance in WTC (McCroskey & Richmond, 1986). In contrast, we could observe correlations of WTC with introversion, communication apprehension, and self-perceived communicative competence in variety of cultures and in considerable degrees (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990).

A good number of studies have indicated noticeable correlations of WTC with a variety of trait-like orientations of individuals. McCroskey and McCroskey (1986a) found that WTC is negatively associated with communication apprehension, introversion, anomie, and alienation and positively associated with self-esteem (statistically significant fair correlations). They also found WTC to be associated with self-perceived communication competence (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986b). Zakahi and McCroskey reported that students who rated high on WTC were considerably more likely to verbally participate in class than were those scoring low on WTC (Zakahi & McCroskey, 1989). In another study, the personality-based variables underlying WTC were investigated by MacIntyre (1994) in a causal analysis. He regarded the sources of WTC among the constructs initially identified by Burgoon (communication apprehension, anomie, alienation, introversion, self-esteem) using a causal modeling. This model focused on the way perceived competence and anxiety influenced WTC separately, whereas in Clement's model (Clement & Kruidenier, 1985; as cited in Yashima, Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004), the two were seen to form a higher order construct, self-confidence in using the L2. The results indicated that communication apprehension and communicative competence were the two most immediate variables responsible for the amount of WTC. In other words, as a person experiences more anxiety for communicating, he will develop more negative thoughts about his own ability to initiate a communication (less self-perceived competence) and this accordingly leads to a decline in willingness to communicate. Further, it was reported that the changes in SPCC were more strongly reflected in WTC while a decrease in CA would increase WTC both directly and indirectly through its impact on SPCC (Yashima et al., 2004).

### **Willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2**

The students' willingness to communicate in a second language has always followed unidentifiable patterns. It is hard to know why some students seek while others evade second language (L2) communication. McCroskey and Richmond (1991) held that the personality variable known as WTC determines why certain individuals initiate a conversation in certain times while others nominate reticence in similar situations. There are many language teachers who have found students high in linguistic competence who do not desire to use their L2 for communication; whereas, other students with only minimal linguistic knowledge have greater tendency to communicate in the L2 in every opportunity they have and without the least apprehensive influences. However, many individuals seem to be taking advantage of their remarkable communicative competence in many ways. Even the people with very minimal language abilities are observed to initiate conversations without being the victim of apprehensive restraints. Body language, common gestures, shared words are some of the means they often use to facilitate communication. On the other hand, as mentioned above, linguistically-competent people might be poor interlocutors. Indeed, despite strong communicative competence, spontaneous and sustained use of the L2 is hardly guaranteed.

In 1996, MacIntyre and Charos developed the first path model of L2 WTC. The initial figure which was known to examine the interaction among the variables of community-affected interlocutions was later modified to encompass a broader range of variables which were responsible for individual and inter-personal encounters. The relationship between affective variables, i. e., attitudes, motivation, perceived competence, and anxiety and their impact on WTC and the actual use measured by the frequency of L2 communication were tested. As the figure below indicates, significant paths influencing L2 communication via WTC were provided from motivation, and perceived communication competence. It was depicted that both anxiety and integrativeness influence WTC indirectly. Anxiety influences WTC through perceived communication competence and integrativeness affects WTC through motivation. This model was the first model focusing on WTC in L2 (as cited in Matsuoka & Evans, 2005).

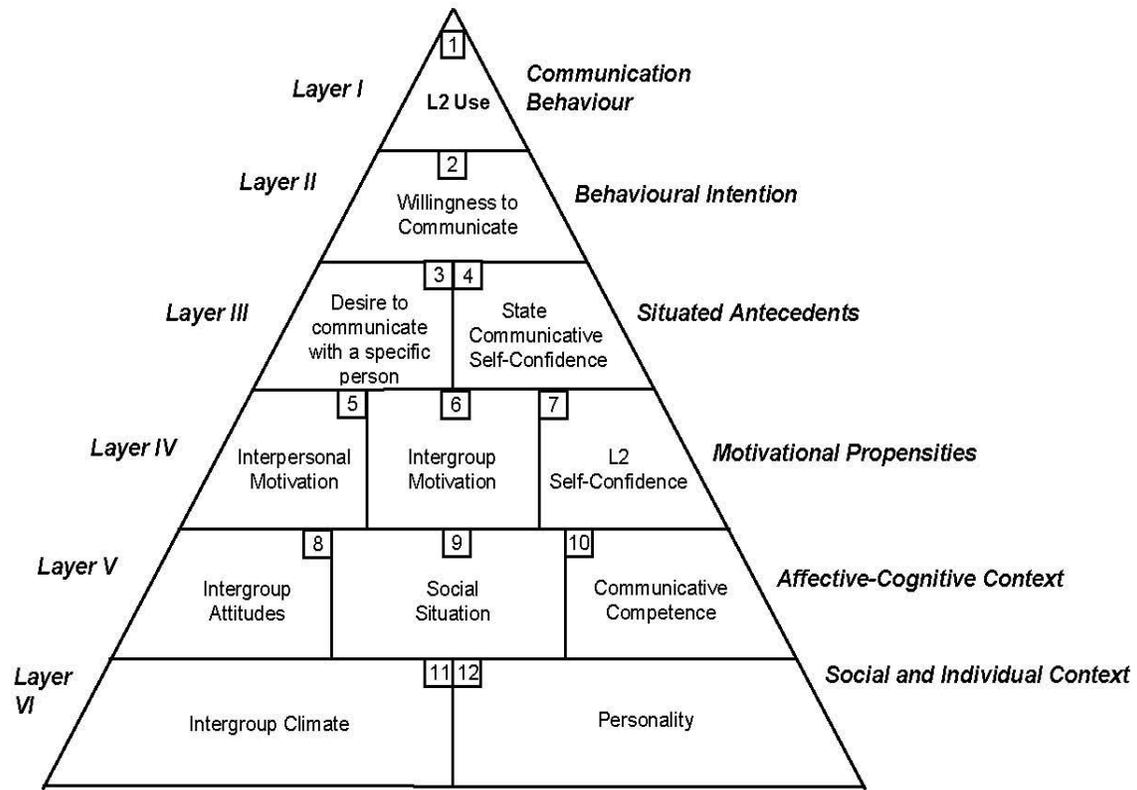


**Figure 1: First path model of L2 WTC**

The construct of Willingness to communicate was first introduced into communication literature by McCroskey and Baer (1985), and McCroskey and Richmond (1986) based on Burgoon's (1976) earlier efforts (Wen & Clement, 2003). Conceptualizing WTC in L1 as the probability of engaging in a communication when free to choose to do so, McCroskey and Baer portrayed WTC as a trait-like construct insignificantly influenced by short-lived situational variables. McCroskey and associates showed that WTC is related to such attributes as communication apprehension, perceived communication competence, introversion, extroversion, self-esteem and so forth. In other words although WTC is undoubtedly affected by situational factors, McCroskey and Baer conceptualized it explicitly as a personality trait. They characterized it as a stable and invariable predisposition to talk in various situations. The model that was proposed by MacIntyre (1994) viewed WTC from another perspective. The model examined the interrelations among several individual difference variables as predictors of WTC in the L1. Results were consistent with a model in which WTC was seen to be most directly influenced by a combination of communication apprehension and perceived communication competence. In turn, these variables were seen to be caused by introversion and self-esteem, and to some extent anomie. The study concluded that approximately 60% of the variance in WTC can be accounted for by this model.

Further MacIntyre suggested that this model may also be applied when examining variability across situations (as cited in MacIntyre et al., 1998).

McIntyre and Charos' model (1996) was followed by a heuristic model of L2 WTC developed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). They presented a model with different layers of variables that feed into WTC. In other words, WTC is a final-order variable that is determined by other factors. This model, known as a heuristic model of variables influencing WTC, considers the grounding precursors of WTC rooted in six layers which are as follows: communication behavior, behavioral intention, situational antecedents, motivational propensities, affective-cognitive context, and social-individual context.



**Figure 2 Pyramid Model of WTC**

At the base of the model the societal and individual context of communication are noticed to have the most noticeable share of significance. This layer is concerned with an interaction between society and the individual. Basically, the intergroup climate in which interlocutors evolve is referred to as societal context; whereas, the individual context refers to the fixed personality characteristics known to be particularly linked with communication. The societal context prepares the opportunities for both learning and using a second language (Clément, 1986), imposing attitudes and values of society members, bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Following Gardner and Clément (1990), intergroup climate can be described in the light of two complementary dimensions involved with the structural characteristics of the community and their enduring and affective correlates. Thorough intergroup relations entail the learning of a second language and its subsequent use; whereas, inferior intergroup relations may distort the motivation, reduce the tendency to learn and communicate in another language (Gardner & Clément, 1990).

The next factor that explains how individuals react to and communicate with the members of their own cultural group as well as out-group members is the individual's personality. Personality traits such as extrovertedness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience can determine the degree of second language learning and the willingness to communicate in that second language (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Lalonde & Gardner, 1984). Yashima (2002) examined how individual differences such as attitude (international posture), English learning motivation, and English communication confidence influence WTC in English in the Japanese context. Different types of personalities may imply more or less willingness to learn a second language as well as different levels of competence and/or confidence in using another language to communicate (Ehrman, 1990; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; as cited in MacIntyre et al., 1998). As presented in MacIntyre (2007) WTC is a complex construct influenced by a number of other individual differences such as communication anxiety, perceived communication competence and perceived behavioral control.

Affective and cognitive context of second language communication is another influential factor. These variables are known to be individually-based and not typically specific to any situation (MacIntyre et al., 1998). These involve intergroup attitudes, communicative experience, and communicative competence. Intergroup attitudes entail the concept of integrativeness. A likely powerful motive for an individual to learn a second language has been known as the desire to mix and identify with the members of a second language community (Gardner, 1985); whereas, a fear of assimilation and losing one's identity may be a strong drive to avoid learning or using a second language (Clément & Kruidenier, 1985). Attitudes toward the second language itself are also included in intergroup attitudes. It is believed that having a positive attitude toward learning the second language, might promise more willingness to use it in the future. Communicative experience also plays a significant role. Put differently, experiencing certain situations may render an individual more willing to communicate in other similar situations, but that experience may not transfer to all situations. Sometimes for an alteration of an individual's communication experience in a better way, the relative frequency and pleasantness of prior contact with the L2 community is recommended. This leads to varying levels of willingness in the same person to communicate in different situations. Communicative competence, either real or perceived, is also very likely to bring about changes in WTC. In the past it had been assumed that communicative competence in an L2 led to the use of that L2, but it is never that simple. There are varying types of communicative competence that affect the whole, namely linguistic competence, discourse competence, actional competence, socio-cultural competence, and strategic competence.

The next layer in the model can be referred to as motivational tendencies which can be described as consistent individual difference traits present in many situations (MacIntyre et al., 1998). It involves interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, and second language self-confidence. An individual's relationship to the second language and the people who speak that language is what we know as interpersonal motivation. Intergroup motivation is defined as the attitudes and relations between individuals representative of language-related groups (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Communicative competence, in the light of experience, increases self-confidence. More perceived communicative competence is conducive to higher self-confidence, and consequently a greater willingness to communicate in a second language. Our certain patterns of communication are known to be relatively consistent over time. This means that people depict systematic patterns in their communication behavior across situations (MacIntyre et al., 1998). However, specific situations might arouse specific communicative reactions which differ over different situations. These variables are dealt with in the next layer which can be referred to as situated antecedents of communication. These variables are defined as a predilection to communicate with a specific person and state communicative self-confidence. This desire to communicate with a specific person is affected by the elements of affiliation and control. Control also affects second language communication. If a communicator can comfortably apply his second language for achieving a

goal, control may be a motive. People generally attempt to influence each other's behavior, and in a second language situation achieving a goal by influencing another person's behavior can become a motive for communicating in a second language (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

State communicative self-confidence is affected by two parameters: perceived competence and lack of anxiety (Clément, 1986). People might be subject to varied amounts of competence and anxiety at different times. This, in turn, brings about varying levels of willingness to communicate in a second language which can be situation-dependent. Indeed experiencing a particular situation affects both perceived competence and the level of anxiety. This is why unfamiliar situations would be known to result in a lower WTC, while familiar situations in which the interlocutor is free of apprehension positively affect WTC because there would be less anxiety felt and higher perceived competence experienced. The final two layers in the model are willingness to communicate and actual communication. Willingness to communicate evolves from a joint effect of the variables listed above and can be defined as a predisposition to speak in the second language at a particular time (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). A person might be inclined to speak even without the opportunity to do so, although WTC is characterized as having a direct impact on second language use. Ideally, individuals with higher willingness to communicate would be assumed to use that second language more often, and would be expected to voluntarily experience situations requiring a second language more frequently. This is why MacIntyre and associates argue that willingness to communicate entails a greater likelihood of using a second language (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Conrad (2001) studied willingness to communicate as a measure of social support, and language learning orientations of immersion students. Matsuoka (2004) focused on WTC among the college students in Japan both in L1 and L2. Matsuoka and Evans (2005) argued that willingness to communicate plays a significant role in the second language development of Japanese nursing students.

Clement, Baker, and MacIntyre (2003) focused on the effects of context, norms, and vitality. They combined both social context model, which stresses the importance of contact, L2 confidence, and identity in acquiring a L2 and WTC, which concerns with the functions of L2 use. The aim of their study was to consider both contextual and individual differences in L2 use. Participants of their study were both Anglophone and Francophone students attending a Canadian bilingual university

Kang (2005) reported a qualitative study of the situated WTC of four adult male Korean learners of English in the United States. The learners were paired off with native speakers and invited to engage in free conversation. In this context international posture did not appear to play any role. Rather the participants situational WTC in their L2 appeared to emerge under psychological conditions of excitement, responsibility and security.

Ellis (2008) contended that work on WTC is in its infancy and it is a promising construct in several respects. WTC constitutes an obvious link between other, more thoroughly investigated constructs (such as learner attitudes and motivation) and language proficiency. It is also a construct of obvious relevance to language teaching. Dornyei (2005) suggested that developing WTC is 'the ultimate goal of instruction'.

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**Editor's Note:** This is part of a continuing search for more effective ways to teach foreign language. It benefits from a large sample to test the UCLP as part of a total program and shows a significant improvement in language knowledge and skills.

## Reflections of a contributive ULCP (Ubiquitous Language Course Program) on learners' motivation and achievement

Mustafa Öztürk and Hilal Atalan  
Turkey

### Abstract

This paper reports the results of a study on ubiquitous language learning, which aimed to investigate how effective and how useful a *contributive* ULCP (Ubiquitous Language Course Program) was for elementary level learners of English at tertiary level in Turkey. Strengthened through a pilot work with about 300 participants for three months in advance, this study included a large sample size ( $N=914$ ), a variety of data collection instruments, and various data analysis procedures. Having both quantitative and qualitative implications, the findings in this experimental research indicated that average learners using ULCP would be at the 71<sup>st</sup> percentile while average learners without ULCP would be at the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile with respect to learners' progress and achievement. Regarding the learners' motivation, ULCP was not perceived, by the participants, as a single source of motivation for language learning; yet as a useful supplementary source for improving language knowledge and skills.

**Keywords:** ubiquitous learning (u-learning), language learning, online course programs, mobile learning, ULM (Ubiquitous Learning Materials), distance learning

### Introduction

The basic view behind *ubiquitous learning (u-learning)* is “anywhere and anytime learning”, which is a broad-sense definition underscoring any learning environment allowing students to access learning content in any location at any time no matter whether wireless communications or mobile devices are employed or not (Hwang et al., 2008). Alongside this definition, key characteristics of u-learning could be summarized through seamless, context-aware, and adaptive services (Bomsdorf, 2005; Yang, 2006; Yang et al., 2007); or mobility, location awareness, interoperability, seamlessness, situation awareness, social awareness, adaptability, and pervasiveness: (Yang et al., 2008); or computing, communication, and sensor devices embedded and integrated into learners' daily life to make learning immersive (Hwang et al., 2008). A context-aware u-learning environment has useful functions for gathering data on the learning behavior of students (Huang & Wu, 2011) as learning content is retrieved according to environmental contexts such as learners' location (Shih & Tseng, 2009). It not only supports learners in learning without constraints of time or place via mobile devices but also associates learning activities with real learning environment (Chih-Ming & Yi-Lun, 2010).

According to Kukulska-Hulme (2010), mobility is a great *instigator* of change and language learning, as one of the most popular application areas of mobile learning, provides fertile ground for the growth of this phenomenon. Considering the opportunities that ubiquitous course programs might enable for language learning, Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Department of Basic English intended to implement free, diverse and flexible exposition of language learners to language knowledge and skills through a *contributive* ULCP (Ubiquitous Language Course Program). In view of the philosophy behind an *omnipresent* learning, this

attempt aimed to create an EFL environment in which interaction is *free of stress* and to provide a safe environment for learners to interact with each other and with instructors.

## Review of literature

Being in the midst of developing multimedia technologies, educational institutions and organizations all over the world have been using mobile learning processes widely for either of the two purposes: (a) as a contribution to face-to-face learning occurring in physical classrooms or (b) as an independent online course system which can be managed anywhere any time. Taking reference from the benefits of such innovative systems, u-learning is becoming increasingly important at all levels of education, especially in language learning; yet it might have both positive and negative effects. The areas of beneficial or negative impacts of technology and u-learning could be grouped in four: (a) students in terms of performance, engagement, motivation, and attendance; (b) teachers with respect to attitudes, productivity, methodology, and management; (c) families considering interaction and parental involvement; and (d) communities regarding both social and economic effects.

When recent research trends and patterns of technology-based learning were investigated, it was seen that mobile and u-learning grew significantly between 2005 and 2009; Higher Education became the most utilized sample group; and the themes were mostly related to motivation, perceptions and attitudes (Hsu et al., 2012). Numerous studies, especially through experimental designs, have been conducted on the effectiveness of technology and online teaching on various educational processes. Most of them dealt with the impact on student performance or achievement (Penuel, et al., 2002; Ross, et al., 2003; Escorza & Rodriguez, 2008; Shih & Tseng, 2009; Wu et al., 2011); and motivation or class participation (Silvernail & Lane, 2004). Many papers and studies indicated the positive impact of online teaching and use of technology on student performance (Smith & Hardaker, 2000; Waxman, et al., 2003) while some others pointed out that online teaching has a negative impact on performance (Johnson, 2005). Davies and Graff (2005) put forward that online engagement had no statistically-significant impact on examination performance though. On the subject of the end-of-year examination grades, Rodgers (2008) suggested that online interaction has a positive and statistically significant impact on performance and Arman, et al. (2009) argued that e-learning has a significant increase in achievement (80% greater). Some other studies showed that e-learning enabled higher gains in scores (Mann, et al., 1999); more learning in less time (Chinien; 2003); increase in attendance (Mitchell Institute, 2004); improvement in higher order skills (Trucano, 2005); and an increase in scores (Wagner, et al., 2005).

Milrad and Spikol (2007) reported the results of the MUSIS (Multicasting Services and Information in Sweden) with regard to the use of smart phones and mobile services in university classrooms. In this context, students generally perceived the services as useful to learning and their attitudes were more positive if the instructor adapted pedagogical style and instructional material to take advantage of the distinctive capabilities of multicasting. As Ogata et al., (2008) clarified, the application of u-computing in classroom settings and other activities generate numerous benefits to the teaching and learning processes, some of which are opportunities for the students to interact with the professor and among classmates and to feel more interested in the lecture content which becomes more encouraging. Another study proposing a Ubiquitous Performance-support System (UPSS) that can facilitate the seamless use of powerful new technologies in the school setting indicated positive effects concerning motivation, interactivity, and effectiveness (Peng et al., 2009). Findings of an experimental study showed that the learning performance of learners who used personalized English vocabulary learning systems with context awareness was superior to learners who used personalized English vocabulary learning systems without context awareness (Chih-Ming & Yi-Lun, 2010). In another study, the experiments

showed that learners who adopted a situated and reading-based English learning system exhibited higher quality performance than those who adopted conventional learning systems. The performance of learners who utilized the learning support system with a reading guidance mechanism was of higher quality than that of learners who merely utilized a simple situated learning system (Wu et al., 2011). According to Despotović-Zrakić et al. (2012), the students' effectiveness and achievements in learning were higher when they attended courses adapted using the described method, in comparison to the non-adaptive e-learning courses. The percentage of students who passed the exam was by 11% higher in the case of the adaptive e-learning environment.

## Method

In the scope of the study, there were two research questions: (a) what is the impact of a *contributive* ULCP (Ubiquitous Language Course Program) on learners' achievement in terms of learner progress and end-of-semester grades, and (b) how effective is the program with respect to learners' motivation and satisfaction. In order to investigate these questions, the steps followed were: (1) an experimental group of students ( $N=430$ ) among 914 participants were selected on voluntary basis at the beginning of the semester and registered in the ULCP; (2) these students were provided with a variety of ULM (Ubiquitous Learning Materials) and diverse continuous assessment tools throughout 14 weeks; (3) an evaluation scale on learner satisfaction and motivation was administered to the participants at the end of the implementation and analyzed quantitatively; (4) a focus group ( $N=20$ ) was interviewed at the end of the program about the effectiveness of the program and interpreted qualitatively; and (5) an analysis of end-of-program grades was carried out in order to see the impact of the program on learner progress and achievement. The last phase was done through inferential statistics by comparing the scores of the 430 ULCP participants in the experimental group and the rest 484 students in the control group, who were not provided with the ULCP or ULM the experimental group had.

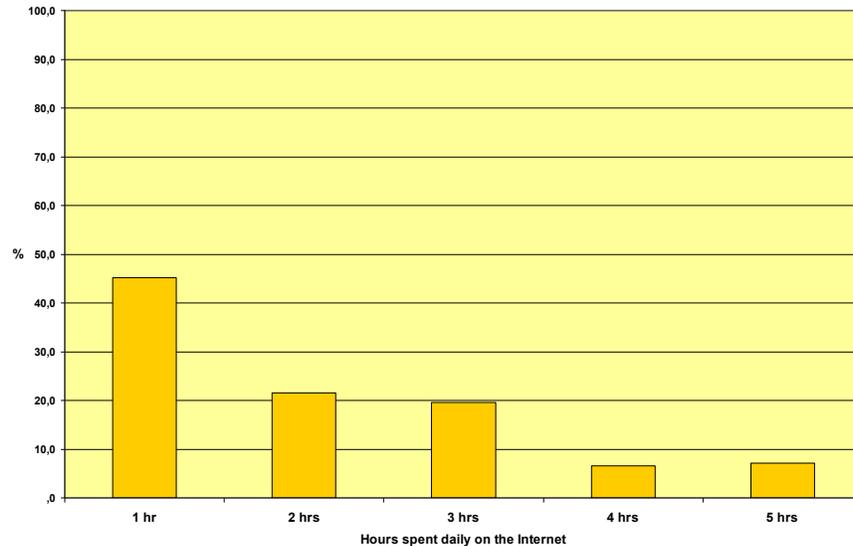
This *contributive* ubiquitous course program that the school adopted was first pilot-tested with a large group of elementary level learners ( $N=300$ ) in the previous semester before the implementation so as to support learners' in-class learning through self-study e-materials such as audios, visuals, videos, puzzles, PowerPoint presentations, assessment tools, and teacher notes prepared and uploaded on the system by the teachers. The participants in the study were the elementary level language learners who were taking a one-year English preparatory program at the Department of Basic English at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages. In order to get the intended data from the participant groups, a variety of data collection instruments were used: (a) tests measuring student progress and achievement such as weekly pop quizzes, monthly progress tests, story exams and achievement tests and the teachers' observation and assessment procedures; (b) a closed ended questionnaire with a four-level scale as an end-of-course evaluation scale; and (c) an interview protocol to see the qualitative perceptions of the participants at the end of the program. The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics using both quantitative and qualitative research traditions and content analysis procedures.

## Results

In order to see to what extent a continuous online interaction would have a positive and statistically significant impact on the participants' performance throughout the implementation, the collected data were analyzed and interpreted in three phases: (1) participants' backgrounds; (2) findings about learner achievement; and (3) perceptions on motivation and satisfaction.

### Findings in relation to participants' backgrounds

The first informative result was related to how many hours a participant spends for the Internet minimum a day. The responses indicated that the participants use the Internet approximately 2 hours a day ( $M=2.09$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ) and that almost half (45.2 %) of the participants use the Internet for about 1 hour a day (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. How many hours a day do the participants use the Internet minimum?**

**Table 1  
Participants' backgrounds**

Items				Agree	Disagree
	M	SD	N	%	%
I have a personal computer or internet connection. OR I can easily find an access to a computer or internet connection.	3.38	.94	325	83.1	16.9
I have enough knowledge about the Internet and how to use a computer.	3.02	.76	326	76.4	23.6
I use the Internet when learning English more with the purpose of improving my listening skills.	2.97	.88	324	73.1	26.9
I use the Internet when learning English more with the purpose of improving my speaking skills.	2.18	.93	323	35.3	64.7
I use the Internet when learning English more with the purpose of improving my reading skills.	2.23	.82	323	35	65
I use the Internet when learning English more with the purpose of improving my writing skills.	1.91	.88	323	22.2	77.8
I use the Internet when learning English more with the purpose of improving my vocabulary knowledge.	3.04	.85	323	76.8	23.2

Most of the participants had an access to a computer or Internet connection (83.1%) and had enough knowledge about the Internet and how to use a computer (76.4%). Concerning the use of the Internet with the purpose of language improvement, it was seen that most of the participants use the Internet when learning English more with the purpose of improving their vocabulary knowledge (76.8%) and their listening skills (73.1%) (see Table 1).

The findings in the focus-group interviews revealed that only a few participants had used online learning programs before the implementation of the ULCP. Specifically they had used online dictionaries, played online games teaching English, and watched TV series/films in English.

With the purpose of seeing the profile of the participants in the ULCP, their fields of study were investigated and only 322 participants declared their undergraduate study programs. Accordingly, the participants represented twenty different study programs and most of the participants came from various fields of engineering ( $N=124$ ). Specifically, the departments represented mostly among the participants were Social Work ( $N=38$ ), Information and Records Management ( $N=28$ ), Physics Engineering ( $N=24$ ), Business Administration ( $N=24$ ), and Computer Engineering ( $N=23$ ) (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Participants' study programs**

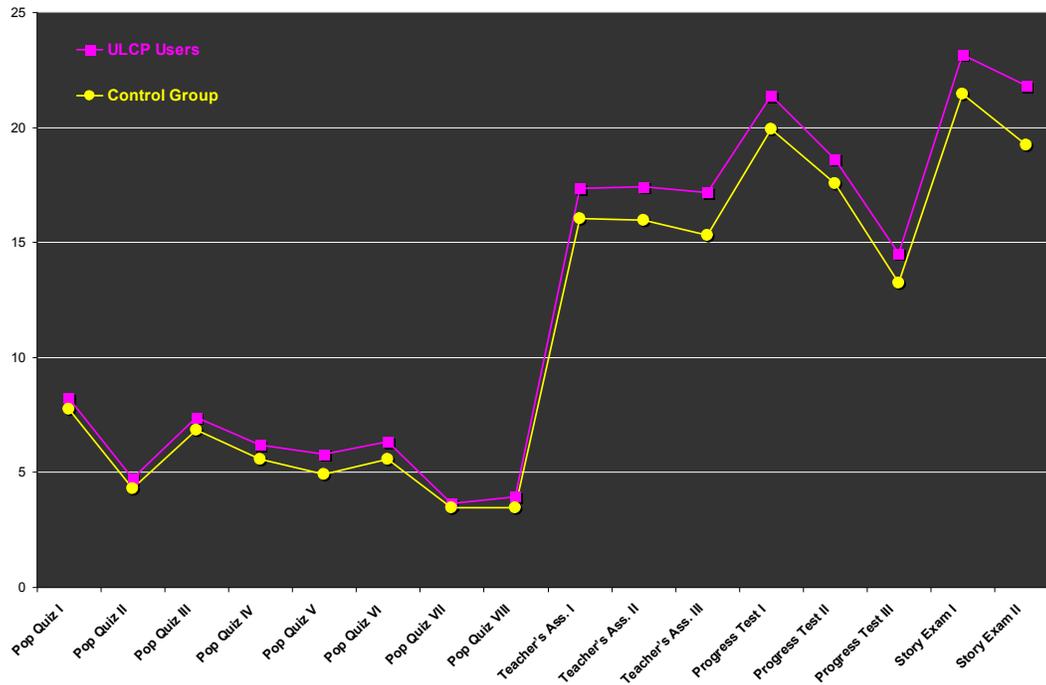
Departments	F	%	Departments	F	%
Physical Education & Sports Teaching	8	2.4	Computer Engineering	23	7.0
Information & Records Management	28	8.6	Industrial Engineering	2	0.6
Business Administration	24	7.3	Physics Engineering	24	7.3
Electrical & Electronic Engineering	20	6.1	Food Engineering	16	4.9
Nuclear Power Engineering	7	2.1	Chemical Engineering	14	4.3
Political Science & Public Administration	17	5.2	Mining Engineering	15	4.6
Nursing	17	5.2	Automotive Engineering	3	0.9
Economy	21	6.4	Finance	22	6.7
Social Work	38	11.6	Medicine	11	3.4
International Relations	6	1.8	Sport Science	6	1.8

### Findings in relation to learner achievement

For the first research question, the impact of the program on learners' achievement was investigated and the general findings indicated that average students using ULCP would be at the 71<sup>st</sup> percentile while average students without ULCP would be at the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile, which revealed a positive and satisfactory effect on learner achievement. As the first step, an independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that the ULCP users' end-of-semester grades are higher than the control group's end-of-semester grades. The *t* test was significant,  $t(912)=6.38$ ,  $p<.001$ . ULCP users had higher grades ( $M=333.45$ ,  $SD=55.18$ ) than the students in the control group ( $M=305.76$ ,  $SD=73.40$ ) at the end of the semester (see Table 3). As Figure 2 displays, in all types of assessment tools measuring student progress throughout the semester, ULCP users had higher scores than the learners in the control group even though the difference between some tests were not big.

**Table 3**  
**Independent-samples t test results**

Variable	Groups	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
end-of-semester grades <i>t</i> (912)=6.38, <i>p</i> <.001.	ULCP Users	333.45	55.18	430
	Control Group	305.76	73.40	484

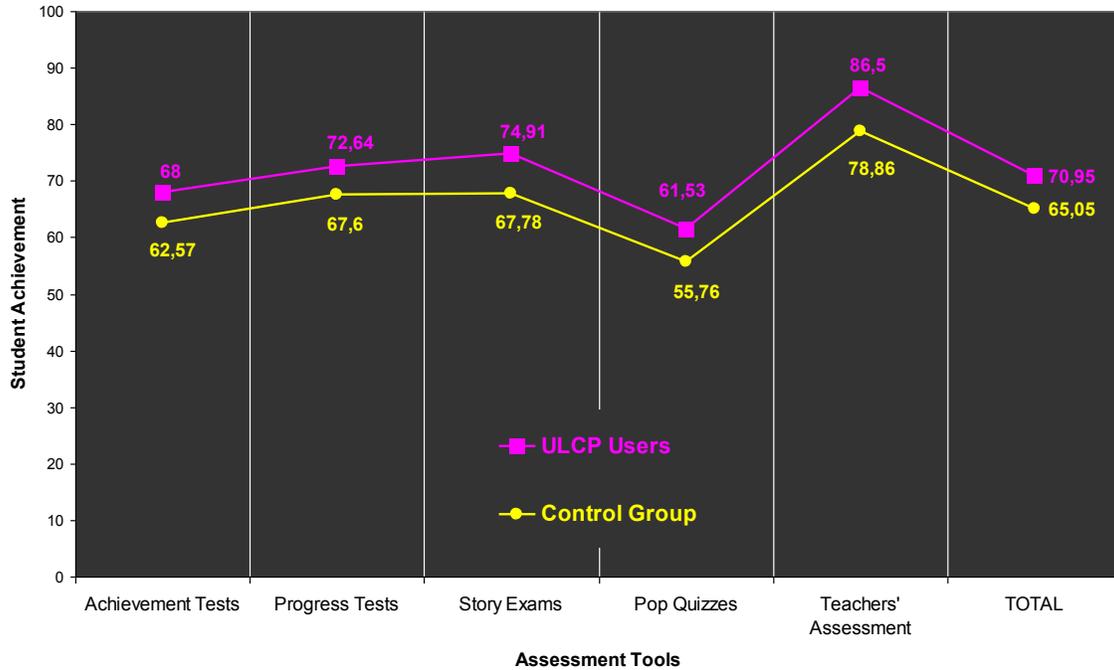


**Figure 2: Student progress - ULCP users vs. control group**

Similarly, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between engagement in ULCP and the increase in student achievement. The ANOVA was significant,  $F(1,912)=40.73, p<.001$ . The strength of the relationship, as assessed by  $\eta^2$ , was strong, with the factor, engagement in ULCP, accounting for 43% of the variance of the dependent variable, student achievement. ULCP users got higher grades ( $M=71$ ) than the students in the control group ( $M=65$ ) (see Table 4). As Figure 3 displays, ULCP users had higher scores than the control group did in general as regards to the learner achievement.

**Table 4**  
**One-way analysis of variance results**

Variable	Groups	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
GPA out of 100 <i>F</i> (1,912)=40.73, <i>p</i> <.001.	ULCP Users	70.95	11.74	430
	Control Group	65.05	15.61	484
	Total	67.83	14.22	914



**Figure 3: Student achievement - ULCP users vs. control group**

**Findings in relation to learners' perceptions on motivation and satisfaction**

To start with the positive results in the evaluation scale about the learner satisfaction, the perceptions of the participants were given in Table 5. Accordingly, most (71%) of the participants found the ULCP appropriate for their language level ( $M=2.74$ ); 66% thought that the ULCP supports activities they carried out when learning the language

**Table 5**  
**Findings indicating learner satisfaction**

Items				Agree	Disagree
	M	SD	N	%	%
The ULCP is appropriate for my language level.	2.74	.77	309	70.6	29.4
The ULCP supports activities I carried out when I am learning the language.	2.73	.81	310	65.8	34.2
Materials and activities offered in the ULCP are parallel to those covered in the class.	2.62	.79	308	62.7	37.3
The ULCP is appropriate for my learning pace.	2.62	.78	309	62.1	37.9
Materials and activities offered in ULCP are related to my aims.	2.58	.79	310	58.4	41.6
Materials and activities offered in ULCP help me see my weak points.	2.56	.83	307	58	42
The ULCP helps me reach my goals for language learning.	2.55	.82	311	57.2	42.8
The ULCP program has sufficient content.	2.59	.81	307	57	43
Materials and activities offered in the ULCP are rich enough.	2.56	.77	310	56.1	43.9

( $M=2.73$ ); 63% found the ULM parallel to those covered in the class ( $M=2.62$ ); 62% found the ULCP appropriate for their learning pace ( $M=2.62$ ). Correspondingly, more than half of the participants thought that the ULM offered in the ULCP was related to their aims. ( $M=2.58$ ) and helped them see their weak points ( $M=2.56$ ) (see the values for the other items in Table 5).

With regard to the points needs improving in the ULCP, it was seen that ULCP did not support the participants in developing their productive skills such as speaking and writing ( $M=2.09$ ). Furthermore, the participants did not find the ULM exciting enough about language learning ( $M=2.10$ ) and pleasure-giving ( $M=2.32$ ). They also rated that the ULM offered in the ULCP did not help them guide their work for face-to-face learning ( $M=2.30$ ). (see the values for the other items in Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Findings indicating learners' dissatisfaction**

Items				Agree	Disagree
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	%	%
Materials & activities offered in the ULCP excite me about language learning.	2.10	.84	307	30.6	69.4
Materials and activities offered in the ULCP help me guide my work for face-to-face learning.	2.30	.84	309	43.7	56.3
Working with the ULCP gives me pleasure.	2.32	.84	307	40	60
With the help of the ULCP my WRITING skills sufficiently develop.	2.09	.76	312	27.9	72.1
With the help of the ULCP my SPEAKING skills sufficiently develop.	2.09	.83	310	27.7	72.3

### Findings in relation to focus-group interviews

The findings in the focus-group interviews revealed that the majority of the participants used the ULCP to study grammar and listening, especially to improve their note-taking skills. Some of the participants studied the ULCP so as to improve their reading skills. Though they found materials and exercises in grammar and reading quite moderate, the songs and some of the dialogues were difficult for them to follow.

After the content analysis of the transcripts of the interviews, the basic strengths of the ULCP were ordered as: (a) its providing extra self-study materials to be used anytime especially in spare time at one's own pace; (b) its following the curriculum and matching what is covered in the class; (c) its helping the learners learn English better, revise and practice certain language points; (d) its preparing for exams and quizzes; (e) its making the participants get aware of their needs and so study more on those points; (f) its providing useful listening materials, which is their basic need; and lastly (h) its being more fashionable than studying with a book, paper, pencil, etc.

On the other hand, the points needs improving in the ULCP were ordered as: (a) technical problems while using the materials in the ULCP (e.g. to open listening files); (b) insufficient feedback provided in case of a mistake or misspell of a word (e.g. it is discouraging for the target group not to see where to seek the correct answer); (c) difficulty in enrolling on the program and insufficient explanation/guidance; (d) listening typescripts' being not attached to listening files; (e) lack of interaction with classmates and teachers via ULCP (e.g. to ask questions, send writings, get faster online feedback, follow announcements, etc.); (f) lack of fun activities like games, puzzles, chat, forum and other interactive parts; and (g) the plain and monotonous page layout.

## Conclusion and implications

The general results revealed that the ULCP had a significant effect on elementary learners' progress and achievement in language learning process. The participants benefitted from the ULCP in improving certain language skills. However, the participants used the ULCP for practice rather than to enjoy or have fun as they do not find it motivating or pleasure-giving enough, but useful for practice, which shows the fact that the program needs improving in terms of learner motivation and satisfaction. Concerning the implications for the practice, the *feedback* feature of the program should be improved; *writing* and *speaking* components should be fostered in the program; more *listening* materials should be uploaded on the program; more fun activities and interactive exercises should be included in the program; all teachers teaching at the elementary level, not only a volunteer group, should be involved in the process; a technical support is a must for effectiveness; students need to be introduced to the program in the computer labs with the assistant of a teacher and be provided with a tutorial on how to use the program; and the layout of the program should be more appealing.

To conclude, the word *ubiquitous* refers to *many things available to many people many times* and takes reference from context awareness and adaptive contents in mobile learning. Each of the innovations in this context or any attempts needs special web management procedures to be able to run an effective system. There might appear a variety of factors affecting the efficiency of an online course system, such as time allocated for the program, background characteristics and learning styles of the participants, quality of the materials, and the context where application is supposed to take place. Teachers' attitudes and teachers' pedagogical approaches are two key factors in the successful implementation of teaching with such innovative technology (Peng et al., 2009).

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**Editor's Note:** This study compares web-based instruction with textbook for teaching grammar in a second language.

1609 words

## **Web -based instruction vs. text-based instruction and second language learners' grammar**

**Malahat Yousefzadeh**  
Iran

### **Abstract**

This study investigated the effects of web-based instruction and text-based instruction with multiple-choice questions on grammar. The purpose of this study is to assess the potential of web-based instruction for improving second language grammar. Thus our goal is to investigate whether web-based instruction has an advantage for the learning grammar of second language by elementary Iranian learners. Seventy participants were divided into two groups: web-based group and text-based group. The pre-test was administered before treatment and showed that there is no significant difference between participants. In treatment sessions, web-based group received instruction through online grammar learning and text-based received instruction through traditional classroom instruction by teacher.

The results (pre-test and post-test) were analyzed using t-test. It indicated the superiority of web-based instruction over text-based instruction.

### **Introduction**

Pupils at secondary schools also have difficulties with learning grammatical concepts. To address these problems we propose to create an English language teaching and learning based on the world wide web. The World Wide Web is one of the most exciting pedagogical resources in use today. It can be used to create meaningful tasks and various materials for language learners.

Yousefzadeh (2012) said nowadays the dominant language teaching/learning debates is, using technology in second language teaching/learning. Using computers and multimedia programs have recently increased in language teaching and learning. Ragan, Boyce, Redwine, Savenye, and McMichael (1993) found that, in general, multimedia instruction reduces learning time by 30% compared to traditional instruction. Ewing (2000) also believes that students find chances for improvement in a CALL environments which are unavailable in traditional L2 classrooms. Learners can receive immediate feedback about their answers and correct their errors from the system. With a variety of hyperlinked multimedia documents and computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools, the Web can support language teachers to integrate Web resources into the language classroom (Son, 2007). What makes the Web especially exciting as a resource for language teaching and learning is its possibilities for interactivity. Online language tutorials, exercises, and tests are available to anyone who has access to the Web. Web-based materials can be updated and distributed easily and quickly, and feedback for many activities is instantaneous. Proponents of Web-based tutorials assert that such systems offer opportunities to increase student engagement and understanding of material; thereby, students have the opportunity to complete assignments and receive immediate feedback at any time (Cheng & Swanson, 2011). Mitchell and Jolley (1999) found significant positive correlation between students who used a self-guided, Web-based tutorial and exam performance. Maddux (1996) has stated that some unique characteristics of the Web include: (a) information on the WWW can be made interactive in nature; and (b) it often makes use of multimedia, including graphics, sound, and animation. The Web provides more effective and efficient searching tools than traditional searches in libraries,

and the pages retrieved from the web are more attractive and appealing than traditional printed media. Moreover, multimedia capabilities probably make the Web more attractive to many people. Dooly (2005, p. 8) has clarified that “innovative uses of the Internet and other ITC tools provide opportunities for collaborative language projects which focus on using the language to learn the language”.

### **The aim of the study**

The goal of this study is to find out whether learning grammar via web-based instruction will result in better learning than learning grammar using text-based instruction?

### **Research question:**

Are there any significant differences between the groups of learners due to method of instruction (web-based grammar instruction vs. text-based grammar instruction)?

### **Alternative hypothesis:**

H1: There are significant differences between web-based instruction and text-based instruction in grammar learning of second language learners.

### **Independent and Dependent Variables**

Independent variable was the instruction type (web-based and text-based) and dependent variable was students' scores measured by post-test.

### **Method**

**Subjects:** 90 students in Ardabil guidance school were chosen randomly. Any participants who indicated even partial knowledge of the elementary level grammar was excluded from experiment. After pretest 20 participants were excluded from the study. Then they were divided into two groups. The two groups, in which there were (n=35) web-based group and (n=35) text-based group were placed in two treatment conditions.

### **Procedure**

A pre-test was used to measure the subjects' knowledge in grammar and to find out if there were any significant differences among the groups before and after the treatment, so that any significant differences found at the time of the post-test will be due to the effect of the treatment. 20 multiple-choice questions were dedicated for pre-test. Each question was followed by four choices. In treatment sessions, the participants in the web-based group were taken to a language laboratory in which there were 25 computers. Since the number of participants was more than number of computers, the web-based group was divided into two groups. Before treatment sessions, the students in web-based group were given information about working on web-based learning. This study was conducted online, so students accessed to the Internet in order to complete both pretest and posttest via the web-based lesson. The contents of the tests were designed to cover all types of grammar from all lessons in the web-based lesson to investigate the development of students' proficiency. The web-based group received web-based instruction on grammar in about four hours a week for three months. The text-based group just received a placebo treatment on grammar for these three months through the traditional text-based teaching of grammar.

At the end, a multiple-choice test including 40 items (each correct answer=0.5 points) was used as a posttest to depict the two groups' performance. For web-based materials, we used:

<http://www.english-4u.de/grammar1.htm> for Text-based instruction and we used: the English textbook for Iranian guidance school for instruction.

### **Data analysis**

All of the 70 participants were homogenous based on pre-test that was administered before starting the study. Results obtained by participants in the post-test were compared for the web-based and text-based in order to determine each of their effects of on grammar learning outcomes. A t-test was run to test the alternative hypothesis. The data were the score of two groups after the two types of learning condition (web-based and text-based).

The result of descriptive statistics shows that  $x = 17.45$  and  $SD = 1.46$  (web-based group) and  $x = 14.5$  and  $SD = 2.47$  (text-based group). Also the result shows that  $t(68) = -6.07$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , therefore web-based group is significantly different from text-based group, and we can support the alternative hypothesis. The results of the t-test shows significant differences between the students from the web-based group where web-assisted teaching as applied and that of the students in the text-based group where conventional teaching methods were applied on grammar subjects.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

This study was conducted in an attempt to determine whether the web-based learning method had any effect on the second language grammar learning. At the end of treatments it was determined that there was an increase in grammar levels of students in the web-based group and text-based group. However it was found the increase in the scores of the web-based group was higher than that of students in the text-based group. The result showed that web-based study supports the development of grammar more effectively than traditional text-based instruction. The results of the current study are consistent with Tallmadge and Chitester (2010) who propose that Web-based tutorials assist students in compensating for insufficient background in any subject. Also this finding is in line with Nutta's study (1998) which showed significant differences in favor of the computer-based grammar instruction. It also lends support to the findings of Torlakovic and Deugo (2004).

One of the important advantages of Web-based instruction is that it helps learner autonomy which is very important, because students always have positive attitudes toward learning grammar independently. Many students emphasized the fact that the websites, unlike any other material, provided them with a vast amount of activities which made grammar practice more interesting. This research should be conducted with different populations (e.g., high school students) and different types of skills.

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