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Journal of Research in Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Technology (JRCIET)

Aims and Scope

The *Journal of Research in Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Technology (JRCIET)* is a regional quarterly refereed educational journal. It is one of the publications of the Association of Arab Educators (AAE), Egypt. JRCIET is published in English, French and German in January, April, July and October. It is issued both electronically and in paper forms. It accepts the publication of original high quality papers on both theoretical and empirical research in different areas of educational research related to curriculum, instruction and educational technology. In order for serving as a vehicle of expression for colleagues and/or for meeting university academic standards, or for promotion purpose, JRCIET publishes

dissertation abstracts (M.A & PhD) in addition to reports on symposiums, conferences and meetings held on topics related to its main concerns previously referred to.

JRCIET links everyday concerns of teachers, researchers and practitioners with insights gained from relevant academic disciplines such as applied linguistics, education, psychology and sociology (interdisciplinary research). The scope of JRCIET is deliberately wide to cover research on the teaching and learning in different disciplines. The primary aim of the JRCIET is to encourage research in curriculum planning, design, evaluation and development, teacher education, and approaches , methods, strategies, techniques and styles of teaching in the following disciplines: English, Arabic, French, German, Social studies, Science, Islamic studies, Mathematics, Agricultural sciences, Commercial sciences, Technical sciences, Home economics, Music, Physical education, Kindergarten, Any other related discipline, Educational technology, Special needs, Technical/vocational education. JRCIET also encourages and disseminates work which establishes bridges between educational sciences and other disciplines within or outside educational context.

The views , the opinions and attitudes expressed in JRCIET are the contributors' own positions, and not necessarily those of the Editor, Advisory Board, Editorial Panel, or the Publisher.

Contributions

Offers of contributions are welcome from researchers /academics interested in teaching, learning and educational technology. Contributors should consult the online "Instructions for Authors" on the AAE website: <http://www.aae.org/> or JRCIET website on <http://jrciet.blogspot.com/> for manuscript preparation before submission. Submissions that do not fit with the "Instructions for Authors" will not be considered for publication.

Instructions for authors

Preparation of Manuscripts

JRCIET welcomes manuscripts in English, French and German. Manuscripts should be written in a concise and straightforward style. Authors are advised to have their manuscript proofread before final submission. A manuscript should not exceed 25 pages following JRCIET's formatting system (see section on formatting the manuscript). Submitted manuscripts should be written according to the APA style (for a brief manual of the APA style, consult the *Association of Arab Educators'* website on <http://www.aeducators.org/>)

Manuscript Formatting

The following formats should be followed: Title: Font (Times New Roman), Size 16 + bold, Heading 1: Font (Times New Roman), Size 14 +bold., Heading 2: Font (Times New Roman), Size 14 +bold+ italics, Heading 3: Font (Times New Roman), Size 14 +bold+ italics + indentation., Left margin = 2.5 cm, Right margin = 2.5 cm, Upper margin = 3 cm, Lower margin = 3 cm, Authors should use 1.5 space between lines and a double space between paragraphs.

Components of the research/article manuscript

Three copies of the research/article should be submitted. The manuscript should be typed, double-spaced on a A4 paper, on one side of the paper only. A cover page should contain only the research title, name(s) of author(s) and institutional affiliations on a separate page in order to preserve author anonymity on submission of the research/article to referees. An abstract not exceeding 200 words should be included on a separate sheet of paper. The main components of the research/article are Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, Conclusion(s), Acknowledge- ments (if any), and References. Diagrams and Figures if they are considered essential, should be clearly related to the section of the text to which they refer. The

original diagrams and figures should be submitted with the manuscript.

Footnotes should be avoided. Essential notes should be numbered in the text and grouped together at the end of the research/article.

Research Title

The title should accurately reflect the focus and content of the research. The title should be brief and grammatically correct. Titles do not normally include numbers, acronyms, abbreviations or punctuation. They should include sufficient detail for indexing purposes but be general enough for readers outside the field to appreciate what the paper is about. The title should be no more than 14 words in length.

Authors' names and institutional affiliations

This should include the full authors' names, affiliations (Department, Institution, City, Country), and email addresses for all authors.

Abstract and Keywords

The abstract should be comprehensive and concise and not exceeding 200 words in length followed by 5-7 carefully chosen keywords . It should be structured to give the purpose of the study, main procedures including sample and instruments, main findings of the study, conclusion(s) reached and their significance. Citations and specialist abbreviations are to be avoided..

Introduction

Authors should provide a brief literature survey avoiding citing literature over ten years old, unless absolutely necessary, background to the study, hypotheses and the significance of the research.

Method

The experimental procedures should be given in sufficient detail. Description of the participants, instruments and experimental design is necessary and should be detailed where possible.

Results

This section should provide details of the results that are required to support the conclusion(s) of the paper. The section may be divided into subsections, each with a concise subheading.

Discussion

This section should present a comprehensive analysis of the results in light of prior literature. Discussion may also be combined with results.

Conclusion(s)

The conclusion section should bring out the significance of the research paper, show how the author(s) have brought closure to the research problem, and point out some remaining research gaps by suggesting issues for further research.

Acknowledgements (if any)

The author(s) should first acknowledge the source of funding followed by acknowledgement of any support or help.

References

References should be written according to the APA style (6th edition). (See AAE website)

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Contacts and Information

Publishing, subscription, and queries from customers should be sent to:

Editor in Chief's email: mahersabry2121@yahoo.com

Mailing address: Prof. Dr. Maher Ismail Sabry, Ahmad Maher Street, from Alsharawy Street, Atreeb, Banha, Egypt.

Association of Arab Educators (AAE) website : <http://aae999.blogspot.com>

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Dreidimensionales Drucken im Bildungsprozess

Prof. Khaled M. Fargoun

Dekan der Fakultät für Pädagogische
der Universität Helwan

Einführung

Der Wunsch, sich Wissen leichter aneignen und besser merken zu können, besteht sicher schon so lange, wie Menschen in der Lage sind, sich mit Hilfe der Sprache zu verständigen.

Aus diesem Grunde werden in guten Unterrichtssituationen sowohl verbale als auch nonverbale Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten genutzt. Wissenschaft und Technologie schafften zusammen die Werkzeuge, sie in einer lebhaften Harmonie zu verbinden. Das sind z. B. 3D Bücher mit Bildern, 3D Kino und Fernsehen .3D Dreidimensionales Drucken und Technologie realisieren ein interaktives, abstraktes Begriffsverständnis.

Von vielen Seiten wird 3D-Druck als Kern einer bevorstehenden Revolution von Produktion (bis hin zum Häuserbau) und Wirtschaftssystem betrachtet. Egal ob das eintreffen wird oder nicht, die Technologie macht viele Dinge möglich und ist ein interessanter Kristallisationspunkt für Lernprozesse – und damit ein Gegenstand für die Medienpädagogik und sicher auch für die Schule.

Bis Sehr naher zeit dachten die meisten Leute, dass die Idee von Drucken nur, für Tinte auf Papier steht.

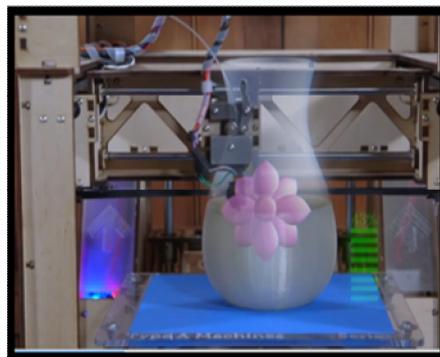
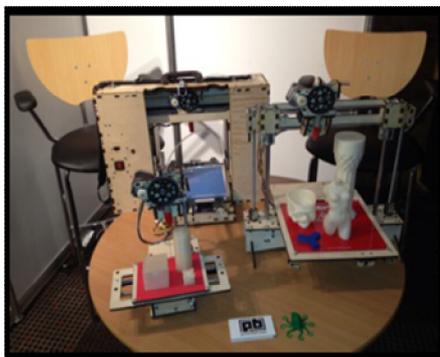
Aber das neue diesmal, ist dass der Druckvorgang sich befreit von den Grenzen der Papieroberfläche. Alle Außenabmessungen wie Länge und Breite sind keine Grenzen mehr. Drucken dieses Mal ist dreidimensional, und kabellos durch die "Space glass" Brille, so dass, wenn die Person ihr dreidimensionales Modell verarbeitet, und einen Befehl an den Drucker gibt, entwickelt sich diese Annahme in ein konkretes Objekt und sichtbare Wirklichkeit mit Gewicht.

Die Space Glass Technologie repräsentiert ein Interaktives Virtuelles Theater für Lehrer und Lehrende zielend darauf sie Wissen zuzufügen, verbreiten, besser analysieren, und die Verbindung zwischen ihnen und den verschiedenen Anwendungen zu verstärken. Durch eine virtuelle Umgebung das manchmal als zweites leben "second life" bezeichnet wird. Deswegen ist es ein Virtuelles System, das den realen Bildungsprozess Simuliert, und wenn der Inhalt Stimmt kann man es in die Reale Umgebung formen.

3D-Drucker im Bildungsprozess

Kaum ein Techniktrend sorgt gegenwärtig für so viel Aufsehen wie 3D-Drucker. In der Industrie, dem Produktdesign oder der Wissenschaft sind diese Geräte bereits seit den 1990er Jahren für die Teile- und Produktfertigung unverzichtbar geworden. Wegen der hohen Anschaffungs- und Betriebskosten blieben sie für den Mainstream jedoch lange Zeit real existierende Science-Fiction. Das änderte sich spätestens, als das Start-Up-Unternehmen MakerBot halbwegs erschwing-

liche Geräte herausbrachte und damit das dreidimensionale Drucken populär machte. Seither steigt die Nachfrage und die Geräte bahnen sich stetig ihren Weg in neue Anwendungsbereiche und Zielmärkte – so auch im Bildungsprozess.



Form (1) dreidimensionale Drucker

Wo die Reise in Bildungseinrichtungen hingehen könnte, zeigt sich gegenwärtig in England. Dort tüftelt das Bildungsministerium derzeit an einem neuen „national curriculum“, das öffentliche Schulen ab September 2014 unter anderem dazu verpflichten soll, computergestütztes Produktdesign und 3D-Modellierung für die Altersstufen 11 bis 14 im Rahmen des Schulunterrichts anzubieten. Die britische Tageszeitung *The Guardian* will sogar aus nicht näher genannten Regierungskreisen erfahren haben, dass „3D-Drucker zum Standard in britischen Schulen werden sollen“. Zusammen mit dem ebenfalls ab Herbst 2014 vorgesehenen obligatorischen Programmier- und Technologieunterricht sollen die Schülerinnen und Schüler so besser auf das Berufsleben vorbereitet werden, welches immer stärker von technologischen

Problemstellungen bestimmt wird. Die nach Fachkräften darbene Industrie hat bereits die Initiative ergriffen, um sich den technisch begeisterten Nachwuchs heranzuziehen und finanziert im großen Stil die Integration von 3D-Druckern im Bildungsprozess. Ob die Geräte tatsächlich bald zur Grundausrüstung gehören werden, wird sich erst noch zeigen müssen. Dass England seine Pläne bei der Integration digitaler Medien im Bildungsprozess konsequent umsetzt, hat das Land schon bei den interaktiven Tafeln unter Beweis gestellt. Nahezu jede öffentliche Schule ist dort inzwischen mit den Geräten ausgerüstet.

Und wie sieht es hierzulande aus? Auch in deutschen Schulen gewinnt das dreidimensionale Drucken an Bedeutung. Es gibt bereits Berufsbildungseinrichtungen und allgemeinbildende Schulen, die 3D-Drucker im Unterricht einsetzen. Die Bandbreite der Nutzung reicht dabei von ersten Gehversuchen im Technik- oder Kunstunterricht, über kreative Schularbeitsgemeinschaften und Projektwochen bis hin zur professionellen Nutzung, wie es an einigen technisch-handwerklich ausgerichteten Berufsbildungs- und Oberstufenzentren der Fall ist. Noch handelt es sich um vergleichsweise wenige Leuchtturmprojekte, diese sind aber schon jetzt vielversprechend. Ein spannendes Projekt, das sich intensiv mit dem dreidimensionalen Drucken im Bildungskontext beschäftigt, ist der FabLab München e.V. Der vom

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung geförderte Verein ermöglicht es Schülern und Lehrern, im Rahmen von Workshops in die Thematik einzusteigen.

Um den praktischen Nutzen zu erkennen, muss man das 3D-Drucken als eine Art Querschnittskompetenz begreifen: Das Druckergebnis will von der ersten Idee bis zum Endprodukt gedanklich durchdacht sein, was das räumliche Vorstellungsvermögen, die Kreativität und auch in einem gewissen Maß die Problemlösekompetenz schult. Geht es darum, verschiedene Bauteilgruppen zu entwerfen, die sich zu einem fertigen Produkt zusammensetzen lassen sollen oder wie beim Beispiel einer Schweizer Schule, in der eine ganze Modellstadt gedruckt wurde, müssen die Schülerinnen und Schüler ihre Kooperationsfähigkeit unter Beweis stellen. Steht die Idee, muss diese skizziert werden, was nicht nur Aspekte des Technischen Zeichnens tangiert, sondern allgemein den künstlerischen Ausdruck schult. Die Skizze muss anschließend am Computer mit einer geeigneten 3D-Modellierungssoftware als digitales Modell erstellt werden, welches der Drucker verarbeiten können muss. Hier können technisch begeisterte Schülerinnen und Schüler bereits im Schulunterricht erste Erfahrungen mit Branchen- standards machen-CAD-Software (Computer-aided-design) ist hierbei ein wichtiges Stichwort. Ohne diese und die Fähigkeit, entsprechende Programme bedienen zu können, geht in vielen

Bereichen der Industrie und Wirtschaft inzwischen überhaupt nichts mehr. Insgesamt berührt die Thematik 3D-Drucken in vielerlei Hinsicht den ganzen MINT-Bereich, da mathematisches, informatisches, naturwissenschaftliches und technisches Geschick gefragt ist. Zu guter Letzt sind da noch die Begeisterung an der Sache und das Erfolgserlebnis, wenn das Druckergebnis tatsächlich gelungen ist – und das sind schließlich in der Pädagogik und Didaktik zwei der wichtigsten Aspekte.

Umwandlung der virtuellen Realität zur Fassbaren Realität:

- Der Benutzer fängt an fotografische Daten über die dreidimensionalen Objekten durch verschiedene Methoden zu senden. Entweder durch 3D Scannung um die 3D Spezifikationen der Objekte zu kriegen, oder durch ein 3D Model geformt mit der "Space Glass".
- Der Datenspeicher im Drucker Sendet Signale zu einer Plattform von Düsen um eine Reihe von aufeinanderfolgenden Schichten zu bilden wobei von dieser Düse geschmolzenes Kunststoffmaterial rauskommt in Form von Filamenten für die Synthese von Objekte. Die Rolle der Software liegt in der Steuerung, der Reihenfolge des Prozesses wobei, wenn das Drucken von einer Farbe vollendet, die nächste Farbe anfangt. Es gibt neue Drucker mit mehrfarbigen düsen. Dieser Prozess dauert ein paar Minuten, um ein kleines Objekt die Größe eines Schlüsselan-

hängers oder mehrere Stunden um größere oder komplexere Modellreihen zu erhalten.

Dreidimensionales Drucken als komplementäre Technologie:

Was Diese Art von Drucken unterscheidet ist ihre Leichtigkeit des drucken von Komplexen Modelle schneller als herkömmliche Methoden. Das Erlaubt es als neue Technologie, dem Lehrer der Produktion vom Modell Augenblicklich zum Objekt.

So kann man Diese Druckart als Professionelles Drucken in Händen Von Amateuren bezeichnen. So bei kann der Lehrer, physikalische Modelle entweder entworfen durch CAD Programm, oder 3D gescannt mit einem 3D Scanner. Weiterhin kann er die Modelle benutzen um viele der Konzepte und Themen im Bildungsprozess zu erklären, Speziell in den Feldern von Industriedesign, Technik, Architektur, Bau-Technik, Automobil-Technik, Luftfahrt- Technik, Medizin , Dentalindustrie und Bildung im Allgemeinen.

Von Diesm Punkt an wudre diese Technik in den wenigen vergangenen Tagen ein Präzisionsinstrument, es wurde auch allmählich billiger. Bis die Dreidimensionalen Medien sich weg vom Polycarbonat-Kunststoff bewegten, zum gummi und Harze, das bedeutet, dass es auf ihrem weg zur shneller ausbreitung. Vor allem, dass die Produkte durch Internet auch verkauft werden. Dies bedeutet, es so bald wie möglich zu erhalten. Diese Technologie hat

auch auf die Türen der Medizinischen Technik geklopft, und dass erscheint in der ELD Technik wobei man genaue Modelle von internen Teilen des Körpers sehr detailliert herstellen kann, oder ein Gelenk das beeinträchtigt oder durch Unfall gebrochen zu ersetzen. Was die Aufgabe des Arztes vielfältig erleichtert.

Damit man diese Technik im aktiven Lernen sieht, dass die Space Glass benutzt integrieren kann, oder andere neue Techniken über Internet, gibt es jetzt viele Webseiten, die es erlauben den Lehrenden sein Thema mit der Realität zu verknüpfen durch die Physible, wo diese Seiten Dateien für Modelle verfügbar machen, die man mit 3D Drucker drucken kann um echte fassbare Objekte zu produzieren. Auch wird die Seite erlauben das Herunterladen von den Daten die die 3D Objekte formen.

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The Effect of Wikifolios on Developing Secondary Stage Students' EFL Writing Skills

Dr. Nahed Mohamed Mahmoud Ghoneim,

Assistant Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Department of Curriculum and Teaching Methods, Faculty of Education, Menoufia University, Egypt.

Dr. Heba ElSayed Abdelsalam Elghotmy,

Lecturer of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Department of Curriculum and Teaching Methods, Faculty of Education, Menoufia University, Egypt.

Abstract

The current study aims to investigate the effect of Wikifolios on developing EFL writing skills of secondary stage students.

Forty first year secondary students were randomly divided into two groups: experimental (n=20) and control (n=20). The experimental group used Wikifolios assessment in EFL writing while the control group underwent regular writing assessment. The findings indicated that students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in their writing skills.

Keywords: *Wikifolios, EFL Writing skills, Secondary stage students.*

1. Introduction

The method of teaching English writing in language classes has been shifting from traditional way of the end product to the process of creating writing. (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). By such an emphasis on writing process, students learn how to develop their writing, the technique to solve problems and how to think critically. However, it is somehow difficult to assess this

new method of writing via conventional assessment techniques such as timed impromptu writing test. Therefore, new techniques of assessment have been developed to demonstrate what students learn and what they can do with their own knowledge. These new techniques of assessment are called "authentic" or "alternative" measures. Among all the procedures of alternative assessment, portfolio has become a popular technique. As Moeller (2010) points out, portfolios show students' progress, achievement and self-reflection in one or more areas. Portfolio assessment is an ongoing process. It does not evaluate progress and performance of the learners through an impromptu paper and pencil test or enable instructors to evaluate their student's performances within a very short and limited period of time. According to Yurdabakan and Erdogan (2009), an ongoing assessment is a learning process that examines and documents learner progress at certain intervals. The main goals of portfolio assessment are encouraging learners to become more autonomous, take the control of their learning, make decisions, participate in the evaluation of their own work and solve the problems they may face.

Although students' active participation is vital during the portfolio assessment process, the teacher is the key to the successful use of such a technique (Wang & Liao, 2008). According to Espstein (2005), portfolio assessment transforms the role of the teacher away from generating comparative rankings of achievement

and toward improving student achievement through evaluation feedback and self-reflection.

Despite of its popularity, using writing portfolios is not so common in EFL contexts.

1.2. Background to the Study

Based on interviews with (27) English language teachers in the secondary stage to ask them about the method of writing assessment, they reported that they use the timed writing test as it is the dominant way of assessing writing. The emphasis is on the final product. They believe that the process-oriented writing pedagogy could improve EFL learners' writing skills but it is not so common in the Egyptian context.

1.3. Aim of the Study

The current study aims to develop some EFL writing skills of the first year secondary stage students through using the wikifolio assessment technique

1.4. Questions of the Study

The study tried to find answers to the following main question:

What is the effect of using Wikifolios on developing of some EFL writing skills of first year secondary stage students?

Out of this main question, the following sub questions are stated:

1. To what extent does the implementation of Wikifolios develop the sentence structure skills of first year secondary students?

2. To what extent does the implementation of Wikifolios develop the content related skills of first year secondary students?
3. To what extent does the implementation of Wikifolios develop the tense consistency skill of first year secondary students?

1.4. Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control one concerning the development of overall EFL writing skills in favor of the experimental group.
2. There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control one concerning the development of sentence structure skills in favor of the experimental group.
3. There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control one concerning the development of content related skills in favor of the experimental group.
4. There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control one concerning the development of tense consistency skill in favor of the experimental group

1.5. Significance of the Study

The current study is significant as it might help:

Students as using wikifolio as one of the writing assessment techniques could give them the confidence to continue to write, develop their skills and overcome problems in writing. Besides, the wikifolio as a self-

reflection assessment could be appealing because it changes the way writing has been graded and constitutes a grading system whereby the teacher shares control and works collaboratively with students. In this way, wikifolios in EFL context could increase the level of students' motivation and give them a sense of autonomous learning. Students take the responsibility for knowing where they are with regard to learning goals, broaden their view of what is being learned; and begin to see language learning as a process.

Teachers as wikifolios could help them review the status of student progress and development at any time. They do not have to review students' portfolios in the classroom. Besides, the teacher uses information in student portfolios to diagnose their needs and to guide instruction. Wikifolios also give the teacher a solid foundation on which he can base instruction. Moreover, student wikifolios could provide the teacher with a record of student strengths and areas for improvement.

1.6. Delimitations of the Study

1. The participants of the current study are students in the first year of the secondary stage in El Masaie El Mashkoura School in Shebin El Koum.
2. The EFL writing skills which the current study is concerned with are content related skills (unity and coherence), sentence structure and tense consistency skills.

1.7. Definition of Terms

1.7.1. Wikifolios

The current study adopts Hickey & Rehak's (2013) definition which views wikifolio as an electronic format for learners using the wiki tool to record their work, their achievement and goals, to reflect on their writing and to share and be supported.

A wiki is a powerful, free Internet tool that allows users to quickly create web pages organized into websites without special training. The web page editing screen has recognizable formatting tools. Although these tools are limited, wikis have a number of exceptional features that enhance web page creation for educational use, both individually and collaboratively.

1.7.2. Writing Skills

Writing skills are used in this study to refer to the specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message. These abilities include lexical and syntactic knowledge, organizing, and putting ideas into meaningful texts. (Tabatabaei & Assefi, 2012).

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Nature of E-Portfolios

According to Pelliccione and Dixon (2008) and Barrett (2011), e-Portfolios encourage a self-directed, individualized approach to learning that students can use throughout their lives. As they develop the

appropriate skills to regulate their own learning and become responsible for it beyond the walls of the classroom, they can engage both individually and collaboratively in the e-Portfolio project. The primary audience for a formative portfolio is the student and often their parents in student-led conferences.

E-Portfolios can transform and enhance curriculum and demonstrate to students and educators the connections between students' learning and the assessment criteria. One can assess e-Portfolios both qualitatively and quantitatively; they constitute sound source of both kinds of information about students.

In e-Portfolios, students build themselves a resource that, once assessment is complete, they can take with them into the workplace. E-Portfolios thus constitute a form of sustainable assessment (Hallam, 2008).

According to Beetham (2005), there has been a big shift from summative assessment which represents the product oriented approach to writing to formative assessment that reflects the process oriented approach. It stresses the need for assessment to be integrated with the goals of the curriculum and to have a constructive relationship with teaching and learning. It includes a variety of assessment procedures such as learner- centered assessment, student-designed tests, and portfolio assessment which the teacher and

students can collaboratively choose and use successfully in language classrooms.

As Wang & Liao (2008) point out, advances in technology and pedagogical outlooks have led to the evolution of electronic portfolios that operate on the metacognitive as well as the practical level in ways that have the potential to surpass even the best reflective paper portfolios. Like its paper counterpart, the electronic Portfolio provides a space for students to organize, assess, and reflect on their work. The e-Portfolio also can fulfill the traditional role of final assessment tool for a course. But unlike hard copy, Housego& Parker (2009) believe that the e-Portfolio can be a permanent yet organic system that grows with the student, preserving a record of the past, establishing links in the present, and helping plan for the future. It creates what can be called a virtual identity, which undergoes continuous change and is shared with others. This evolving self-portrait, painted by the student and carried with him/her from the first-year experience through graduate school, can be a lifelong student-centered learning tool. As students collect their work and transcripts, they create an arena for discussion and planning in which they and their advisors can easily access and refer to information (Moeller, 2010). The e-Portfolio tools, including e-mail asynchronous and synchronous chat, blogs and wikis also can facilitate deeper communication between advisor and student.

Collaborative work with wikis

Working collaboratively in pairs and groups allows students to negotiate meaning together to internalize their learning. When students of varying abilities work together, they can assist each other or create a scaffold that supports their learning. Later, the students will successfully perform similar tasks independently.

According to Bellizzi (2008), in the wiki, the “discussion” tab allows students to comment on wiki pages and negotiate additions and changes before they actually make them. This simulates real-world collaborative writing. In addition, when teachers guide students in criticizing their classmates’ completed writing in the “discussion” tab, the students practice critical reading and writing skills, reinforcing their understanding of what makes comprehensible writing from the eye of the reader.

While writing collaboratively, the various drafts of the writing process with the many additions, deletions and changes can be confusing to the writers and almost impossible for the teacher to understand as an outside observer. The “history” tab organizes this by color-coding along with saving the versions under the user’s name and date of the contribution. Students have these previous versions organized and readily accessible while the teacher can easily follow the collaborative writing process gathering information on students’ strengths and weaknesses.

Classroom applications

E-portfolios can be developed on wikis since they both foster collaborative learning. It is also advantageous to utilize wikis if they have already been explored by the students. Hickey & Rehak (2013) advise selecting the most suitable software and tools for the e-portfolios to meet the needs of students. Rather than introducing several tools, it is better to focus on tools that can be utilized in line with the class objectives, and as the aim here is to promote writing, a wiki serves as a good option. Barrett (2011) further suggests that feedback on e-portfolios should not be public. While working on the wiki, students can work collaboratively and give feedback to each other, and by changing the setting, the wiki can be set as private. Students developing their English skills can incorporate wikis into their project-based learning in a number of ways. Wikis can improve students' internet research, reading and writing skills by responding to their personal research in their own words on a wiki. The wikis allow the students to incorporate video and photos, practice correct citation of resources and share their work with classmates seamlessly.

Another valuable use of wikis in the EFL classroom is for portfolio work. For effective language development, it is important for learners to reflect on and write about their learning process, including successes and areas for improvement. Richardson (2010) points out that keeping a digital record of portfolio reflections in a

wiki aids the teacher with organization and streamlines responses from classmates with the “discussion” tab feature. Students can include a photo of their poster, a recording of their poetry reading or even a short video of their skit, examples of student products that are difficult to include in traditional paper portfolios.

Electronic portfolios provide capabilities for storing and displaying examples of work in a variety of formats. The viewing options of electronic portfolios allow the user to submit work not only in traditional documents, but also in multimedia forms of audio, video, electronic projects, and links to other websites. These increased forms of output provide the assessing group a more interesting, holistic perspective on student learning. (Lam& Lee, 2010).

According to Chan (2009), Hickey& Rehak (2013), electronic portfolios also provide solutions to logistical issues encountered with paper portfolios. Because electronic portfolio information is stored electronically, the student can store vast amounts of information without needing extensive storage space. Furthermore, electronic portfolios assist multiple reviewers by providing simultaneous access. Reviewers no longer need to physically meet to review portfolios; instead, reviewers may view the portfolios at their convenience from any computer with Internet capabilities. This easy access allows multiple reviewers to be involved in the process and decreases time spent waiting for others to

analyze traditional portfolios one by one. Fahim & Jalili (2013) point out that ease of use makes electronic portfolios a feasible tool for assessing student learning. Paper portfolios often require extra staffing of clerical personnel who collect or verify the collection of work examples maintained in portfolios. With electronic portfolios, teachers can require students to submit their work directly into the portfolio and thus reduce the need for extra personnel in the data collection process. E-Portfolio advising has short- and long-term benefits for the student, the advisor, and the institution.

Short- and long-term benefits of Wikifolios

Regarding short-term benefits, Epstein (2005), Brown, Anderson, Simpson, and Suddaby (2007), Baturay& Daloglu (2010) point out that the short-term benefits are practical, more measurable, and perhaps easier for students as well as faculty to appreciate. They include:

- **Accessibility.** Students and advisors can use the portfolio anytime and anywhere. If a student thinks of a question while studying at home, she/he can send an electronic query to an advisor while the subject is fresh.
- **Time management:** The ability to communicate with advisors online may reduce the number of meetings required, freeing up student as well as advisor time.
- **Showcase for student work:** Electronic preservation and organization of student work and records in a variety of media including text, sound, hyperlinks, graphics, and video enrich student presentations

and provide a fuller picture of the student's skills and talents.

- **Context:** students and advisors can view the body of work and how the pieces fit together. This one-stop organization makes it easier for students and advisors to track progress and identify areas that need attention.
- **Planning:** Easy access to advisors and to an organized view of past work, plans of study, and academic records enhance a student's ability to select pieces of work and set goals.
- **Portability and preservation:** Students can take their information with them from school to school and job to job, making it easy for advisors to track a student's academic history and patterns. Information stored in the e-Portfolio is saved to be used anytime.
- **Interactivity:** Online comment features and synchronous chat expand the opportunity for more frequent and more fruitful student/ advisor communications.
- **Organization and record-keeping:** All student's work and records can be centralized. In addition, comments and communications between students and advisors are archived for future reference, creating a history of the exchanges.
- As for the long-term benefits, Housego & Parker (2009) point out the following:
- **Development of reflective thinking:** E-Portfolios encourage students to think about their growth and

become active and self-reliant learners, assessors, and planners.

- Creation of a record of growth and accomplishment over time.
- Formation of student identity that is directed by the student with guidance from advisors.

E-Portfolios achieve a goal that many other assessment methods cannot; they change the student role in assessment from passive research subject to active participant as students are called upon to select samples of their classroom and co-curricular work products for the e-Portfolio and to reflect upon why these artefacts were selected and how they demonstrate learning.

The wikifolios process

Gunn & Peddie (2008) and Hughes (2008) point out that the cognitive skills required for self-directed students in a wikifolio are "collect, select, reflect, connect".

Collect

In this stage, students gather evidence of academic, professional, or personal growth. It could be projects from classes, written paragraphs or essays. For an e-Portfolio, a piece of evidence must be in a format accessible on the Web.

Select

Many of the artefacts held in the e-Portfolio represent some aspect of an individual's thoughts and

growth. The student has to select those pieces of evidence that are most representative of his/her work.

Reflect

This step involves reflection and discussion of what the student has learned. A wikifolio is not just a collection of work and evidence. It should also contain evidence of academic, intellectual, and personal growth. It is important to link the passages written and the growth achieved to the evidence of work presented. A wikifolio isn't just about what has been done; it is about what has been learned and the way forward.

Connect

The student connects the teacher and peer feedback and his own reflection to write the final product.

2.2 The Relationship between Wikifolios and EFL Writing Skills

Hirvela & Sweetland (2005) believe that the most important factor in writing is that students need to be personally involved in order to make the learning experience of lasting value. Encouraging student participation in the exercise, while at the same time refining and expanding writing skills, requires a certain pragmatic approach. Within the communicative framework of language teaching, the skill of writing gains a great importance. With so many conflicting theories concerning writing, the teaching of writing has undergone a great change in the past quarter century. Tabatabaei & Assefi (2012) point out that the popularity of portfolios resulted from the shift in

writing theory from a focus on writing products to that of writing processes. Table (1) presents the differences between traditional writing assessment and wikifolios as highlighted in a publication of the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC, 2011).

Table 1: Traditional Assessment vs. wikifolio Assessment

Traditional	wikifolio
Measures student's ability at one time	Measures student's ability over time
Done by teacher alone; student often unaware of criteria	Done by teacher and student; student aware of criteria
Conducted outside instruction	Embedded in instruction
Assigns student a grade	Involves student in own assessment
Does not capture the range of student's language ability	Captures many facets of language learning performance
Does not include the teacher's knowledge of student as a learner	Allows for expressions of teacher's knowledge of student as learner
Does not give student responsibility	Student learns how to take responsibility

The process of generating ideas, drafting, redrafting and editing are vital elements of writing and these

important dimensions are not sufficiently assessed in a one-shot attempt of traditional testing. (Elahinia , 2004).

According to Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli, & Ansari (2010), writing skill is more challenging for students in EFL context than native speakers' in timed writing assessment . Having a set time during a writing test, EFL students cannot focus on the skills needed for L2 writing and on culturally related issues in the process of writing at the same time.

According to Chan (2009), portfolio assessment is particularly applicable to foreign-language assessment. Standardized tests provide foreign-language teachers with an incomplete picture of students' needs and learning. Currently, teachers tend to apply a process-oriented technique in writing instruction. In such technique, students spend time to select the topics, gather information, write about the topics and before submitting a final piece of writing, draft, revise and edit it.

According to Behzad (2010), the new trend in teaching writing in EFL classrooms is concentrating on writing processes to create a certain product, therefore, it is essential to apply an assessment technique that develops and encourages such a trend as assessment and teaching are two sides of the similar coin. As Richardson (2010) points out, portfolio assessment, as an authentic innovative technique of assessment,

provides a tool of assessing the processes of writing as well as the end product of writing. It is a technique that improves students' writing performance. The portfolios include all of the student's work and a reflective essay that analyzes how the work has evolved and how the student has changed as a writer. Other portfolios may require the student to select work as evidence of skills and concepts he or she has mastered. The reflective essay or cover letter for this type of portfolio analyzes how each example of work demonstrates the required skill. Students are often asked to discuss their weaknesses as well as their accomplishments and to set goals for improvement. They are asked to choose their best pieces of writing to put in portfolio to submit assessment. Students can also include those samples of writing that represent the development of writing process, including planning, drafting, revising and editing. Portfolio assessment can develop students' autonomy, critical thinking and linguistic competence. Furthermore, it supports the notion that writing is process that involves growth, development, and learning as well as a product (Al-Serhani, 2007).

2.3. Related Studies

In the literature of teaching and learning EFL writing, there are a number of studies that deal with the development of portfolio assessment and the students' attitudes toward using portfolio, but it has not been so enlarged by quantitative research to investigate using portfolio with EFL learners. Some experimental studies have been conducted in last decade dealing with

portfolio assessment that report technical information and employ accepted research techniques.

Apple and Shimo (2004) tested students' perceptions of portfolio creation in an EFL context in Japan. The participants were sixty one students in two different universities attending English writing class. A student-selected portfolio work was used as the elementary means of assessment. Tests were not used for assessment. A self-report questionnaire was used to measure the responses of the learners. Findings revealed that portfolio technique helped participants improve expressive and compositional writing ability.

Marefat (2004) investigated views of the students on portfolio use in an email-based EFL writing class. The majority of the subjects found that the portfolio technique was a positive opportunity for their writing. In addition, some students improved a personal understanding of their learning process. Hirvela and Sweetland (2005) described two case studies which investigated student experiences with portfolios in two ESL writing classes. The findings showed that the subjects liked the idea of portfolios but they did not endorse their use as employed in those writing courses.

Paesani (2006) conducted a writing portfolio project whose purpose was to assemble the learning of skills, content and language competences through literary study. The findings indicated that the portfolio

project developed the students' writing skills and grammatical competence. Besides, the reactions of the students to the portfolio writing project stressed the perceived value of the project.

Baturay& Daloglu, (2010) conducted a study entitled "E-Portfolio Assessment in an Online English Language Course". This study reflects that traditional approaches to assessment of student progress in EFL writing lack indicators of students' development of the skill. To achieve the aim of the study, the researchers worked with two groups of students: the e-portfolio group who kept an electronic portfolio in the online elementary level English language course and the traditional assessment group who did not keep an e-portfolio. Although there were not significant differences between the post-test scores of the two groups, there were significant learning gains in both groups. The perceptions of the students in the e-portfolio group reflected that they benefited from and enjoyed keeping a portfolio.

Behzad (2010) investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on final examination scores of EFL students' writing skill. To determine the impact of portfolio-based writing assessment 40 university students who enrolled in composition course were initially selected and divided randomly into two experimental and control groups. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted in this study. In order to appraise the homogeneity of the experimental and control groups,

comprehensive English Language test (CELT) was employed at the beginning of the study. The pre-test was applied to both the experimental group and control group. Later in the study, a post-test of dependent variables was implemented for both groups. The findings of the study revealed that that students whose work was evaluated by a portfolio system (portfolio-based assessment) had improved in their writing and gained higher scores in final examination when compared to those students whose work was evaluated by the more traditional evaluation system (non-portfolio-based assessment). The findings of the study highlighted the fact that portfolio assessment could be used as a complementary alternative along with traditional assessment to shed new light on the process of writing.

Tabatabaei& Assefi (2012) aimed to investigate the effect of portfolio assessment technique as a teaching, learning and assessment tool on writing performance of EFL learners. To this end, forty Iranian EFL learners who were all English teaching majors were randomly divided into two groups: experimental (n=20) and control (n=20). The experimental group received the treatment i.e. portfolio assessment while the control group underwent the traditional approach of writing assessment. The findings of statistical analysis indicated that the students in experimental group outperformed the students in control group in their writing performance and its sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary.

The findings suggest that portfolio assessment technique improves writing ability of the students. The results have also some implications for assessment, teaching and learning of L2 writing.

Fahim & Jalili (2013) investigated the possible effects of using writing portfolio assessment on developing the ability of editing among thirty eight Iranian EFL learners. The learners were asked to perform some writing tasks. Then, they edited their own papers and corrected their writing products using the five categories of content, organization, grammar, spelling, and mechanics. There was a continuous dialogue between the teacher and the learners. The findings indicated that the learners could be trained to use editing in their writing. Editing seems to be an effective way for higher proficiency learners to improve the organization of their writing.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study included 40 first year secondary stage students. They are divided into two groups: the control group and the experimental one. Each group consisted of 20 pupils.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. A Pre-Post Writing Skills Test

3.2.1.1. Test Description

It aims to test the pupils' performance on the intended writing skills the study is concerned with

(tense consistency, sentence structure and content related skills). The test (Appendix A) consists of four questions; the first one asked students to write a paragraph where the three kinds of sentences (topic, supporting, and concluding) have to be clear, related, arranged and relevant to the topic. The second question was to write an e-mail. As for the third question, participants have to decide where the mistake is and correct it. The last one was to put the verb in the correct tense.

3.2.1.2. Test Validity

The test was given to a panel of jury in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to judge its validity. The panel of jury agreed that the test is valid and measures the intended skills.

3.2.1.3. Test Reliability

Test retest method was used to get the test reliability. The participants were first tested on the 6th of February 2013. Two weeks later, they were retested. The correlation coefficient was 0.74

3.2.1.4. Pre-testing

The test was administered as a pretest to the control and the experimental groups. A rubric, designed by the researcher, was used to assess the pupils' writing skills. All the paragraphs and e-mails were scored by three raters according to the rubric. Each participant's score was the mean of the three raters' scores (the total score=100). Finally, the Pearson correlation coefficient ascertained that the level of inter-rater reliability is 0.77

Table (2) The Writing Skill Rubric

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Topic & Ending Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> topic sentence is unclearly stated and sentence structure is not correct topic sentence is not restated in the closing sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> topic sentence is unclearly stated but sentence structure is correct topic sentence is unclearly restated in the closing sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> topic sentence is stated with correct sentence structure topic sentence is restated in the closing sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> topic sentence is clearly and articulately stated with correct sentence structure topic sentence is clearly and articulately restated in the closing sentence
Supporting Detail Sentence(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> paragraph has no supporting details sentences do not relate to the main idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> paragraph has one to two supporting details sentences relate back to the main idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> paragraph has three supporting details sentences clearly relate back to the main idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> paragraph has more than three supporting details sentences clearly and articulately relate back to the main idea
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sentences are not organized or relevant to topic writing does not flow or follow order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sentences are somewhat organized and relevant to topic writing somewhat flows and follows some order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sentences are organized and relevant to topic writing flows and follows order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sentences are clearly organized and relevant to topic writing flows logically and follows structured order
Tense Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all sentences are not consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most sentences are not consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some sentences are consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all sentences are consistent

Table (3) showed that there were no significant differences between the two groups.

Table (3): The Significance of Differences between the Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control groups on the Pre-test

Skill	Participants	Mean	SD	t-Value	Significance
Sentence Structure	Experimental Group	18.65	2.960	0.551	Not Significant
	Control Group	18.10	3.338		
Tense consistency	Experimental Group	17.80	3.188	0.492	Not Significant
	Control Group	17.35	2.560		
Content	Experimental Group	17	3.356	0.327	Not Significant
	Control Group	16.7	2.341		
Total	Experimental Group	41.75	12.294	0.503	Not Significant
	Control Group	39.05	12.951		

3.2.2. A Computer Literacy Questionnaire (Appendix B)

3.2.2.1. Description of the Computer Literacy Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 23 statements. It was administered to the participants of the experimental group. The aim of the questionnaire was to find out whether the participants were computer literate or not. Computer literacy is essential for carrying out the wikifolio assessment model. Findings showed that all participants know how to use the computer.

3.2.2.2. Questionnaire Validity

The questionnaire was given to a panel of jury in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to

judge its validity. The panel of jury agreed that the questionnaire is valid and measures the participants' computer literacy.

4. Wikifolio Assessment Model

The main aim of the wikifolio assessment model is to develop first secondary graders' writing skill including the following sub skills: (tense consistency, sentence structure and content related skills). It consists of four procedures: collect, reflect, select and, publish (final draft). As Behzad (2010) points out, the uses and types of electronic portfolios are diverse and multi-faceted, but they all include some degree of self-reflection

4.1. Experimental Procedures

4.1.1. Orientation sessions

These sessions are to prepare participants for the experiment.

First orientation session

In this session, the researcher:

- Explains the importance and the aims of the experiment;
- Indicates what's meant by wikifolios,
- Familiarizes students with general computer usage and basic typing skills.

Second orientation session

The researcher is required to do the following:

- Training students on the basic searching skills, and how to browse the Internet

- Demonstrating what is meant by the wiki and how to use it. Participants are informed that a **wiki** is a collection of Web pages designed to enable anyone with access to contribute or modify content, using a simplified markup language. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites and to power community websites
- Explaining that there is a wiki for each participant which basically contains the program guidelines and the assignments demanded from the students. Each student can log in and read or edit her wiki only by using her username and password. Other students can collaborate by checking each other assignments and the teacher is to check these assignments after their due dates. They can also communicate with each other or with the teacher through the comment box of their wiki.
- Training students on how to access, browse and use their wikis.
- Distributing a paper for each participant. This paper contains her wiki URL as well as her own username and password.

4.1.2. The Process

The experiment consisted of two orientation sessions and four processes. First, participants were asked to write a paragraph each week. Writing genres that will be focused on through the experiment are: description, email, and narration. These are the most commonly used genres in the first secondary graders' English course.

Once participants have uploaded the first draft of the assignment by the due date, the teacher started to provide feedback and edit the paragraph or the e-mail. Participants were asked to read the instructor's response and comments and begin modifying the first draft. They also received feedback from their peers. By means of these comments, participants could gain their strong and weak points in these aspects of writing. Then, they were asked to reflect on or self-assess their writing and evaluate it. Once they have made all the changes they wish to make, participants uploaded the new draft. The final draft was assessed using the rubric in the editing checklist. This rubric was also used to rate students' writing for both pre-test and post-test.

Wikis allowed unlimited uploads so instructors could ask students to revise their writing much more often. At the end of the experiment, the students in the experimental group were asked to choose two out of four of their best writings for final evaluation.

5. Findings and Discussion

The writing test was administered as a post test to both groups. The researcher and another scorer used the rubric to rate students' answers.

Table (4) indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group. It shows that the participants of the experimental group outperformed those of the

control group regarding all the writing skills which the study is concerned with.

Table (4): The Significance of Differences between the Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control groups on the Post test

Skill	Participants	Mean	SD	t-Value	Significance
Sentence structure	Experimental Group	21.20	2.261	7.582	Significant
	Control Group	14.95	2.910		
Tense consistency	Experimental Group	20.60	2.500	6.818	Significant
	Control Group	14.65	2.996		
Content	Experimental Group	20.65	2.254	7.736	Significant
	Control Group	14.10	3.041		
Total	Experimental Group	78.55	10.292	9.623	Significant
	Control Group	42.80	13.040		

These findings might be due to the following:

1. Wikifolios encourage students to think about their writing and become active and self-reliant learners and assessors.
2. Participants can use the wikifolio anytime and anywhere. They are not limited to write at a certain time or place. No pressure is loaded on them.
3. As participants collect their writings, they create an arena for discussion and planning in which they and their advisors can easily access and refer to information.

4. Students and advisors can view the body of work and how the pieces fit together. This one-step organization makes it easier for participants and advisors to track progress and identify areas that need attention.
5. Wikifolios facilitate deeper communications between advisor and student.
6. The student can get a wider view of her writing from the teacher and peers. This makes her easily realize her mistakes.
7. The student has the facility of editing his writing many times in an easy and quick way.

The results of quantitative data analysis show that wikifolio assessment had a positively significant effect on students' overall writing. It shows that the combination of the portfolio scores and the writing test scores to assess the participants' writing performance and growth can be beneficial. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of earlier research conducted by Aly (2002), Elahinia (2004), Al-Serhani (2007), Yurdabakan and Erdogan's (2009), Behzad (2010), and Fahim & Jalili (2013) which indicated that portfolio assessment had a positively significant effect on students' language skills.

6. Conclusion

The current study aims to investigate the effect of Wikifolios on developing EFL writing skills of secondary stage students. Forty first year secondary students were randomly divided into two groups:

experimental (n=20) and control (n=20). The experimental group used Wikifolios assessment in EFL writing while the control group underwent the traditional approach of writing assessment. The result of statistical analysis indicated that students in the experimental group outperformed those in control group in their writing skills.

Based on the findings of the current study, wikifolio assessment technique has a significant positive effect on EFL learners' overall writing ability and its sub-skills. It is an effective instructional technique as well as assessment tool. In addition, wikifolio assessment offers authentic information about the progress of students and helped to overcome their writing anxiety in L2. A positive correlation appeared in the wikifolio in relation to the English writing test. Using this technique allowed students to create a bridge between their teacher and themselves. The teacher can use portfolio assessment technique to analyze student growth and use the information for decision making regarding future instruction.

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The Effectiveness of Using Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in Developing ESP Learners' Some English Writing Sub-Skills

Dr. Tariq M. El-Ghonaimy

TEFL Lecturer, Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction

Faculty of Education, Kafr Elsheikh University, Egypt

Abstract

This study was conducted to explore the effectiveness of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) on the development of some English writing sub-skills (paragraph, grammar, spelling, punctuations) of ESP University students of Engineering. Participants of the current study were 38 students, divided into two groups (experimental and control), with 19 each. Being pre-tested, no significant difference existed between the groups. After the treatment (teaching & learning writing sub-skills) by using the CALL, only to the experimental group, while the regular method was applied to the control one. The findings revealed that the experimental group in post-tests outperformed the control group in 3 CALL writing sub-skills (paragraph grammar and punctuation), whereas in the spelling skill, no considerable difference existed between the two groups. The study suggests that CALL English writing sub-skills could be more functional and beneficial both linguistically and socially if, as much as possible, highly-prepared computer software learning programs as Computer-Assisted Writing (CAW), and well trained English learners are more integrated.

Keywords : *cooperative assisted language learning, computer assisted writing, writing sub-skills, English for specific purposes.*

Introduction:

Technology has become an inseparable part of today's world and this is quite obvious in the field of foreign language instruction. Its use in teaching and learning English has actually dominated the pedagogical debates and discussions and made the luminaries and pedagogues in the area investigate the possible positive outcomes of its application of modern technologies in such a way to bring about interactive, interesting and dynamic outcomes. Obviously, the skill of English writing with the help of modern computer software has been essential in English language instruction especially with the incorporation of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) into the ELT curriculum. Actually CALL is meant to supplement face to face language instruction and not to replace it.

Plainly, English language E-learning laboratories are supposed to be equipped with the most up-to-date hardware and software in addition to availability of internet connection. Testing, dictionaries, sending and receiving from and to lab-learners are available to enable the instructor to control and display what he plans in his instruction. Many studies indicate that CALL provides an innovative and effective alternative for language instructors (Warshauer and Healey, 1998; Stepp Greany, 2002).

Furthermore, CALL would allow learners to progress at their own pace and work individually to

solve learning problems, provide immediate feedback, allow learners to know whether their answers are correct or not, and provide them with the correct answer if they are mistaken. Undoubtedly, English writing plays fundamental intercultural and transnational roles in business, and governmental activities across the world's geography (Parks, 2000; Thatcher, 2000). Writing has been called the core of education and the path of language learning. Kroll (2003) believes that writing is an integral part of the higher education system in the United States, while Leki (2003) is of the opinion that writing plays "a major gate – keeping role in professional advancement " in academic writing. (p. 324). Generally, learning to write a language successfully is viewed as a proof of actual acquiring that language. Nitta (2004) concluded that the concept of fluency includes the components of organization, grammar and vocabulary in communication not simply the number of words produced in a given period of time.

Recently, educators as well as CALL researchers have found out that CALL offers a technology that facilitates all levels of education (Chapelle, 2001; Stepp-Greany, 2002; Perez-Sotelo and Gonzalez-Bueno, 2003).

In fact, many researchers (Nichols; Cobine, 1997; Ho, 2000; Sullivan & Lindgren, 2002) revealed that computer-assisted instruction (CAI) has become one of the aspects that characterizes writing courses in the

last two decades. Furthermore, meaningful texts can be produced by learners as their writing production increases by using computer (Puccio, 1993 & Forman, 1998). They added : “with word processing systems, classroom learners can edit and check written texts. Additionally, CAW[Computer-Assisted Writing], is a word processor program of the CALL implicational methods that help learners to improve FL writing.”

The study of Cunningham (2000) concluded that his students found that his writing class was more productive when he used word processing software with his students. He surveyed 37 EFL students in his writing class to study the students’ attitudes towards using computers in their writing. Eighty eight % of them proved that using a word processor during the writing process helped them to concentrate on certain aspects of their writing sub-skills such as grammar, vocabulary and organization of structure of their text. Similarly, Kasper (2000) reported similar results in his study which highlights the useful role of the computer technology in developing writing skill of EFL students.

Obviously, the benefits of CALL in general and CAW in particular are numerous. Motivation, can be promoted in learners by personalizing information, having animated objects on the screen, and providing practice activities which incorporate challenge, curiosity and providing a context. Additionally, being able to control the pace of learning and making choices in what and how to learn would in turn make learners

feel more competent in learning. CALL also can provide a merit which is authenticity, the opportunity to interact in one or more of the four language skills by using or producing texts for an audience of the target language, not the classroom because surface errors do not matter so much. Critical thinking skills can be developed together with self-concept, mastery of basic skills, better writing communication which may result in higher-order thinking skills and better recall.

To facilitate and fasten writing practice, a variety of techniques, strategies and activities are needed as Brown (2001) argues that written products are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills, skills that are developed naturally by every speaker... pedagogy focuses on how to generate ideas, and how to organize them coherently. Again Brown (2001, 339) asserts that producing an English writing requires a mutual exchange of ideas between students themselves instead of a compulsory imposition of the teacher's authoritative ideas. This requires –as the researcher views - a negotiable process of composing ideas development in a logical, argumentative, cause and effect or narrative style. This seems to be practical and in line with Brown (2001) who asserts that one should not “buy into the myth that writing is a solitary activity.”

Clearly, media resources are part of the technology which can be helpful in language instruction. Furthermore, literature on the classroom interaction

has shown a profound impact of the instructional materials in the learning process. Chance and Chance (2002: 165), for instance, assert that communication research proves the saying that 'actions speak louder than words' which means that learners must be involved in hands-on activities in order to learn effectively.

A number of individual strategies were suggested by Brown (2002) in order to encourage EFL learners to improve their English learning output. One of them was the use of the internet which is an amazing source for language practice. Today about 80 percent of all World Wide Web (www) sites around the world are in English - so wherever you are - if you have a computer, you can easily find English on the internet. Similarly, Mupinga and Busby (2011: 94) in their study about online games and simulations as instructional strategies for learning, claimed that "in the future, if children are sheltered from technology, they will be left behind. Thus, the current challenge EFL instructors face is to take advantage of the potentials of the internet and to determine when and how to queer it to match the benefits of the instructional aims".

How to integrate and incorporate the internet language classroom effectively is still incomplete fully the case that needs limitless efforts of researches. According to her study, Beauvois (1998) found that students in the network writing project displayed more

fluidity of conversation, more use of complex sentences, and more self-disclosure. Additionally, she found that the elimination of strong teacher dominance freed students to express themselves, resulting in a larger quantity and better quality of communication. Furthermore, Priemer and Ploog's (2007) research findings verified parts of the hypothesis that writing with external source of information is like the use of internet that has epistemic effects and that students with basic writing skills and little prior knowledge benefited most from writing tasks. Additionally, the internet as Singhal (1997) remarked, can retrieve and access information in addition to the communication benefits. In fact, the World Wide Web is therefore a virtual library at one's fingertips. Virtually, understanding a culture of a society is understanding its language and this is what the internet actually does. Furthermore, the internet can facilitate the acquisition of English language writing skills in general and English for specific purposes (ESP) in particular, which is the focus of the present study, whose participants are students of the Institute of *Technology and Engineering* with the aim of improving their writing sub-skills with the help of the use of the internet as a means of ESP instruction.

Research problem

Being a productive skill, writing requires recalling personal stored background knowledge of all language aspects and then composing and producing a practical relevance of a written piece in order to be read by others again comprehensibly. For ESP Egyptian

students, English learning skills, particularly writing, are given less attention in theory and practice. Further, limited command of vocabulary, paragraph development writing skills and usage of grammar add greater challenges to this dilemma. This led the researcher to tackle this problem. CAW seems to be valuable to help solve the writing sub-skills for ESP students.

Research questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of using the CAW as a means of teaching writing to ESP students. Therefore, the questions of the study could be formulated as follows:

1. Does computer-assisted EFL instruction have a positive impact on Egyptian ESP University students' writing in general and on specific writing sub-skills such as paragraph, spelling and correcting grammar in particular?
2. What are the areas of improvement in the ESP students' writing that could be due to the effect of using the CALL as a means of instruction?

Research hypothesis

The present study investigated the following hypothesis:

There would be no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group (taught writing sub-skills: spelling, paragraph

and grammar correction by CALL) and the control group taught conventionally.

Method and procedures

The present study was carried out at *Institute of Technology and Engineering*. Participants were 38 ESP Freshmen students who were randomly assigned to two groups, (experimental and control), 19 each.

The treatment

The treatment consisted of two levels:

- a. Using computers (CALL) alongside the conventional methods for the experimental group for three-3 hours. periods a week for eight week duration in the second term and;
- b. The conventional method alone for the control group. Both groups were pre-tested immediately before starting the experiment and the same test was administered as a post-test immediately after it.

The participants in this study consisted of 38 ESP students chosen randomly through the statistical package SPSS. They were assigned into experimental and control groups of 19 ones each.

In order to answer the study questions, the researcher collected the students' writing responses alongside their writing home-assignment. During the first term, free topics writings were required that appealed to their interest whose writing could be enhanced. Students' benefits would be maximized

positively through sometimes working in groups or pairs to discuss and edit their writing tasks.

Results of the study

Descriptive statistics was used. Table (1) displays the means and standard deviations (SD) of both groups' (experimental & control) achievement in the pre-test.

Table (1): Means and standard deviations in pre-test of both groups

Source of variation	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
Pre-test	Experimental	19	10.61	3.11	1.10	0.201
	Control	19	9.38	3.8		

Findings reveal that the two groups were equal in terms of their writing ability on their pre-test. Differences between the two groups in the pre-test and post-test achievements(before and after the treatments) are shown in the following table (2).

Table (2): Means and standard deviations in pre/post-test of both groups

Group	N	Source of variance	Mean	SD
Experimental	19	Pre-test	10.61	3.11
		Post-test	21.03	4.22
Control	19	Pre-test	9.38	3.80
		Post-test	14.21	2.99

The two phases (pre-post testing) are revealed to indicate considerable differences between the two groups. Additionally, the above table (2) displays that both groups' writing skills improved weather they were

taught by CALL method or by the teacher-driven (traditional) method. These considerable differences are most likely due to the instructions of writing received by these groups.

The following five Tables (3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) reveal the four writing sub-skills abilities (paragraph writing, grammar, spelling and punctuation) which the ESP subjects received. The fifth table (7) displays the overall means and standard deviations of the four writing sub-skills of pre/post-tests of both groups.

Table (3): Overall means & standard deviations of writing sub-skills of pre/post tests of both groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD
Experimental	19	20.28	3.01
Control	19	16.71	2.28

Table (4): Means & standard deviations in paragraph writing of both groups

Source of variance	Group	N	Mean	SD
Paragraph writing	Experimental	19	5.20	3.55
	Control	19	4.02	2.61

Table (5): Means and standard deviations in grammar writing for both groups

Source of variance	Group	N	Mean	SD
Grammar	Experimental	19	6.22	3.78
	Control	19	4.41	2.28

Table (6) : Means and standard deviations in spelling of both groups

Source of variance	Group	N	Mean	SD
Spelling	Experimental	19	3.65	2.44
	Control	19	4.37	2.74

Table (7) :Means and standard deviations in punctuations of both groups

Source of variance	Group	N	Mean	SD
Punctuation	Experimental	19	5.21	3.71
	Control	19	3.90	2.82

According to the four above tables, findings can be analyzed as follows:

1. As for paragraph writing, the experimental group achieved higher mean scores than the control group as the mean score was 5.20 for the experimental group, while, it was 4.02 for the control group (Table 4).
2. As for the Grammar skill, the experimental group achieved higher than the other group. The mean score was 6.22, while it was 4.41 for the control group (Table 5)
3. As for the spelling skill in writing, the experimental group achieved almost the same results as the control group did. The mean score of the experimental group was 3.65, while it was 4.37 for the control group, (Table 6).
4. As for the punctuation skill in writing, the experimental group achieved higher than the one of the control group. The mean score was 5.21, while it was 3.90 for the other group.
- 5.

Generally, this reveals that the CALL method of writing of this sample was more effective than the regular method in paragraph writing skill, grammar

skill and punctuation skill whereas in the spelling skill, no considerable difference existed between the two groups. Discussion of these findings are as follows:

Discussion of the results

Findings of this study indicate that CALL writing sub-skills (paragraph, grammar, punctuation) could be more effective than the regular method for teaching English writing. Additionally, spelling skill improvement via computer teaching had the same effect on the regular one and the experimental group seemed to benefit largely from using computers in learning writing sub-skills.

Unlike the regular method in the writing skill learning, CALL enabled the learner to get feedback from linguistic repertoire available in the word processor easily. Clearly, the software is able to give comments on errors made by users and provides suggestions for checking and correcting linguistic errors which occurred in writing.

On the other hand, students of the control group did better in spelling than the experimental group. This could be so because the ESP students were beginners (they were in the first year) of their university education. They preferred checking their misspelled words with the help of their lecturers through the conventional method of instruction which was based on recognizable memorable drills and exercises. These findings seem to be in line with some previous studies

of Cohen and Riel (1989), Cononelos & Oliva (1993), Brock (1995), Alsouki (2001), Cunningham (2002) and Gayle Davidson-Shiever, Nowlin and Lanouette (2002).

It is worth noting that the overall mean score of the four sub-skills on the pre-test was (16.71), while on the post-test was (20.28). Thus, it seems that the computer has a significant role in English learning which, in certain cases could improve the writing sub-skills. This is in agreement with Puccio, (1993), Chapple, (2001), Cohen, (1989) Muir,(2004), and Szendeffy(2008).

In general, the results proved that there were significant differences <0.05 between students' writing sub-skills on all sub skills in favor of post-test except of English spelling. This could be again due to their inexperience in ESP English as they, for the first time, learned it in an Engineering study.

Recommendations and Educational Implications

1. ESP students could benefit more from studying writing sub-skills with the aid of computers CALL.
2. ESP students may be more interested and self-directed to use computers to improve their English writing according to the user's pace, even at home.
3. ESP students should be more encouraged to use recent CALL over checking programs to have an easy access to the most beneficial linguistic

features in the feedback process, checking, evaluating and correcting errors.

4. Appropriate exercises carefully selected in the computer are badly needed to be used which are commensurate with the level of ESP students, so our expectations of benefits may be maximized.

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Engagement: A Path to Better EFL Learning

Dr. Ahmed H. Seifeddin

Professor of Curriculum and Instruction (EFL),
Faculty of Education, Menofia University

When it is said that someone is "engaged", the term is used to mean that he\she is involved at a deep level. Synonyms may include absorbed, engrossed, interested, and involved. Engagement is now at the center of mainstream education discussion and debate. It is now identified as an important precursor to student learning.

Origin of Student Engagement

The term dates back to 1930s when Dewey's notion of experiential learning appeared. Dewey emphasized that learners are actively involved in the learning process; that is, they learn by doing. Freire (1970) insisted that learners' lives and issues must always be the content of literacy instruction. Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development posited that when teachers structure learning opportunities at the appropriate level and with the right support, students become engaged in learning. Wenger (1998) described situated learning as an apprenticeship process that takes place within a community. Novice learners learn by observing others, being coached and nurtured by more expert peers, and practicing what they have learned in a supportive environment. Related work by Wenger (2006) describes communities of

practice or “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 1). An adult ESL classroom can be viewed as a community of practice, where teachers and students learn from one another and all participants are engaged (Taylor, Abasi, Pinsent-Johnson, & Evans, 2007; Warriner, 2010).

Definition of the term "engagement"

It is difficult to define "engagement" as it is not a simple construct. Multiple factors are at play when students fully engaged their learning. It is considered as a multidimensional construct. Harris' (2008) extensive review of student engagement explains the challenge: "While there is general agreement that student engagement produces positive outcomes, defining the concept is problematic as there is disagreement about what counts as student engagement" (p. 58). The following are some of the definitions of the term engagement:

1. Natriello (1984) defines learning engagement as a student's voluntary participation and willingness to take part in activities designed as part of the learning program which leads to better acquisition of focal knowledge or skills.
2. Nystrand & Gamoran (1991) used student engagement to refer to students' willingness to participate in routine school activities such as attending classes, submitting required work, and following teachers' directions in class.

3. Engagement versus disaffection in school refers to the intensity and emotional quality of children's involvement in initiating and carrying out learning activities ...Children who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest (Skinner & Belmont, 1993, p. 572)
4. Willms (2003) used the term engagement to refer to the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, and participate in academic and non-academic school activities.
5. The amount of time and effort students spend on academic as well as other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success.

Dimensions and/or types of engagement

Meyer and Turner (2006) explored the concept of engagement and also added **emotional engagement** to the equation when they suggest "engaging students in learning requires positive emotional experiences, which contribute to a classroom climate that forms the foundation for teacher-student relationships and interactions necessary for motivation to learn" (p. 377).

Dunleavy (2008) defines three combined types of student engagement:

Behavioral: value of schooling outcomes, participation in extracurricular and non-academic school activities, attendance .

Academic-Cognitive: time-on-task, homework completion, response to challenges in learning, effort directed toward learning, cognition and strategic learning.

Social-Psychological: sense of belonging, relationships, perception of capacity for success/sense of competence, motivation, interest, need for choice and autonomy (p. 23).

Harris (2008) defined engagement in two hierarchical categories – **Procedural and Substantive**. Procedural engagement loosely correlates to behavioral engagement, occurring when students complete class activities and homework. Substantive engagement describes aspects of psychological and cognitive engagement, happening when students commit to academic study.

Willms, Friesen, Milton (2009, p. 7) added other dimensions of engagement:

Social Engagement – a sense of belonging and participation in school life

Academic Engagement: participation in the formal requirements of schooling

Intellectual Engagement: a serious emotional and cognitive investment in learning, using higher order thinking skills (such as analysis and evaluation), to increase understanding, solve complex problems, or construct new knowledge.

According to Harris (2011), student engagement is often presented within academic literature as a meta-construct with two to four dimensions. Constructs frequently draw on **behavioral**, **academic**, **psychological**, and **cognitive** dimensions of engagement, each of which is described in turn.

Much research focuses almost exclusively on **behavioral** engagement, typically used to measure student involvement in school. It is often quantified by examining pupils' attendance, compliance with school rules, and active participation in classroom and extracurricular activities. **Academic** engagement is evidenced by time spent doing schoolwork in school or at home, academic credits accrued, and homework completed. The final two dimensions, psychological and cognitive engagement, are more abstract and difficult to quantify, which is perhaps why they are examined less frequently in research. Some prefer to use the less theoretically laden term **emotional** engagement instead of **psychological** engagement to describe affective factors like interest, enjoyment, support, belonging, and attitudes towards school, learning, teachers, and peers. **Cognitive** engagement relates to

students' personal investment in learning, including goal-setting, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, commitment to mastery learning, and use of learning strategies.

Cognitive or meta-cognitive engagement is yet another factor. Chapman (2003) shares Pintrich & De Groot's (1990) and Pintrich & Schrauben's (1992) definitions, which hint at a hierarchical nature to engagement as they associated engagement levels with students' use of cognitive, meta-cognitive, and self-regulatory strategies to monitor and guide their learning processes. In this view, student engagement is viewed as motivated behavior that can be indexed by the kinds of cognitive strategies students choose to use simple or "surface" processing strategies such as rehearsal versus "deeper" processing strategies such as elaboration and by their willingness to persist with difficult tasks by regulating their own learning behavior.

Debate exists over whether all dimensions of engagement should be investigated simultaneously as each relates to a unique aspect of student experience or if some are more worthy of investigation than others in relation to specific outcomes. Glanville and Wildhagen (2007) argue that while one dimension might help prevent early school leaving, another may lead to improved achievement scores. Their perspective appears plausible in relation to commonly cited goals

for student engagement: positive social outcomes and student learning.

Importance of Engagement

Student engagement is generally considered to be among the better predictors of learning and personal development. The premise is deceptively simple, perhaps self-evident: The more students study or practice a subject, the more they tend to learn about it. Likewise, the more students practice and get feedback on their writing, analyzing, or problem solving, the more adept they should become (Kuh, 2003). The very act of being engaged also adds to the foundation of skills and dispositions that is essential to live a productive and satisfying life after college. That is, students who are involved in educationally productive activities in college are developing habits of the mind and heart that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development (Shulman, 2002). It is clearly indicated that student engagement contributes to more favorable outcomes for college students.

A review of related literature and studies reveals that engagement has various positive effects and outcomes. Engagement is positively correlated with:

1. Learning effectiveness and satisfaction (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Benbunan-Fich & Hiltz, 2003)
2. Improved academic achievement (Finn & Rock, 1997; Marks, 2000; Fredricks et al, 2004; Greenwood et al., 2002)

3. Higher school completion rates (Finn, 1989)
4. Increased student sense of belonging in schools and other social institutions. (Willms, 2003)
5. Better academic performance (Burrows, 2010),
6. Improved knowledge acquisition(Chen et al., 2010),
7. Motivation (Scott & Walczak, 2009)

Learners who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest. The opposite of engagement is disaffection. Disaffected learners are passive, do not try hard, and give up easily in the face of challenges. They can be bored, depressed, anxious, or even angry about their presence in the classroom; they can be withdrawn from learning opportunities or even rebellious towards teachers and classmates. (Skinner & Belmont, 1993)

Effective learning requires students to engage proactively in learning activities. According to the experiential learning theory (Kolb, Rubin, Osland, 1990), people learn by doing; that is, by engaging in learning activities, students internalize what they learn and can absorb and reflect on the learning experience.

Students engage more in learning activities when they are active learners and take charge of their learning, which leads to favorable learning outcomes. By deeply engaging in learning, students undertake more effort to meet the learning requirements and accomplish the learning goal by acquiring focal knowledge or skills. In light of engagement theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998), learning engagement is essential for effective learning; as a result, students who proactively engage in learning activities are more likely to consider their learning effective than those not engaging in such activities, regard-less of the medium.

Several studies (Akey, 2006; Carini et al., 2006 ; Christenson et al., 2012; Orji, 2011; Taylor et al., 2011) have described students' involvement in the learning process and its relation to academic achievement and attitude. They used the term "student engagement" to connote not only students' attention in class but also their cognitive, psychological and social involvement or efforts/pursuits in learning task. Akey (2006) explored the influence of student engagement and perceived academic competence on achievement in reading and mathematics. He found that both engagement in school and students' perception of their own academic competence positively influenced achievement in mathematics for high school students. Similarly, Carini et al. (2006) found many measures of student engagement positively (though weakly, correlated with such desirable learning outcomes as

critical thinking and grades. Student engagement does not only prevent dropout but improves learning outcomes (Christenson et al., 2012). Thus ‘according to Taylor et al. (2011), we need to change how we teach and what we teach in order to encourage student engagement.

Indicators of Engagement

Encouraging or fostering student engagement is predicated upon the understanding and operationalization of student engagement. While referring to students' engagement as their mental and social participation in learning tasks, Orji (2011) operationalized it with **sociological factors** of feeling, belonging, cooperation and group work; **psychological factors** of interest, personality and motivation; and situational factor (institutional classroom variables). This was based on the assertion that human is made up of cognition, that is, has cognitive ability, and is a social being (Piaget, 1978; Knowles, 1978). **Sociological indicators** of student engagement include cooperation, „involvement“, „participation‘ taking-part-in“ and „attendance“ in an organized social activity, influenced by the need to be part of an activity (pressure from peers, expectations and values) (Cangelosi, 1993; Courtney, 1989 in Orji, 2011). Other studies (Appleton et al., 2006 & 2008) focused on **psychological indicators** (interest personality, motivation (such as „interest“, „personality“, „motivation“ „involvement“, „attentiveness“, „student initiative „curiosity“, and „enthusiasm“. There are also

studies (Cangelosi, 2008 ;Smith et al., 2005) that focused on **ecological, situational or institutional** explanation of student engagement. They highlighted the importance of a conducive classroom climate and instructional management procedures for the promotion of students' task engagement.

Greenwood, Horton and Utley (2002) identified engagement behaviors in students as participating in a task, talking about academics, and asking and answering questions. Also, these behaviors lend themselves to social engagement like participation in the classroom community and cooperative learning.

Language-related engagement

Language-related engagement is a kind of engagement that has been discussed in the sociocultural literature. As Ohta (2001) argued, engagement can be with the language itself. Evidence for language-related engagement is noted in individual learners' speech activity, in which they repeat to themselves or respond vicariously to others' questions and statements about "pieces of linguistic data." For example, verb endings, grammatical particles, or lexical items that are of current concern or interest are selected by the individual learner. In this case, learners can be more or less committed as a function of how much discursive work they display. Similarly, Donato (1994) found that his students, working in groups to plan a scenario, frequently attended to linguistic form as they planned what to say, while Swain and Lapkin (2000) found

learners similarly engaged with language in their dictagloss tasks. These researchers also found evidence for development of the linguistic system associated with their learners' work on that system.

Concerning the relationship between engagement and EFL learning, many studies have shown the importance of engagement in language acquisition (Kuiken & Vedder, 2002 ; Leow, 1997; Qi & Lapkin; 2001; Schmidt, 1993; Storch, 2008). Weldin (2011) confirmed that English language learners lack engagement toward academic content. Even with services such as pull-out ESL, ELLs are lacking in engagement during their time in the general education classroom.

EFL Reading Engagement (Engaged Reading)

Reading engagement refers to the joint functioning of motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interaction during literacy activities (Guthrie & Anderson, 1990). This means that reading involves more than cognitive skills. Baker, Dreher, Guthrie (2000) indicated that the engagement perspective is appealing because it integrates cognitive, motivational, and social dimensions of reading and reading instruction. Students are engaged readers when they read frequently for interest, enjoyment, and learning. The heart of engagement is the desire to gain new knowledge of a topic, to follow the excitement of a narrative, to expand one's experience through print. Engaged readers can find books of personal significance

and make time for reading them. Engaged readers draw on knowledge gained from previous experiences to construct new understandings, and they use cognitive strategies to regulate comprehension so that goals are met and interests are satisfied. Benefits to readers may also occur through their satisfaction in possessing valued information about a topic that plays a central role in their sense of self. Engaged readers are curious and involved in a literate lifestyle.

To promote engaged reading, instructional contexts must be well-designed: "In an engaged classroom, reading lessons are designed to develop long-term motivation, knowledge, social competence, and reading skill." (Guthrie & Anderson, 1990:37).

Guthrie and Knowles (2001) confirmed that motivation and engagement are necessary components in the reading process and the development of students' ESL reading skills and argue that there are "several dimensions" that need to be addressed in order to enhance motivation and engagement with reading texts and tasks. These include providing students with "(a) conceptual themes, (b) real-world interactions, (c) support for self-direction, (d) using interesting texts, (e) cognitive strategy instruction, (f) social collaboration, and (g) supporting students' self-expression".

EFL learners will therefore be engaged with the reading texts and tasks if teachers provide opportuni-

ties for assimilation and accommodation of new information with prior schemata, make real-world connections between the text, tasks and the learners' world, provide explicit instruction in strategy use, allow students to collaborate with others, allow learners to take responsibility for their own learning and provide opportunities for learners to engage in self-expression and reflection regarding the texts. This is supported by Conrad and Donaldson (2004) as they emphasize that engaged reading, which leads to engaged learning, is defined as “a collaborative learning process in which the instructor and learner are partners in building the knowledge” (p. ix), which means that when learning is interactive, “learners are actively engaged in a variety of activities, and along with peers and the teacher, they are co-constructors of knowledge” (p. 3).

This type of learning and co-construction of knowledge occurs, as Neal and Miller (2006) state, when students are “meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others on relevant and authentic tasks requiring cognitive processes such as creating, problem solving, reasoning, decision making, and evaluation” (p.337) A few characteristics of engaged learning, identified by Conrad and Donaldson (2004) include that (i) engaged learning is focused on the learner; (ii) that each learner's knowledge and actions contribute to both individual and community knowledge and (iii) that learners have to be active participants in the learning situation (p.5-7) .

Engaged reading, leading to engaged learning described above, also include as Guthrie & Knowles (2001) mention, “the fusion of cognitive strategies, conceptual knowledge, and motivational goals during reading” (p. 159). This means that engaged readers can also be characterized as being "intrinsically motivated to read for the knowledge and enjoyment it provides while employing various reading strategies" in order to facilitate reading comprehension (Guthrie & Cox, 2001, p. 284). The teaching of reading skills and strategies can, as such, then not successfully occur without finding a way to increase students' engagement level with the reading texts and tasks and to a certain extent, this can be addressed by creating a learning environment and presenting reading related tasks that cater to initiating and maintaining increased engagement levels.

Guthrie and Cox (2001) emphasize the importance of creating a learning context that would facilitate and sustain these higher levels of engagement as well, and suggest that it could be done through : (a) identifying a knowledge goal and announcing it; (b) providing a brief real-world experience related to the learning goal; (c) making trade books and multiple resources available; (d) giving students some choice about the subtopics and texts for learning; (e) teaching cognitive strategies that empower students to succeed in reading these texts; (f) assuring social collaboration for learning; and (g) aligning evaluation of student work with the context (e.g., grading students for progress towards the learning and knowledge goals) (p. 299-300).

EFL Writing Engagement

Dořnyei (2001) pointed out that engagement is an essential element of successful language acquisition and is a dynamic process subject to continuous flux. Lo & Hyland (2007) indicated that one way of enhancing students' motivation and engagement to write in EFL is to provide opportunities for them to engage at a more meaningful level with the language through refocusing their writing classes to make them relevant to their social and cultural context as well as designing writing tasks which have meaning and interest to them and offer opportunities for social interaction and self-expression.

Williams and Burden (1997) suggest that each individual L2 learner's motivation and engagement is influenced by both external factors related to the socio-cultural and contextual background of the learner and internal factors related to the individual learner. Internal factors include the learners' attitudes towards the activity, its intrinsic interest, and the perceived relevance and value of the activity. Motivation and engagement are also influenced by learners' sense of agency and feelings of mastery and control over the learning activity and their interest in it. According to Noels (2001), three psychological needs have to be met in order to enhance motivation and engagement: "(1) a sense of competency achieved through seeking out and overcoming challenges; (2) autonomy; (3) relatedness—being connected to and esteemed by others belonging

to a larger social whole" (p. 54). To increase intrinsic EFL motivation and engagement, Oldfather and West (1999) argue that "a sense of self-worth and self-determination are essential, and learners need to be given ample opportunities for social interaction and self-expression" (p. 16). Richards (1993) also mentions "personal causation", "interest," and "enjoyment" as indispensable factors.

Many researches confirmed that engagement is highly correlated with positive EFL learning outcomes, especially the writing skill. For example, Weldin (2011) observed the relationship between students' level of engagement and the quality of their EFL written work, attending to the teacher, following directions, participation in the learning tasks, and completing the tasks.

Engagement at the level of EFL syntax

Ansarin & Mohamadi (2013) investigated language related engagement on the basis of metatalk; talk about the language, and task typology. They indicated that task-based instruction is considered as the one of the most effective way to learn a language, it is oversimplified on various grounds especially in teachers' implementation of the approach in practical terms. Different variables may affect how students are engaged with the language and also with the task. Eighty EFL intermediate participants were assigned to four homogeneous groups on the basis of their proficiency level. The groups were given four different

types of the tasks namely; jigsaw, dictogloss, test reconstruction, and translation in order to examine the role of metatalk and task-typology in the creation of language engagement opportunity. Participants' language related engagement was measured by evaluating syntactic devices used in language related episodes in their performances. The statistical analysis revealed that there were significant differences across groups. Specifically, the translation task had the most potential for creating language engagement opportunity and jigsaw task created the least language engagement opportunity. It is concluded that task implementation and task design affect learners' language engagement at the level of syntax.

Some Engagement Instructional Approaches and Methods

According to Miller (2010, pp.2-6), instruction, when planned according to learners' needs and goals in mind, should enable students to learn from one another, tap into their life experiences, and challenge their varying levels. To achieve this end, teachers should use engagement-raising approaches and methods. Examples are task-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, literature circles, and classroom-based assessment. These approaches and/or methods will be discussed below in the following section.

Task-Based Learning

Task has been defined in various ways in the language learning literature (Ellis, 2003), yet there is

agreement among researchers that tasks that promote language learning (Ellis, 2000):

1. Involve a real-world problem;
2. Are authentic; that is, “designed to instigate the same kind of interactional processes, such as the negotiation of meaning, scaffolding, inferencing, and monitoring, that arise in naturally occurring language use” (Ellis, 2009, p. 227);
3. Are cognitively complex; that is, “are context-free (in the sense that the task does not provide context and support for communication) and involve considerable detail” (Ellis, 2000, p. 8)
4. Require a two-way exchange of information, rather than a one-way exchange (i.e., both participants in the task seek, give, and receive information);
5. Require interactive communication rather than simple description; and
6. Lead to a specific outcome (e.g., a product is made by one student following the instructions of another).

Tasks can be structured for an entire class, small groups, or pairs and can focus on listening, speaking, reading, writing, or an integration of skills. Ellis (2009) explained that tasks can be either focused or unfocused. In a focused task, learners use specific language (e.g., prepositions of place by giving directions to a partner, who draws items in a picture; “The vase is on the coffee table”). In an unfocused task, learners use language for

general communication (e.g., interview one another to get acquainted and report back to the class).

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning focuses on learning through solving real, open-ended problems to which there are no fixed solutions (Ertmer, Lehman, Park, Cramer, & Grove, 2003). Problems can be taken from real-life news stories, generated by students themselves, and developed from realia, such as brochures about emergency preparedness, flyers advertising housing opportunities, and reports from community meetings. Students work in pairs or groups to understand the problem and then to find possible solutions to it .

Recent research reviews indicate that problem-based learning can lead to long-term learning outcomes, whereas traditional instruction leads to slightly better performance on short-term learning as measured on standardized tests (Strobel & van Barneveld, 2009; Walker & Leary, 2009). Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, and Chinn (2007) cite evidence that problem-based learning is particularly effective in increasing engagement and reducing the achievement gap among marginalized groups in K-12 settings, including English language learners. Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006) caution, however, that learners new to this instructional approach require more guidance (direct instruction) than do more experienced learners. This caution should also be applied to learners with limited

English language and literacy. While there is no research on problem-based learning in adult EFL contexts, the evidence in K-12 and post-secondary education provides support for its use with adults learning English.

Problem-based learning is characterized by the following elements :

1. The focus is on real-world problems that require critical thinking skills, collaboration with others, reflection, and application of solutions if possible (Savery, 2006)
2. Students are responsible for their own involvement and learning.
3. Teachers serve as facilitators of learning rather than knowledge providers.
- 4.

The steps in carrying out a problem-solving activity include identifying the problem, exploring what is known and what is not known about it, generating possible solutions, considering the consequences of the different solutions, and selecting the most viable one (Mathews-Aydlini, 2006).

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning focuses on real-world problems, issues, and contexts (Alan & Stoller, 2005); promotes use of all four language modalities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); and may include explicit focus on form. It is similar to problem-based learning in that it engages learners in authentic

communication with team members and is learner-centered and teacher-facilitated. Completion of projects typically requires learners to use language in a variety of ways to collaborate on a plan, negotiate tasks, contribute ideas and constructive criticism, assess progress, and achieve consensus on various issues that are important to the learners' lives. Unlike problem-based learning, which focuses on discussing and solving a problem, project-based learning focuses on developing a product, such as a group presentation, class newspaper, or cookbook of recipes from each student's native culture (Starr, 2005). Other projects to use with adults learning English might include creating oral histories; designing books for children in the family; writing short plays, skits, or poetry; surveying students in the program about an issue of interest or concern, analyzing the survey, displaying the data and using it for next steps; listing tips on how to apply to a local college or training program; or producing mock TV news broadcasts or talk shows, complete with commercials, focused on issues of personal significance or of significance in the community.

When a project is designed for students to produce and practice English in ways they need to outside the classroom (e.g., participating on a team, repairing communication break-downs), it provides a bridge to real-world communication (Bas, 2008).

Literature Circles

Literature circles provide a venue for students to engage with one another while also interacting with

texts of interest and importance to their lives. Originally developed by Harvey Daniels (1994), literature circles are similar to a book club, where readers can engage in lively discussions about what they have read.

A recent experimental design study showed that literature circles can have an impact on English language learners' reading comprehension as measured on standardized tests (McElvain, 2010). While this study was conducted with children, it seems likely that literature circles can be adapted for high-intermediate and advanced adults learning English. In McElvain's version of literature circles, groups of four to six students were formed based on the level of text they were reading. Students read silently in class for 15 minutes and spent the next 15 minutes responding to the text in a reading response log. During the final 15 minutes, students either participated in student-led book clubs by sharing from their reading response logs, or they worked on a collaborative book project. McElvain suggests that the most important aspect of literature circles is the "collaborative talk" about the reading that takes place among students throughout the activity as well as with the teacher, creating a "classroom literacy community" (p. 182). An additional finding from this study was that both teachers and learners reported increased engagement in reading and improved confidence to participate in class discussions.

Classroom-Based Assessment

Students who are learning are engaged in monitoring their learning progress, as are their teachers. Formative assessment, also called assessment for learning (Dainton, 2010), is an ongoing process that provides teachers and learners with details about what students have and have not yet learned from instruction. Involving learners in setting personal goals for learning and monitoring their progress are essential components in formative assessment (Looney, 2007). Evidence from research in K–12 settings indicates significant learning outcomes when students were engaged in tracking their own progress (Marzano, 2009). Formative assessment can show students that teachers want to understand what and how they think rather than whether they know the correct answers. As a result, students may become empowered to think for themselves and take control of their own learning (Brookhart, Moss, & Long, 2008).

Whereas formative assessment is an ongoing process that engages learners, is part of instruction, and lets learners monitor their progress, summative assessment reports on the outcomes of learning. Summative assessments often take the form of standardized tests that are used for accountability purposes. According to research in K–12 settings, when formative assessments are aligned with standards, teachers structure the assessments effectively, and students clearly understand the evaluation criteria and

are engaged in monitoring their own progress, learners can perform well on summative assessments as well (Leahy & Wiliam, 2009).

Teacher's role in engagement-based classroom

“To teach is to engage students in learning.” This quote, from *Education for Judgment* by Christensen et al. (1991), captures the essence of the state of the art and practice of pedagogies of engagement. This book is intended to emphasize that engaging students in learning is principally the responsibility of the teacher, who becomes less an imparter of knowledge and more a designer and facilitator of learning experiences and opportunities. In other words, the real challenge in teaching is not covering the material for the students; it is uncovering the material with the students.

The most common model of the classroom-based teaching and learning process used in education in the past fifty years (and maybe currently!!) is the presentational model. According to it, the information passes from the notes of the professor to the notes of the students without passing through the mind of either one. An alternative to the “pour it in” model is the “keep it flowing around” model in which the information passes not only from teacher to student, but also from students to teacher and among the students. This model of teaching and learning emphasizes that the simultaneous presence of interdependence and accountability are essential to

learning, and their presence is at the heart of a student-engaged instructional approach.

The research findings on pedagogies of engagement underscore former University of Michigan President James Duderstadt's (1999) call for action: "It could well be that faculty members of the twenty-first century college or university will find it necessary to set aside their roles as teachers and instead become designers of learning experiences, processes, and environments." (p. 7)

Sarder (2014) mentioned some other roles of the teacher inside engagement-based classrooms. First, the teacher should keep good learning relationships with his\her students because this is an ideal way to facilitate a highly engaged classroom environment. Second, good teachers pay attention to the physical learning environment, keep it well-designed, organized, and maintained, and do not make changes to that environment that could become obstacles to student learning. Third, an established system of rewards and incentives should be implemented carefully so that instructors use rewards and incentives to build a stronger student perspective on intrinsic motivation as an incentive for student work and learning. A fourth role in a highly engaging classroom environment is the identification and establishment of habits within the classroom where instructors are able to improve the classroom experience and stimulate higher levels of

student engagement by focusing on appropriate procedures and having students practice those procedures until they become habitual.

In addition to the above mentioned teacher's roles, Sarder (2014) mentioned several key aspects of pedagogy that teachers and professors are able to emphasize in order to facilitate student course engagement. The first key for the successful pedagogy is *course design for rigorous and relevant instruction*, as relevance can facilitate the motivation and conditions necessary for students to investment the time and energy necessary for a rigorous curriculum or optimal learning. The bottom line is that student are willing to work more and harder if the information they are presented with is relevant to what they already know.

The second aspect of pedagogy that professors should focus on in course design is *personalized learning*. No two students learn the same way and come from identical backgrounds. Therefore, each student, when treated as an individual, will have a unique learning requirement. Professors must acknowledge this and design this assumption into a course syllabus. Student will learn in different ways, at different speeds and respond differently to course material. Teachers can create improved classroom environments and higher levels of student engagement if they focus on appropriate procedures and have students practice those procedures until they become habits.

The third aspect of pedagogy that results in an actively engaged student is *active learning strategies*. Teachers and professors must seek out new and different ways of stimulating interest in classroom material and discussion. A video lecture, a recorded short lecture, and e-textbooks are inherently isolating for the student and result in a mind-numbing rather than mind-engaging learning experience. Professors and teachers should emphasize comprehension strategies that focus on pre-reading and summarization that provide the opportunity for students to be more engaged in readings. Reading is a primary focus for student engagement because reading is a cornerstone of any education endeavor.

Engagement and Technology

Learning engagement generally has positive effects on learning effectiveness and satisfaction in both technology-mediated and face-to-face learning environments and this depends basically on the learning medium designed. The combined results of several studies suggest that learning engagement is an important mediator for determining learning outcomes in technology-mediated learning.

The strategies used for engaging students in a conventional in-class setting have been developed over a long period of time and their implementation does not necessarily equal successfully engaging students. The increased use of distance learning as a means of granting students access to higher education has not

enjoyed the same long term evaluative development process. It was not until recently that researchers realized that solely giving access to course digital materials does not necessarily equate to student engagement in those same materials. According to Martin & Oslen (2010), there are two primary fundamental of student engagement: (a) the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and educationally purposeful activities, and (b) the way an institution uses its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to encourage student participation.

Current research has formulated a number of strategies for engaging students in this online digital format. Martin and Olsen (2010) conclude that utilizing *online social networking* as a medium for student interaction is a promising strategy for improving student engagement. This strategy reflects the philosophy that the most effective means of communicating with students is through their preferred means of communication. According to Madden et al (2011), 71% of all internet using adults are members of social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. It is logical for instructors to pursue social networking media as a teaching tool because students use the technology in which they are interested. If students are interested in a particular technology, then they are far more likely to show higher levels of motivation and engagement in course materials.

Coertze (2011) investigated EFL students' reading engagement and language output in selected online environments. She confirmed that teaching the integration and application of CMC environments in second language teaching and learning became a necessity because technology plays a prominent role in our daily lives and even more so for learners of the 21st century. With students spending several hours reading and writing online, life on the screen is an everyday, natural practice – they know no other way of being.

Sarder (2014) indicated that research has suggested that making efforts to establish a *sense of community* within an online course is an effective way to engage students. Community, in the online sense, can be defined as an environment which is enabled through the interaction and collaboration of its members using various technology and mixed media methods. Interaction is the essential building block of any community. If members of a community are not able to interact in some form or fashion, then it does not exist. The Education Development Centre at Carleton University suggested a number of techniques to foster a sense a sense of community in an online classroom .These techniques include :

1. Use inclusive language when lecturing. Instructors note the importance of building a community through inclusive language such as “us” and “we” as it generates a sense of unity for both face-to-face and distance students .

2. Build rapport with your students. Consider posting a welcome video, podcast, or presentation to introduce yourself and your course. This is a way for students to see and hear you, so you are not perceived as a virtual instructor .
3. Have a positive attitude. Be enthusiastic and market your course to your students as a way to promote community .
4. Use your voice and be honest. Write all content and instructions using your own voice which comes across as more open and genuine with your students .
5. Set online office hours. Schedule regular, online office hours or group discussions where you and the students can connect on a weekly basis .
6. Establish an online presence. One instructor noted that by establishing a strong sense of being there and being present by creating a personal website, blog, or by tweeting can naturally improve classroom management in an online classroom.

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The Role of National Conversation Forums (NCFs) in Developing Critical Speaking Skills of EFL University Students

Dr. Taher Mohammad Al-Hadi

Assistant Professor of EFL Curriculum and Instruction
Faculty of Education, Ismailia Suez Canal University

Abstract:

This quasi-experimental study of one group design attempted to explore how far National Conversation Forums (NCFs) – as a proposed teaching strategy – can develop EFL university students' critical speaking skills. It investigated how the discussion of social issues in well-organized forums with specific ethos and ethics in university campus can tackle divergent perspectives, conflicting views and diverse positions in reasoned discourse. Nine Saudi EFL students at KKU, Saudi Arabia constituted the participants of the study. Data was collected from one source: a public speaking test for assessing critical speaking skills. The findings revealed a positive significant impact of NCFs on developing critical speaking skills in social issues-based language contexts. The study includes insights into how to cultivate critical speakers, including the procedures and steps that could be incorporated in EFL university education program.

***Keywords:** National Conversation Forums (NCFs), critical speaking skills, public speaking .*

Introduction

The mission of higher education seems to be widely changing due to concurrent changes indifferent areas of life. This urged Carcasson (2013) to state that

“colleges and universities need to renew their connection to the community and clearly present their value” (p.47). And owing to the fact that university life cannot be divorced from the public life, it seems so important to burden its responsibility to reconstruct the public life. In an interview with Thomas Bender, David Brown – coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange* (2013:p.10) argues that “academic disciplines and professional communities have become self-referential.” Bender stresses Dewey’s notion of the public : to be pertinent to the public life of their communities. He, then, holds the view that, “we need to listen to the framing of questions by the world around us and then draw upon our social knowledge that may help examine those questions”(p.10). Therefore, responding to the questions of the public (including university students), intellectual communication takes place. In the same stream of thought, Barr and Tagg (2013) stress that the higher education institutions do not exist to provide instruction, but to provide learning. Without learning-centered approach, Barr and Tagg write, “the college’s purpose serves not to transfer knowledge but to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learning that make discoveries and solve problems” (p.56).

After John Hanna, president of Michigan State College had declared in 1944, “our colleges should not be content with only the training of outstanding

agriculturalists, or engineers, or home economists, or teachers...”, Peters (as cited in Boyte, 2013, p.17) put it clearly and practically as thus: “The first and never-forgotten objective must be that every human product of educational system must be given the training that will enable him to be an effective citizen, appreciating his opportunities and fully willing to assume his responsibilities in a great democracy”. Avila (as cited in Boyte, 2013) has given a vivid account of what this means: “The medicine of our predicament in higher education requires efforts to restructure the way we think, act, behave toward each other, and the way we act as a collective to restructure power and resources... culture changes come first, leading to structural changes later... .For academic institutions to partner with community groups, institutions, and organizations for a better , as society requires countless opportunities for conversations and organizing campaigns with community partners engaged in power restructuring” (20). For this, university education programs can take the job and fill the gap as it is sensitive to the larger context.

As it is stressed by Brumfit (2001), “ teaching does not take place in a vacuum, and too few certificating courses address the underlying ideologies and philosophies of current practice”(140). Language – specifically in university education EFL programs – is for communication which is crucial because of EFLers’ areas of misunderstanding and difference, not because

of their shared comprehension of each other, and it is their ability to communicate difference that needs to be central to their thinking. Language, therefore, can be said to perform a pragmatic function as means of getting things done in the world, and a learning and conceptualizing function, as a means of understanding the world, of making sense of ideas and evidence. To Brumfit, “the following set seems better: conversation, discussion, comprehension (either speech or writing...” (40). The need for exposure to good teaching allows good learning. Thus, good teaching – according to Edwards and Mercer (2010:p.167) – “will be reflective, sensitive to the possibility of different kind of understanding.”

Departing from Brumfit’s (2001) notion that education needs language, language needs education so that we should not be alone. A thoughtful view framing and conscious reflection about Brumfit’s notion stresses that language is intimately bound up the process of education at all levels. There, teachers need to be sensitive to this and informed about the way language operates in society. All teachers, then, require some knowledge of language; and teachers of English particularly require specific work on language if they are not to mislead the public about their own expertise.

Taking the long view, Saudi Arabia has been facing some sociopolitical gridlocks since last political changes in the Arab world. Therefore, the current

scene is featured by a lot of hurdles which in their turn affect social and economic aspects. Conflicted views and unreasoned perspectives in public life as well as academic life have arisen. A problem seems to be there! Ehrlich and Fu (2013a) see that “campuses are the one of the few places where reasoned debate can and should take place on tough political [social or economic] issues and students need education in grappling with those issues” (p.34). Ehrlich and Fu seem to tap on the role of language in schemata changing within a communicative context. Particular purposes of language use is as deriving from the operation of particular modes of thinking rather than simply a matter of matching style to audience. Widdowson(as cited in Brumfit, 2001) suggests that language knowledge is organized at two levels: systematic and schematic, corresponding to linguistic and communicative competence. Widdowson holds the belief that,

interpretative procedures are required to draw systematic knowledge into the immediate executive level of schemata and to relate those schemata to actual instances. The ability to realize particular meanings, solve particular problems, by relating them to schematic formulae stored as knowledge, constitutes ...capacity. Capacity... can be understood as the ability to solve problems and, equivalently, to make meanings by interpreting a particular instance ... as related to some formulae, thereby assimilating the instance into a pre-existing pattern of knowledge (p.26)

More clearly, injecting innovative teaching strategies in university education programs might promote students' reflection, critical speaking skills and

positive thinking. Critical speaking might explore areas of difference, and opposing views, and then find a reasoning way to construct new knowledge and build new schemata.

Context of the problem

The recent revolutionary changes in the Arab world known as *ArabSpring* have created opposing views and multiple perspectives in every Arab country. They, therefore, are reflected between and among different ideologies, beliefs and values. This – in the researcher’s belief – requires constant communication, mutual understanding, and adjustment. Saudi community must be in constantly conversation concerning how to best negotiate the social issues and make various adjustments along the way. The better the conversation, the stronger the community likely will be. This is because the zero-sum, winner-take-all nature of adversarial tactics tends to incentivize problematic communication patterns that cause polarization, misunderstanding, cynicism, already-wicked problems much more diabolical.

Claiming that most social problems in Saudi Arabia – unemployment, violence against women, how expats are treated in Saudi Arabia, national security, social stability, etc.,- are wicked problems, there should be some sort of organized forums in the university to discuss national issues in an academic, non-threatening atmosphere. Therefore, National Conversation Forums (henceforth NCFs) is suggested by the researcher to be

an innovative teaching strategy for EFL university students. It might be a guarantee with specific procedures, techniques and ethics to develop critical speaking skills of those students. Developing such skills may lead them – when being teachers in field practices – to discuss problematic situations concerning national issues in an objective way.

Statement of the Problem

Having reviewed the related literature and previous studies, there seems to be a research gap – to the best knowledge of the researcher – to be filled in about national conversation forums, as an innovative teaching strategy for advanced students, namely EFL university students. Such a strategy might provide them with opportunities to be engaged in expressing ideas, exchanging thoughts, debating on issues, and consequently developing their critical speaking skills.

Questions of the Study

The researcher addressed a main question for the study: *Can National Conversation Forums (NCFs) be an effective innovative teaching strategy to develop critical speaking skills of EFL university students?*

Sub-questions were derived as thus:

1. What are the critical speaking skills that EFL university students should have?
2. To what extent do EFL university students master critical speaking skills?

3. What are the main features of the teaching strategy proposed (NCFs) for developing critical speaking skills?
4. How far is the teaching strategy proposed (NCFs) effective in developing critical speaking skills of EFL university students?

Objectives of the Study

The current study aimed to:

- a. identify critical speaking skills that EFL university students should master,
- b. assess how far EFL university students master critical speaking skills,
- c. develop a teaching strategy – named National Conversation Forums (NCFs) to develop critical speaking skills of EFL university students, and
- d. assess the impact of using NCFs in developing critical speaking skills.

Significance of the Study

Conducting such a study :

- a. clarifies how far academic university life can be mirrored in daily life situations.
- b. strengthens the close relationship between NCFs and critical speaking skills, resulting in reaching a compromise as for competing views, specifically among university students.
- c. asserts Deetz's view (2014) that "public decisions can be formed through strategy, consent, involvement and participation...[and] meaningful

democratic participation creates better citizens and social choices”.

- d. can develop the rules for rational discussions or discourses to attain the goal of resolving disputes in what is referred to by Lumer (2010) as ‘dialogic logic’ – that “conceives logical proofs as dialogue games, where a proponent *defends* his thesis in an exactly regimented way against an opponent’s *attacks* by logically composing it into formulas already accepted by the opponent.”(p.54)
- e. fosters deliberative learning where “deliberation is not *debating*, since the goal of debate is to win an argument and silence the other, whereas the goal of deliberation is to find a creative solution to a practical problem,”(Demirbulak,2012:p.232).
- f. boosts the relationship between deliberative pedagogy and the community since...

deliberative pedagogy most often occurs inside the boundaries of the classroom ...Deliberative pedagogy in the community connects - and transforms - deliberative dialogue and community engagement by attempting to create space for reciprocal conversations, grounded in real-world experiences, which lead to the public judgment and collective action.(Longo,2013:pp.51-52)

Delimitations of the Study

The current study was delimited to the following:

1. Nine EFL university students at College of Science and Arts, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia.

2. Eight critical speaking skills: (a) mastering the subject matter with rich data and credibility of analyses and interpretations, (b) delivering oral presentation that is lucid, polished and well-organized, (c) finding some common ground with listeners, (d) using different types of reasoning (casual, inductive, deductive), (e) examining counterarguments related to the issue in focus and refuting them logically, (f) comparing and contrasting conflicting personal views presented on different occasions, (g) posing hypothetical questions and queries related to the issue in focus and answering them, (h) providing alternative, creative, and feasible solutions to some existing and other predictable problems.
3. Five debatable national social issues: (a) *How expats are treated in Saudi Arabia*, (b) *Private education: a blessing or a curse*, (c) *Social stability*, (d) *Terrorism and its effects on social development*, and (e) *High rates of divorce among Saudi women* as the content material of the strategy.

Instrument of the Study

In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, the researcher developed and used a study instrument called *Public Speaking Test* for assessing critical speaking skills.

Review of Literature

National Conversation Forums (NCFs): Definition and characteristics

National Conversation Forums (NCFs) are seen as academic conversations - referred to by Wright (2014) -

that are characterized by being sustained, purposeful and content-rich, and they contain core skills: elaborate and clarify, support ideas with examples, build on challenge a partner's ideas, paraphrase and synthesis. For the academic conversations to succeed, Wright presents some recommendations for teacher talk. Stressing that Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) discourse often dominates classroom interaction; the teacher needs to : (a) move IRE to IRF(Initiation-Response-Feedback) to offer students alternative interactional moves(e.g., repetition, recasting, reformulation, prompting), and (b) provide greater independence to students and opportunities for greater output.

In a wider view, NCFs can be seen as a combination of National Conversation (NC) and National Issues Forums (NIF) referred to by Osborn and Osborn (1995). The researcher, therefore, sees NCFs as “planned, face-to-face, systematic, argumentative, reflective, deliberative, transformative, cooperative meetings focusing on the empowerment of the public voice by exercising citizen responsibilities (EFL student teachers in this case) on specific national issues.”Those characteristics can be verified as thus:

- a. NCFs group discussants meet *face-to-face* in the same context in order for each one to follow others' verbal and nonverbal communication.
- b. NCFs are *systematic* since they follow certain rules and procedures: they first begin with a

constructive speech which outlines a position and a supporting argument on an open-ended question about a specific national issue; second, there is a *critique* in which arguments are subject to close inspection. Third comes a *speech of negotiation*, in which arguers explore how and whether the best features of each position might be combined into a transcendent stance upon the question.

- c. When NCFs are *reflective*, participants are involved in some sort of a reflection level of (analysis/synthesis/judgment) with an orientation of (theory/practice/values) and a style of (technical rationality/reflection in action) , Burbank, Bates and Ramirez (2012).
- d. NCFs are *deliberative* when the conversers find common ground, share concerns and interact effectively towards the complexities of the given situation.
- e. When the conversers change their habits of mind and frames of reference voluntarily owing to the reasoned claims offered, NCFs must be *transformative*.
- f. NCFs seem also to be *cooperative* since the participants get involved in a “ process of reasoned interaction on a controversial topic intended to help participants ... make the best assessments or decisions in any given situation” Macau (as cited in Osborn and Osborn, 1995:p. 252).

NCFs: Objectives

National Conversation Forums -to many researchers' belief as well as the current researcher's - achieve many objectives. Among them are:

- a. NCFs may foster deliberative learning, and promote democratic practices, which in their turn, “ assist students in learning how to solve controversial issues in a democratic way” (Hu,2012:p.31).
- b. In a NCFs-based context, students can communicate using reason and mutual respect, “ forming consensus and resolving public issues” (Lanir, 1991, p.11).
- c. Within a context of tolerance and neutrality, rational students should be able to discuss public affairs in a deliberative way. They – then - are able to assess the various options for action and come to a consensus acceptable to the public at large, (Elster,1998).
- d. NCFs can instruct students in skills of analysis and in taking an objective point of view. Besides, they are encouraged to accommodate, even participate, the diverse views of others,(Ashhworth,2010; Chandler and Hobbs,1997; Chang, 2005; Mills,2012).
- e. In NCFs, students can enjoy expressing personal opinions, and improve their ability to verify and criticize different viewpoints.
- f. NCFs can function as a hands-on democratic practice generating critical exploration of

ideological dimensions coupled with respectful reading of the experience of another, (Thyberg, 2012).

- g. Because NCFs are sometimes begun with heated debates before common grounds are found and a systematic and deliberative policy takes place, integration or synthesis of knowledge, logical reasoning, listening and persuasion gradually develop ,which in their turn, help one develop social maturity, open-mindedness, ethics, and a knowledge of current national issues.
- h. When argumentation is used in NCFs context, its goal is to enhance personal, intellectual development and to understand, perhaps even to lubricate, the friction of contending arguments, thus causing the evidence to be brought to life and to shape that evidence into formidable proofs that convince and arouse.
- i. When participants sharing in NCFs are ready to change their thinking habits - when finding others' arguments are right on target - the win-to-win approach prevails away from rigid, predetermined positions in which the willingness to change, evolve, and improve through the interaction of alternative perspectives is regarded a weakness, (Willig,2008).
- j. NCFs can provide students with opportunities for critical views, activelearning of the target language through a well-versed dialog, and a positive learning environment where a prevailing

community is built and mutual respect for others and their ideas is celebrated.

- k. NCFs can not only tackle tame problems, but wicked problems as well. The difference is that tame problems are particularly data-dependent and essentially can be solved by experts armed with good information. Wicked problems – on the other hand – have several characteristics that distinguish them, keeping pace with what takes place in NCFs:

l.

Wicked problems are systematic, thus require systems-level thinking due to the inherent interconnections between issues...

Wicked problems inherently involves competing underlying values and paradoxes...

Wicked problems often require adaptive changes from key audiences...

Addressing wicked problems demands effective collaboration and communication across multiple perspectives...

Wicked problems often require creativity, innovation, and imagination... (Carcasson, 2013: p.38).

- m. It can also be said that NCFs use different discourses as social interaction settings within social systems of different levels for causing change and development.

NCFs: Procedures

Considering the recognition of richer diversity leads to an acknowledgement that the process of interpretation and comprehension requires us to respond to many different features of language, and

their interaction with world knowledge, EFL university students – as Saudi citizens – come together in formal conversations on national issues. They, then consider relevant facts and values from multiple points of views, listen and react to one another in order to think critically about the various options before them, and ultimately attempt to work through the underlying tension and tough choices inherent to wicked problems and arrive at a more nuanced public judgment.

But the primary hindrance with NCFs is the need to build capacity for it, and ultimately make it a habit in our communities. In order to support all the various process points that NCFs require broad and inclusive research that identifies both tensions and common ground, issue framing, genuine engagement across perspectives, and support for the move to collaborative action, deliberative practice generally requires the assistance of colleges and universities that improve the quality of communication. College students, with instruction and support from professors and staff have potential to fill this role in their local communities since colleges and universities also offer numerous opportunities for training in adversarial politics, generally outside of the curriculum. There, they have what is called ‘free-speech zone’,(Carcasson, 2013).

Critical speaking skills

The role of communicative skills including critical speaking has been radically altered in all societies

including the Saudi one. The ability to manage or adapt to diverse communicative situations has become essential and the ability to interact with people whom one has no personal acquaintance is crucial to acquiring a small measure of personal and social control. When we are at a situation that needs to be settled, we often rely on interactive and persuasive skills to get things done. Therefore, critical speaking can be defined as “ the ability of a student to carry out, in appropriate ways, some communicative tasks which are typically encountered in formal conversations where language is actively spoken. Teaching critical speaking skills – referred to before - seems to be considered the way for such purposes.

Due to the importance of critical speaking skills required for English language learners, Musacchio (2007) reported a critical speaking skills seminar for university students. Besides, *Communication Within the Curriculum* (CWiC) program in the University of Pennsylvania (2008)- which is a public speaking tutoring program – tends to train undergraduates to assist their peers with presentations assigned to them by their professors. Those presentations are delivered in what is called *Critical Speaking Seminars*. Their goals include improving undergraduate teaching, creating an intellectual community through speaking and creating a forum in which students can become public speakers.

In CWiC Critical Speaking Seminars, critical speaking and listening skills are improved through

class discussions, debates, storytelling, and other types of presentations. In order to improve critical speaking skills, the seminars focus on developing the following skills: analyzing speaker's arguments, giving coherent, lucid and polished oral presentations and developing, and debating positions.

In a similar stream of action, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin University (2008) provided a portfolio named *Wisconsin Cooperative Education Skill Certification for Youth Leadership*, including many skills to be developed. Among them are some critical speaking skills: discussing an issue with a supervisor, teacher, or colleague, elaborating on others' ideas, giving constructive oral feedback to others, using different formats orally to convey ideas, opinions, or feelings and engaging in an open exchange or ideas with others.

Some educators have recently viewed that critical speaking is the core of public speaking (e.g., Hilton, 2013; Marshal,2012; Stevens,2013) for many reasons. Via public speaking, the speaker's personal and professional life can be enriched, and opportunities to influence the outside world can be provided. In 2013, Hilton presented key points about public speaking: public speaking can be a great self-esteem booster; public speaking engagements are great places to meet new social and professional contacts, and if you would like to change the world, remember public speaking is an effective platform for spreading revolutionary ideas.

Stressing that critical speaking can be displayed in a public speaking context, Marshal (2012) proposed 17 quick and dirty tips to help public speakers. The first two – in the researcher’s belief – are the mostly connected ones to what can be applied to university students of EFL:

a.Learning about one’s audience. This can help understand exactly what it is that different audience members want to know, say, or do differently as a result of hearing you speak. And it is important to meet the needs of a majority of your audience.

b.Learning about the organization and effort. The public speaker has to find out who and what was presented in the past, find out what has worked and what has not, and ask about what would be considered an ideal outcome. (3)

Stevens (2013) seems to go in parallel with Marshal. She surveyed critical communication skills including public skills and found that everyone should strive to possess certain skills , listen carefully, communicate clearly and assertively, give positive feedback, manage effectively, educate without arrogance, build rapport, know your audience, be congruent in tone, nonverbal communication skills and words, select your words carefully, and remove distracting barriers.

In 2006, Fredrick Knapp Association, Inc. arranged a comprehensive two-day seminar to develop and sharpen management speaking skills called “Excu-Speak”.This seminar is featured by some characteristics that seem to be its real objectives. Although the seminar

is designed for the business person who needs to give credible, convincing and dynamic presentations, it can also be suitable for EFL university students who need such critical speaking skills in a public speaking context. They state:

** You learn how to project the strength and enthusiasm in your speaking voice.*

**You will learn word power and to choose phrases and words that will stimulate and persuade your audience.*

** You will learn proved ways to overcome apprehension so you can project self-confidence and professional poise. (p.2)*

In his article Thinking Critically, Speaking Critically , Klaua (2004) refers to the content of the issues raised/discussed in public speaking. He claims that it is extremely difficult for people to criticize their own social environments. This is because if you try to criticize your own social environments, you are essentially criticizing yourself for whom you are, your identity, your aspirations to be with a particular group, the need you have for moral and other support from others. Klaua goes backward and suggested a solution. Hestresses his belief on “stimulation of people to review their political and social environments so that they will take action to remedy them and improve their own personal positions in terms of power and equality” (p.4). Critical speaking, in such a situation, is the departure point towards accomplishing such a function.

The latest two attempts – to the best knowledge of the researcher –to inject critical speaking skills in

TEFL/TESL teaching/learning contexts are currently being done by ICAL TEFL Center affiliated to ChungdahmPhils Inc. (2014) and the English Language Center in Shantou University, China (2014). The first center is running forums and discussions on TEFL/TESL and looking for a critical speaking tutor working for Chungdahm Critical Speaking Learning Program. On the other hand, the English Language Center of Shantou University is presenting a course entitled "Critical speaking and creative writing". That course is designed for advanced learners of English to improve their oral and writing skills. It provides opportunities to engage learners in expressing ideas, exchanging thoughts, composing essays, debating on issues and also developing their interest and abilities in creative thinking and critical thinking through task-based instruction.

Examining what has been discussed before, one can find that those are involved in critical speaking-based public speeches face challenges internally or externally. And they find themselves obliged to explore and to cope with those challenges. Therefore, critical speakers can be characterized by being challengers who inspire/cause social change to occur. They – according to Klaude (2004:p.10) –

(a) talk not only with powerless people, but also with those in positions of power so that they can understand the dynamics of the situation in a more holistic way,

(b) state very clearly their own beliefs, biases, prejudices,

and try to define their own cultural and social contexts and the extents to which they can truly challenge their own social environments, and

(c) leave it open to people to decide the type of action they want if they do choose action: preventive, palliative or curative.

Relationship between NCFs and critical speaking skills

As NCFs can have different forms/styles (e.g., oral presentation, public speaking, open discussion, debate, critical incidents, role playing, and problem solving) since they have many things in common, public speaking seems to be the most appropriate style for managing and accomplishing NCFs in a satisfactory, critical way. Public speaker, then, can use two imperatives of speech, find some common grounds with listeners, focus on ideas to develop confident delivery, suggest multiple paths to goals, tap on the beliefs, attitudes and values of listeners, start speech with ideas of agreement when handling hostile audiences, use statistics and testimonies to enhance credibility, stress the factors of attention, deploy gender-neutral language, varyate method of speech delivery (memorized, manuscript, prompt) , and utilize pauses effectively.

The view that NCEs use discourse as a social interaction setting that tackles the social system as a complex dynamic real-world system, such a system has the potential for further change and development. Critical speaking – in the researcher’s belief – plays

such a role. It might start the process of thought modeling a complex dynamic system by:

- *identifying the different components of the system, including agents, processes, and subsystems*
 - *for each component, identifying the time scales and levels of social and human organization it operates*
 - *describing the relations between and among components*
 - *describing how the system and context adapt to each other*
 - *describing the dynamics of the system*
 - *how the components change over time, and*
 - *how the relations among components change over time.*
- (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron,2012 : p.41)*

To put it clearer, a pair or group of people engaged in speech communication or talk-in-interaction or social issues – as in NCFs – are seen as a coupled system with the individuals as component subsystems. The talk of each individual is seen as a complex dynamic system that emerges from the interactions of subsystems of body, brain and mind with language resources that help cope with those social issues. At the same time, the discourse emerged is seen as a dynamic adaptive system. By focusing on face – to – face conversation as the primary site of discourse action, critical speaking skills have something to do to unveil discourse settings beyond conversations. But still remains an essential point: *Does it require practice or not? If Yes, on what basis?* Clark (1996) answers the first question: “face-to-face conversation ... is universal, [it] requires no special training, and is essential in

acquiring one's first language. Other settings [NCFs in our case] lack the immediacy, medium, or control of face-to-face conversation, so that they require special techniques or practices" (p.11). At the same time, NCFs are featured by the discussion of social issues which talk-in-interaction – to Schelgloff(2001)-is fundamental to social life and action and to language learning. Change in such areas cannot be systematically operated and managed unless there is critical speaking analyzing social issues, examining counterarguments, using different types of reasoning and providing feasible solutions to social issues in focus.

Research Method

This study adopted quantitative and qualitative approach to analyze the data, since such an approach seems to be the most appropriate one: first, to show the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary activity between NCFs and critical speaking; second, when they are integrated and applied to real-world problems, issues and challenges involving language, they will be embedded in all aspects of society and social life.

Research site :

The study took place in College of Science and Arts at Balqarn, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia, during the second semester of the academic year 2013/2014 , where – like other universities in the Arab World – there are a lot of social issues or problems discussed.

Because the researcher had recognized that the challenge is imposed by the status quo of calls and

hopes for maintaining social stability in Saudi Arabia, he decided to keep boundaries, and not to allow polarization to take place, since polarization is not fair. And it is not that time to recall, retrieve or reveal a mismatch between the theoretical calls of any group including policymakers and its practices. The main goal of NCFs is then purely academic. It was also taken for granted that conceptual tensions and confusions were consequently liable to appear. In order for the NCFs to succeed, the researcher had to set a code of ethics and simplify the content resolving any tensions and confusions. Everything was open for discussion except that threatens social solidarity, national security or discrimination on the ground of color, profession, or tribal descent. Good ideas had to be accepted; effective positive communication had to prevail, and above all, common good and stability of the country has been the ultimate goal.

Participants:

Nine voluntary EFL university students – who were randomly drawn from seniors (Level 8) – constituted the sample of the study. They were seen linguistically proficient and had some sort of interest in national issues. They were told , during the orientation session, that they were free to communicate their views, but following the regulations and ethics of NCFs.

Data source:

One source of data informed the study :a *Public Speaking Test* focusing on critical speaking skills. It was administered before and after using the strategy

proposed. It required the participants to deliver a public speech on *Unemployment in Saudi Arabia* for 20 minutes each. The total score of the test was 24 marks: 3 marks for each critical speaking skill practiced. For that purpose, a rubric of a three point scale was developed(Appendix B).

Procedure

NCFs is an innovative teaching strategy proposed to develop transferable skills, namely critical speaking skills. That three phase-strategy (Appendix A) revolved round discussing five social issues: (a)How expats are treated in Saudi Arabia, (b) Private education: a blessing or a curse, (c) Social Stability, (d) Terrorism and its effects on social development, and (e) High rates of divorce among Saudi women. The discussion/conversation within the study group (N=9) forums provided two way communications among the participants and between the participants and the moderator over seven weeks period. However, more importantly, the participants were able to take the time they needed to prepare themselves for the weekly forum expanding scope or content of the issue raised in that forum, then to provide a coherent, objective discussion.

In NCFs, the participants got familiar with each other, a positive, informal and relaxed learning climate was set and a code of ethics was established. Although each person has his own 'measures', legal rights and moral rights had to be accepted: legal rights are

relatively straight forward, providing that there is an agreed legal system to refer to while moral rights are much more complicated, because there is no single moral code accepted by all human beings.

Dialectical reflection-based critical speaking was the objective for the participants to share, transform, or reconstruct their experience and knowledge. They were asked to project how the learnt knowledge and skills could be utilized in a possible professional situation. The participants were also encouraged to learn from each other, to share their experiences, and to respond to the forces which shape their personal and professional lives. At the same time, shared interests, mutual understanding and positive communication were highly appreciated. Diverse interests, different perspectives and conflicting views had to be tackled objectively. The golden rule is: Resolving social issues is a central need for all participants.

Four questions were addressed in each session of NCFs:

- *Whether (and to what degree) a problem is existing;*
- *Whether (and to what degree) a solution is possible and feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;*
- *Whether (and to what degree) a specific action is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;*
- *Whether (and to what degree) a similar action is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails.*

Before the intervention, which lasted for five weeks (three hours/week), the study participants were tested on critical speaking skills. They were asked each to present a public speech on *Unemployment in Saudi Arabia* for twenty minutes before their peer study participants. Then, the intervention took place following the procedures previously defined. Having finished the intervention, the post-test was administered. Both the pre-test and post-test responses were recorded and transcribed. Data was, then, collected and treated statistically.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Having collected the data, they were processed statistically using SPSS, Version 18. Since the sample number was small ($n=9$), Wilcoxon T test was used. Following are the results in table 1.

Table 1: T-values for the mean differences of the study participants on critical speaking skills pre-post testing

NO	Skills	MEAN		SD		DF	T-VALUE	SIG.
		PRE	POST	PRE	POST			
1	SMS	1	2.56	.000	.530	8	14.55	.000
2	DOB	1.22	2.44	.440	.530	8	8.32	.000
3	FCG	.333	2.22	.500	.440	8	2.00	.081
4	DTR	.778	2.56	.667	.527	8	3.50	.008
5	ECA	.444	2.22	.527	.441	8	2.53	.035
6	CCV	.778	2.67	.440	.500	8	5.29	.001
7	PHQ	.444	2.56	.527	.527	8	2.53	.035
8	PAS	.556	2.56	.013	.000	8	3.16	.013
TOTAL	CSS	5.56	19.78	1.60	1.39	8	10.48	.000

As table 1 shows, there are statistical significant differences between the score means of total skills pre-

post- using NCFs at the level of 0.01 in favor of post testing, highlighting a highly positive impact of NCFs on the study participants' critical speaking skills.

Besides, the researcher had to get the effect size of the proposed strategy in order to find out whether it had a practical educational implication. Following is table 2 showing the results.

Table 2 : Level of the effect size of NCFs on critical speaking skills

NO	Skills	T-VALUE	SIG.	η^2	D value	Effect Size
1	SMS	14.55	.000	10.28	0.96	Large
2	DOB	8.32	.000	05.88	0.89	Large
3	FCG	2.00	.081	01.41	0.33	Large
4	DTR	3.50	.008	02.47	0.60	Large
5	ECA	2.53	.035	01.78	0.44	Large
6	CCV	5.29	.001	03.74	0.77	Large
7	PHQ	2.53	.035	01.78	0.44	Large
8	PAS	3.16	.013	02.23	0.55	Large
TOTAL	CSS	10.48	.000	07.41	0.93	Large

As table 2 shows, d value is 0.93, which is bigger than 0.08 (Mansur: 1997,p.59). This means that 7.41% (η^2) of the total variance in the score means of post testing of dependent variable (critical speaking skills) is fairly high and can be attributed to the proposed strategy (National Conversation Forums).

The results shown above can be attributed to one or more of the following:

First: Because the forums were academic and featured by being sustained, purposeful, and content-

rich, the participants shared ideas across an extended period of time , though they had conflicting views and opposing perspectives. At the same time, the tasks – whether those used in the intervention or pre- post-testing – were appropriate to the participants’ cognitive and linguistic ability; they were integrated with the broader social context , and the participants seemed to have expectations about exploratory versus performative oral language use.

Second: The forums in which the oral discourse proceeded, followed a particular logic of communication, and the procedural rules created a common set of understanding among the participants, even when they lacked consensus. That atmosphere might have given them power to air their ideas in case each one has his time and right to participate.

Third: The participants might have felt as if they were an interest group acting as opinion makers through their own “everyday talk which can play an important role not just in the forum of *opinion formation but also in that of will formation*” (Mansbridge, 2009). Besides, because they were engaged in social issues-based communicative actions, they might have seen themselves involved in communication going not only from top-down but also from bottom-up, with the aim of participating in resolving their own problems.

Fourth: The participants seem to – unintentionally - follow Marshall’s tip (2012) regarding *deep breathing* by which she might mean – in the researcher’ belief -

deep insight or deep thinking.She states: “ for me, deep breathing is a critical speaking skill that should be included in everyone’s tool belt... It helps develop a strong voice and it helps to strengthen personal intensity. It is important for our energy, our focus, and our concentration. Deep breathing also improves your ability to be effective wherever you are facing a particularly stressful situation, from delivering presentations, to delivering bad news, or even when you need to ask for something important.”

Fifth: The deliberate practice – referred to by Thesis Whisperer (2012) and Brett and McKay (2010) - in which the study participants were involved during the sessions of NCFs might have helped them to repeat the same activity over and over, striving to be better each time. Besides, shifting backwards and forwards between positive and negative stances seem to have helped them to move their thinking around and make it more flexible and visible in their critical speaking. And because the deliberate practice is specifically designed to improve performance often with a teacher’s help, feedback was, then, provided on a continual basis. Critical speaking skills, therefore, had found their way to improve.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study overwhelmingly supports the idea that participation in national conversation-based forums in university campus provides significant benefits for those entering the profession of teaching - since teachers are in direct contact with all sectors of

society and have some sort of daily communication with. And universities that want to provide the best possible education for future professionals should seriously consider undertaking efforts to promote and broaden the national conversation experience for their students. Certainly, to increase university students' participation, we must convince them that their participation matters, that they can make a difference, specifically when it banks on social problems or social issues. Resolving them in a democratic and deliberative way is not limited to government. All should participate. Furthermore, when sustaining national conversations on social issues, critical speaking skills can be developed.

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Students' Perceptions of Integrating Social Networking Sites in Language Learning: Benefits and Challenges

Hosam ElDeen Ahmed El-Sawy

Lecturer of TEFL, Faculty of Education,
Damanhur University, Egypt

Abstract

This study aims at investigating students' perceptions of integrating Social Networking Sites (SNS) in language learning. A project integrating SNS (Facebook as an example) was designed to give students an opportunity to use a Facebook group in their language learning process. 57 third year basic education, English department students participated in the project during a complete academic year at the university of Damanhour, Egypt. A detailed questionnaire was prepared and used to enquire students' perceptions. Results of the study indicated that the majority of participants perceive SNS as beneficial in language learning. The most perceived benefits include improvement in a lot of aspects including self-confidence in writing, all language skills especially writing, increased vocabulary, grammar, motivation, interaction among students and between students and teachers, creative skills, exposure to language, cooperation and thinking in English. The study also revealed that the majority of participants are willing to use SNS in learning English as students and in teaching English as future teachers. Participants also declared that they prefer writing and reading short posts than long ones. Some challenges appeared when using SNS for learning language including students' lack of

sufficient time, technical problems related to the access of consistent internet services, and overload of posts on SNS when used for learning. It is recommended to integrate SNS in language learning and more studies especially experimental ones are needed to investigate the effectiveness of using SNS for improving different language skills.

Introduction

The use of computers in language teaching dates back to 1960's and since that time, we see the shift of the role of computer from a mechanical tutor used primarily for drills into a real usage of language in an authentic context by students' self discoveries and developments. When microcomputers entered in the daily life in 1970's, the era of computer assisted language learning has begun at schools and computers were used primarily for drilling activities in language classes. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) expanded in 1980's and 1990's with accessibility of personal computers for language learners. The use of internet in 2000's enabled educators to create web-based language programs which allowed students to use language in real context. Today, millions of people are using SNS and online learning has arisen as one of the most important and fastest moving trends in education (Palmer and Bray, 2001). There are even researchers contending that social networking sites (SNS) have potential to change educational system radically, motivating students for better learning rather than being passive attendees of a classroom (Ziegler, 2007).

Social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook, have spread widely. Consequently researchers are trying to explore the potentials of using these sites in learning and instruction in general. These sites go along with social constructivism theory of learning and the zone of proximal development which emphasizes that learners can learn in association with others much more than what they can learn alone. As a fresh area of research, it needs exploratory studies followed by experimental studies to get clear insight into the potentials of SNS in order to make the best use of it in the field of learning and instruction.

SNS are perhaps the most underutilized ICT in L2 education. While there were more than a billion active users of Facebook as of March, 2013 (Facebook Statistics, n.d.), Facebook and other SNS have yet to gain wide usage in L2 education compared to ICTs such as blogs and wikis. Certainly, the use of SNS has provided communication practice and led to incidental learning for a great number of learners (Mitchell, 2009), but educators could utilize younger learners' reliance on SNS in a more focused and constructive way (Blattner & Fiori, 2009). Indeed, SNS have a variety of tools and are used for a number of purposes, and language teachers have many options for using them in their classes.

Blattner and Fiori (2009) indicate that little is known about how SNS such as Facebook can develop a sense of community in language classrooms or how

they can impact the development of socio-pragmatic competence in language learners. Tilfarlioğlu (2011) also emphasizes that there is not enough research about applying SNS, into the classroom and students' attitudes about the use of Web 2.0 tools in language teaching. Consequently there is a clear need to investigate the potentials of SNS in language learning and to explore students' perceptions of this issue.

Review of Literature:

To review the studies related to the use of SNS in language learning and instruction, we will start with a sample of the studies that dealt with students' perceptions of using SNS in learning in general, then studies that dealt with student's perceptions of using SNS in language learning and finally studies that dealt with students' perceptions of using SNS in writing instruction as the major sub-skill affected by these sites.

Studies that Dealt with Students' Perceptions of the Use of SNS in Learning in General:

Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012) conducted a case study of learners' perspectives and experiences in an online course taught using the Elgg online social network. Findings from this study indicate that learners enjoyed and appreciated both the social learning experience afforded by the online social network and supported one another in their learning, enhancing their own and other students' experiences. Conversely, results also indicate that students limited their participation to course-related and graded activities,

exhibiting little use of social networking and sharing. Additionally, learners needed support in managing the expanded amount of information available to them and devising strategies to manage their time and participation.

Bosch (2009) carried out a study about exploring students use of Facebook and lecturer engagement with students on social media at the University of Cape Town. She conducted a semi-structured qualitative interview with a sample of 50 undergraduate students and five lecturers. In her research, she sorted out the use of Facebook for various aims like social networking, identity construction, privacy concerns and the potential use of Facebook for academic purposes. The study showed that while there are positive benefits to using Facebook for academic purposes, there might be certain challenges like computer literacy and uneven access.

Selwyn (2009) conducted a study to explore students' education-related use of Facebook. His research examined the social significance of Facebook in the lives of undergraduate university students (N=909) in the UK. In particular his study investigated the realities of students' Facebook activity and considered the role that Facebook is playing in the wider student experience of twenty-first century university education. He wanted to learn when and for what purposes were students using Facebook; what aspects of their interactions via Facebook can be

considered to be related to their university education; what evidence was there for Facebook use contributing to the increased (dis)engagement of students with their university studies and what can be said to be new about the nature and outcomes of students' use of Facebook. Analyzing the data, he asserts that Facebook use must be seen as identity politics of being a student rather than enhancing front stage engagement with formal studies.

The above-mentioned studies reveal students' enjoyment and appreciation of using SNS in learning in general. However, there were no specific benefits of using SNS in learning mentioned. The studies also showed some challenges that face the use of SNS in learning including computer literacy and uneven access.

Studies that Dealt with Students' Perceptions of the Use of SNS in Language Learning:

Gamble and Wilkins (2014) conducted a study to investigate Japanese students' perceptions and attitudes of participating in activities through Facebook for language learning. In addition, the researchers discuss the overall implications of and potential uses of Facebook in the field of second language learning and teaching. Ninety-seven students from three private universities in Japan participated in this study. A 26-item quantitative questionnaire using a 7-point Likert scale and an open-ended qualitative questionnaire were used in this study. The results showed a small increase

in positive attitudes toward most activities for language learning following the completion of the study compared to prior attitudes, but there were mixed attitudes toward using Facebook in an educational environment. The study also indicated that participants enjoyed peer editing of classmates writing or discussing videos; all outside of the classroom and through Facebook's user platform.

Eren (2012) conducted a study aiming at investigating students' attitudes towards the use of SNS, Facebook in particular, in language classroom. The study was carried out at a university in Gaziantep, Turkey with 48 undergraduate students who were enrolled in one year compulsory English preparatory class. The research design included a 5 point Likert-type questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. It was found out that students have a very positive attitude towards the use of Facebook activity as a supplement to language classroom, but traditional classroom based language learning still remains a backbone for language education. Though the study is a good effort in the field, it depended on a very general questionnaire and explored the issue in hand globally. Consequently more detailed work is needed in the area.

Blattner and Lomicka (2012) investigated how students use and make sense of Facebook in second language learning. Firstly, they sought to investigate how SNS are used in a language course and how

students respond to this use. Secondly, they examined attitudes of language learners towards it. the main research questions were: (1) How do students react to using this social networking site in a language course? and (2) What are the student perceptions of university level foreign language learners towards the social networking website Facebook within the context of a language course? Twenty-four students between the ages of 18 and 21 (17 female, 7 male) were enrolled in an intermediate level French course at a southeastern university during the fall and spring semesters 2010-2011. The class, along with a partner class in France, used a group Facebook page created specifically for their course in which they participated in discussions that corresponded with themes presented in the course textbook. Since one of the course goals was to focus on honing communication skills, the use of Facebook forums was one way to assist students with that goal. Students also used Twitter, e-mail and Skype to promote different types of written and oral expression and communication. These out of class discussion opportunities related to in class material extended discussion beyond the four walls of the classroom. students generally reported that they liked the use of Facebook for a variety of reasons, which fell under two main themes: (a) facilitation of communication among students and faculty – collaborative exchanges and (b) language and cultural exchange. The researchers concluded that even though Facebook appears to provide valuable benefits and opportunities for

learners and educators in the field of foreign language education, more research is needed to further establish the effectiveness of web 2.0 tools in foreign language classrooms.

Piriyasilpa (2010) conducted a research on the effects of the application of Facebook as part of the classroom. She examined students' opinions about this activity and their use of language in their interaction. The study was conducted at a university in Thailand. The topics were advised by the teacher and students were asked to make comments or discuss their opinions on the teacher's wall. She found out that such incorporation was useful for students to create their social network and it was also beneficial for supporting language learning.

In Klimanova and Dembovskaya' s study (2010), students reported their enjoyment of an assignment where they had to join a group on VK, a social network site popular in Russia. This enabled students to have authentic discussions about topics relevant to each learner with fluent Russian users. This study highlights one of the potentials of SNS in learning a language which is achieving authenticity. Authenticity is one major criteria in current language learning and instruction approaches.

Moreover, Kabilan et al. (2010) conducted a study to investigate students' perceptions of using Facebook

in language classes. They reported that students believe their language skills increased through using Facebook, and further, their motivation, confidence, and attitude concerning language learning were also enhanced through their experiences.

Mitchell (2009) conducted a study to investigate students' purposes of using SNS. The study found that users have mainly social reasons for using SNS. The study was a case study of seven English learners studying in a university in Oregon. All participants reported that they had registered on Facebook to build and maintain relationships, not to learn English. Nevertheless, six of the learners thought that using Facebook had improved their proficiency in English. This indicates one major potential of SNS which is unconscious spontaneous development of language.

Blattner and Fiori (2009) in their theoretical analytic article state that various usages of SNS can be integrated in foreign language courses. They emphasized the role of Group application available on Facebook and highlighted the benefits of authentic language interaction indicating that learners may feel publishing on SNS is more meaningful and authentic than traditional writing. The "net generation," especially, may feel that assignments handed in only to the teacher are "limited in audience, scope and communicative purpose". They also highlighted the potential of Facebook in the development of socio-pragmatic awareness (language use in specific contexts,

relationship building, and language awareness through observation and/or experience), which is an aspect of language acquisition that is often omitted in textbooks. In addition, they reported that increased motivation and improved performance in language classes have been associated with the feeling of classroom community (Rovai, 2002) and Facebook is undoubtedly a tool that can enhance the sense of belonging. What's more, Facebook has unique features that offer constructive educational experiences while maintaining privacy and safety. They consider their work as a starting point for the engagement of further investigations in the abundantly promising field of Facebook pedagogical and linguistic research.

Prichard (2013) surveyed studies that dealt with students' attitudes towards using SNS in language learning and found out that users' attitudes likely affect how SNS can be used. Some learners have reported writing cautiously, feeling unconfident about their language use, especially if their work is public and viewed by fluent speakers of L2 (Hitosugi, 2011; Klimanova & Dembovskaya, 2010; Mitchell, 2009). However, some learners have stated that SNS writing is so informal and that mistakes are so tolerated that it is not an appropriate platform for practicing writing (Mills, 2009; Mitchell, 2009). The variance in learners' attitudes seems to depend on one's personality and learning style, his/her proficiency level and confidence, and how public the platform is.

Students in the above-mentioned studies revealed some benefits of using SNS in learning language including facilitation of communication between students and staff, language and cultural exchange, authentic discussions, improved motivation and confidence. However, some studies showed variance in attitudes. Most of the studies dealt with attitudes and opinions not perceptions. This shows the need for more detailed studies in the area.

Studies that Dealt with Students' Perceptions of the use of SNS in Writing Instruction:

Leonard (2012) conducted a study to explore how students perceive a combination of three strategies, social networking, the writing process, and cooperative learning may help students to be successful with the prewriting phase of the writing process. The three research questions were (1) what are students' perceptions of a social networking tool; (2) how do students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups; and (3) how do cooperative groups work together to prewrite? A combination of strategies together with a high level of student engagement may help to increase student success in developmental writing and first-year composition courses. Nine students across four sections of writing courses agreed to participate in this qualitative inquiry. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, social networking posts, observations, and a researcher-made handout, and data were analyzed using the constant comparative method.

Three themes emerged: Students perceived usefulness related to using a social networking tool, their behaviors, and positive results. Group interaction reflected students' positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skills, and face-to-face interaction. Finally, knowledge representation was evident as it encapsulated the participants' views on making their thinking visible and sharing ideas. A discussion of the research questions integrated these findings. Students perceived a social networking tool to be valuable, beneficial to helping them learn, and an achievement for their ideas. Students perceived a social networking tool to influence prewriting in cooperative groups by generating ideas, representing their contributions, and communications with group members. Finally, the participants' perceptions and observations revealed that working together in cooperative groups to prewrite reflected the five elements of cooperation.

Yunus and Salehi (2012) investigated students' perceptions on the effectiveness of Facebook groups for teaching and improving writing. The authors saw a need to carry out this study as it provides a platform to discover pedagogical implications that would benefit in terms of improving writing skills in a Malaysian ESL context. The respondents of this research comprise 43 third year students completing their bachelor's degree in TESL, at the Faculty of Education, University Kebangsaan, Malaysia. The students' perceptions were

measured through a questionnaire comprising 10 closed-ended items and 3 open-ended ones. Respondents were required to participate in a Facebook group created by the researchers. The Facebook group, called 'Write Out Loud'. The findings showed that 'Facebook groups' is an effective tool in improving the students' writing skills, especially in the brainstorming of ideas before the actual writing. The results of this study may be beneficial to ESL educators in incorporating ICT into their teaching repertoire. It is suggested that future research should focus on the challenges of integrating Facebook groups for teaching and improving writing, and look into the perceptions of the teachers as well. In addition, experimental research could also be done to see how Facebook and Facebook groups help in improving writing skills. This study focused only on students' perceptions of the benefits of using Facebook for improving writing skills. The present study tries to cover a wide range in students' perceptions of using SNS in learning language investigating possible potentials for other skills, students' willingness to use these sites as students and as future teachers, their preferences when using them and the challenges that faces students during usage.

Kabilan et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study to investigate students' perceptions of using SNS in writing instruction. The study depend on a survey of 300 undergraduate students in Malaysia. A great majority (92.5%) of the participants replied that they

thought using Facebook could improve their English. In the survey, most learners replied that using Facebook could offer effective writing practice and increase their motivation to write in English. One student reported that he/she felt particularly motivated to write posts that “attract people” to comment.

In the above-mentioned studies, students stated some benefits of using SNS in learning writing including improvement in generating ideas, and improved cooperation and motivation. However, these studies dealt with the topic quite globally.

From the above-mentioned presentation of related studies, it is clear that there is a rareness of the studies that explored students' perceptions of integrating SNS in language learning and instruction. As recommended in the studies , there is a need for investigating students' perceptions and the challenges that face students when using SNS in language learning and instruction. The present study aims at breaching this research gap. The present study seeks to give more insight of the use of SNS in language learning through a detailed questionnaire investigating the perceived benefits, students' willingness, students' preferences, and challenges faced during usage.

Research Questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits of the use of SNS in language learning?

2. How is students' willingness of using SNS in language learning and instruction?
3. What are students' preferences when using SNS in language learning?
4. What are the challenges that face students when using SNS in language learning?

Method:

Participants:

Fifty-seven third year basic education English department students participated in this project.

The Facebook Project:

Students had established a Facebook group for themselves long ago before the project started. The researcher noticed that most of the posts on the group were written in students' mother tongue (Arabic) though the group was a closed one for students of English department and discussed issues related to their study.

The teacher told students that there will be a project integrating their Facebook use in their process of learning English as a foreign language. Students were encouraged to make English the language of the group whatever they write.

The teacher encouraged them to express themselves using different forms of writing such as essays, short posts, writing comments about others' posts. They were encouraged to write whatever they

want but in English. Students were asked to have daily participation in the group.

The teacher participated by giving comments and opinions about what students write on the Facebook group. The project last for a complete academic year.

Instruments:

Students' Perceptions Questionnaire

A questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to investigate students' perceptions of integrating SNS in language learning (appendix 1). The questionnaire consists of 18 items divided into four dimensions. Table (1) shows the distribution of the items to the different dimensions.

Table (1): Distribution of students' perceptions questionnaire items to the different dimensions

Dimension	Items
Students' perceptions of the Benefits of using SNS in language learning	1-2-3-4-5
Students' willingness of using SNS in language learning and instruction	6-7-8-9-10-11
Students' preferences when using SNS in language learning	12-13-14
Students' perceptions of the challenges that face them during using SNS in language learning	15-16-17-18

A four-point Likert-type scale was used. Students chose their responses from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was revised by specialists in the field to ensure its internal validity. The calculated reliability of the questionnaire was (Alpha = .881)

Two open ended questions were added at the end of the questionnaire to give students chance to add whatever they want about the most important dimensions which are benefits of SNS in learning a language and the challenges they face during the use of SNS in learning a language.

Results and Discussion:

For statistical analysis, the researcher depended on percentages as they give detailed insight for each item of the questionnaire.

The first dimension of the questionnaire, students' perceived benefits of using SNS in language instruction, consists of five items. Table (2) clarifies the percentages of each item.

Table (2): Percentages of the first dimension of students' perceptions questionnaire (students' perceived benefits of using SNS in language instruction)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Writing on this Facebook group increased my self-confidence when writing.	75.4	24.6	0	
I feel more motivated to write when I publish on Facebook.	47.4	45.6	7.0	0
I think the use of Facebook for learning is useful.	73.7	26.3	0	0
I think my writing improves when I participate in English groups on Facebook.	54.3	42.1	1.8	1.8
I think the participation in English groups on Facebook improves other skills besides writing.	36.8	54.4	8.8	0

It's clear from the table that the majority of students perceive SNS (here Facebook is an example) as beneficial in language learning. The general perceptions that Facebook is beneficial for learning in general and the improved self-confidence got 100% agreement (75% strongly agree and 25% agree). Improved writing follows with about 96% agreement. Improved motivation follows with 93% agreement. Finally, improvement in other language skills other than writing follows with about 91%. However, in the last item we can notice that only 37% strongly agree while 54% agree only. This could indicate that writing is the most perceived skill to benefit from the use of SNS in language learning.

In response to the first open ended question which asked about students' benefits of using Facebook, students added details about the benefits of using SNS in language learning including:

- Increased interaction among students
- Exchanging advices about writing
- Making new friendships
- Feeling free and liberated to write about one's own feelings and opinions
- Sharing opinions and ideas
- Improving creative skills
- Writing funny posts
- Improvement of English generally
- Opportunity to communicate more with professors
- Improved typing skills

- Increased vocabulary
- Better exposure to English
- Useful usage of Facebook
- Improved grammar
- Improved reading
- Gaining general knowledge
- Learning from the styles of writing of others
- Learning from teachers' comments
- Taking more time in thinking about what they write
- Improved cooperation among colleagues
- Thinking in English not in native language.
- Encouragement to participate in similar projects

The second dimension of the questionnaire, students' willingness to use SNS in language learning and instruction, consists of six items. Table (3) clarifies the percentages of each item.

Table (3): Percentages of the second dimension of students' perceptions questionnaire (students' willingness to use SNS in language learning and instruction)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I participated in the project because I wanted to improve my writing.	50.9	29.8	17.5	1.8
I participated in the project only because the teacher asked me to.	15.8	29.8	38.6	15.8
I hope the writing in the group continues in English after the project is over.	59.6	33.3	5.3	1.8
I will continue writing in English in the group after the project is over.	29.8	59.6	8.8	1.8
I hope that all professors at college use Facebook to facilitate learning.	66.6	26.3	5.3	1.8
I intend to use Facebook with my students in the future if possible.	52.5	43.9	1.8	1.8

It's clear from the table that the majority of students are willing to use SNS (here Facebook is an example) in learning and instruction. Items 6 and 7 contradict to show the real purpose of students' participation in the project; about 80% responded that they participated in the project because they wanted to improve their writing while when asked in item 7 whether they participated to satisfy the teacher about 45% agreed. This means that some of them (about 25%) have mixed purposes or are confused about their purpose. About 96% of the participants showed willingness to use SNS in their own teaching in the future. This indicates that they believe they have benefited a lot from it and thus they believed it will be a successful tool in teaching English in the future. About 92% agreed that they hope to write in English even after the project is over and they hope all professors use SNS in teaching. This indicates clear willingness to use SNS in learning. However, about 79% declared that they intend to continue writing in English when the project is over (30% only strongly agree). This shows that there is a difference between what students believe as successful teaching methods and what they really apply in their learning and teaching. This was very clear in the follow up observation. The researcher made a follow up observation of the Facebook group after the project was over. The researcher noticed that students began to fall back gradually to the use of their native language (Arabic) as the language of the group. After three months about 90% of students' posts in the group were in the native language not in English. This

indicates that students need to be engaged in academic projects to use SNS in language learning.

The third dimension of the questionnaire, students' preferences when using SNS in language learning, consists of three items. Table (4) clarifies the percentages of each item.

Table (4): Percentages of the third dimension of students' perceptions questionnaire (students' preferences when using SNS in language learning)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I prefer writing short posts than writing essays on Facebook.	59.6	29.8	7.0	3.6
I prefer reading short posts than essays on Facebook.	50.9	33.3	15.8	0
I prefer to write one-word comment than writing comments in complete sentences.	14.0	36.6	33.4	14.0

Item 12 dealt with students' preferences when they write on the Facebook group. About 89% of the participants preferred to write short posts than writing essays or long posts. This is consistent with the nature of SNS as they are meant for social interaction and in social interaction we don't use long texts; we use short texts. This could be an obstacle for using SNS in developing writing skill. The topic of the potentials of SNS in developing writing skills needs more investigation. Item 13 dealt with students' preferences when they read what has been written by others on the Facebook group. About 84% of the participants preferred to read short posts than reading essays. Again this is consistent with the nature of SNS especially Facebook. When you use Facebook, you find yourself

confronted with a great number of posts. You want to read as many posts as you can and thus you prefer to read the short posts than longer ones. Item 14 dealt with a phenomena common on Facebook which is responding to posts with one word such as great, cool, wonderful, nice etc. 51% percent of the participants preferred writing one word comment. This is not a big percentage; however, students participating in projects aiming at using SNS in language learning need encouragement to use complete sentences not one word comments as complete sentences can help better in the improvement of language use.

The fourth dimension of the questionnaire, challenges that face students when using SNS in language learning, consists of four items. Table (5) clarifies the percentages of each item.

Table (5): Percentages of the fourth dimension of students' perceptions questionnaire (challenges that face students when using SNS in language learning)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It's difficult to use Facebook daily because of the lack of time.	36.8	38.6	15.8	8.8
It's difficult to use Facebook daily because of technical problems.	36.8	40.4	17.5	5.3
It's difficult to read all the posts on the group as they are too many.	47.4	45.5	5.3	1.8
My parents object to my use of Facebook in this project.	1.7	5.3	35.1	57.9

Item 15 deals with the issue of time availability. About 75% of the participants declared that they don't have enough time to participate daily in the Facebook group for the purpose of learning. This could be due to the burden on students during the academic year. This could lead teachers to make use of SNS during summer vacations as students are free and have enough time. Item 16 dealt with availability of access to the SNS. About 77% of the participants declared that it's difficult to use Facebook daily because of technical problems. These technical problems are related to the internet service in Egypt which is not available for everyone. Though the majority has the service now, the service is not consistent. Item 17 dealt with the large number of posts on Facebook groups. About 93% of the participants declared that it's difficult to read everything on the group. However, this is not a big problem. Students are exposed to a lot of posts and they can select what is interesting for them. Teachers using SNS in language learning shouldn't insist that all students read all the posts as this is difficult for them. Item 18 dealt with a social issue. In most families parents object to their children's use of Facebook during academic year. However, only 7% of the parents object to the use of Facebook when it was used in learning. This indicates that the resistance of society to the integration of new technologies in learning is not a hindrance.

These percentages are consistent with students responses to the open ended question about the

challenges that faced them when using SNS in learning language. The top responses were as follows:

- Shortage of students' time
- Technical problems
- Access problems
- A lot of time to write essays
- Using transliteration (students write Arabic words in English letters)

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The study revealed that the majority of participants perceive SNS as beneficial in language learning. The most perceived benefits include improvement in a lot of aspects such as self-confidence in writing, all language skills especially writing, vocabulary, grammar, motivation, interaction among students and between students and teachers, creative skills, exposure to language, cooperation and thinking in English. The study also revealed that the majority of participants are willing to use SNS in learning English as students and in teaching English as future teachers. Besides they showed willingness to continue using the sites for learning after the project is over. Participants also declared that they prefer writing and reading short posts than long ones. Some challenges appeared when using SNS for learning language including students' lack of sufficient time, technical problems related to the access of consistent internet services, and overload of posts on SNS when used for learning. Consequently, the study recommends the integration of SNS in language

learning and calls for more studies especially experimental ones to investigate the effectiveness of using SNS for improving different language skills.

Theoretically, this study filled a research gap. Most of the studies that dealt with students' perceptions of SNS in learning language focused on positive and negative attitudes while the present study provides detailed insight in students' perceived benefits of using SNS in learning language, their willingness to use it as students and as teachers in the future, their preferences when using these sites in learning and the challenges they faced.

Practically, this study provides teachers and university staff with detailed insight in students' perceptions of SNS in language learning.

This could encourage teachers and university staff to incorporate SNS in language instruction programs. This also could help them overcome the challenges that face students when using SNS in learning.

Suggestions for further research:

1. Investigating experimental the impact of using facebook in writing instruction
2. Investigating university staff's perception of using facebook in language instruction
3. Investigating the dynamics of student-teacher relationship when using facebook in language instruction

4. Investigating the possibilities of using facebook for improving the four language skills

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