Multimodal Mobile-based Activities in Listening and Speaking Skills Class: EFL Students' evaluation

الأنشطة المتعددة الوسائط عن طريق الأجهزة المحمولة في حصة مهارات الاستماع والتعبير: تقييم طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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Abstract:

Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) is regarded as a new stage in the development of computer and distance learning. Recently, this new wave of technology has gained its popularity among students due to the widespread of various mobile technologies to enhance learning. Within the framework of multimodal approach, this research study seeks to gauge the effectiveness of a multimodal mobile-based course integrated into a Listening and Speaking Skills module at the University of Algiers 2.

The research methodology used in this study is the descriptive. Thus, data was collected by means of a summative evaluation course checklist. The evaluation form was to thirty eight (38) EFL students from Algiers 2 University. The findings revealed that the engagement in different multimodal mobile-based practices received students' approval. The findings also supported the claim that mobile devices are regarded as multimodal and multimedia resources that support technology-mediated instruction through multimodal representation. Accordingly, the results of this study will serve as a foundation for coming researchers to investigate mobile learning in depth.

Keywords: listening skills; mobile learning; multimodality; speaking skills; students' evaluation.

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ملخص:

يعتبر تعلـم اللغـة بمسـاعدة المحمـول (MALL) مرحلـة جديـدة مـن مراحـل تطورالتعلم عن طريق الكمبيوتر والتعلم عن بعـد. ﻓﻲ الآونـة الأخيـرة، اكتسبت هـذه الموجـة الجديـدة مـن التكنولوجيـا شـعبيتها بـين الطـلاب بسـبب انتشـار التقنيات المحمولة المختلفة لتعزيز التعلم. ﻓﻲ إطار النهج المتعدد الوسـائط، تسـعى هذه الدراسـة البحثية إلى قياس فعالية دورة متعددة الوسـائط تعتمد على المحمول مدمجـة ﻓﻲ وحدة مهـارات الاسـتماع والتحـدث ﻓﻲ جامعـة الجزائـر 2. منهجيـة البحـث المستخدمة ﻓﻲ هـذه الدراسـة هـي المنهج الوصفي. . وبالتـالي، تم جمع البيانات عن طريق استمارة تقييمية .تم تقـديم نمـوذج التقييـم إلى ثمانيـة وثلاثـين (38) طالبًـا مـن طـلاب اللغـة الإنجليزيـة كلغـة أجنبيـة مـن جامعـة الجزائـر 2. وكشـفت النتـائج أن المشـاركة ﻓﻲ مختلـف الممارسـات القائمـة علـى الهـاتف المحمول متعددة الوسـائط تلقى موافقـة الطلاب. دعمت النتـائج أيضًـا الادعـاء بـأن الأجهـزة المحمولـة تعتبـر مـوارد متعـددة الوسـائط ومـوارد تـدعم التعليـم بوسـاطة التكنولوجيا مـن خـلال التمثيـل المتعـدد الوسـائط. وفقًـا لـذلك، سـتكون نتـائج هذه الدراسة بمثابة أساس للباحثين القادمين لدراسة التعلم المحمول بعمق.

الكلمـات المفتاحيـة: مهـارات الاستماع– التعلم عـن طريق المحمـول – تعـدد الوسائط– مهارات المخاطبة– تقييم الطلاب.

Introduction

In this new technological atmosphere, it has been noticed that different mobile devices are increasingly used in different contexts and for various purposes. But not surprisingly, their use as educational tools has not been very apparent compared to their non-educational uses. As far as EFL is concerned, research suggests that listening and speaking are core elements of interaction (Ghoneim, 2013). Teaching these two skills requires not only a well-designed syllabus but also a selective choice of the appropriate semiotic resources. With the wide spreading of multimedia technology in educational sectors, more and more teachers have come to realize the importance of applying multimodal theory to the teaching of English. Multimodal teaching method, through the use of pictures, videos, audio files and some other means, has the strengths of improving students

listening and speaking skills efficiently and will definitely replace the traditional and monotonous mode of English teaching.

It is worth noting that teaching listening and speaking at the university level in the Algerian context in general, and Algiers 2 University in specific, is still struggling in terms of the availability of the appropriate means such as the language laboratories. Hence, by traditional English teaching with insufficient resources set to teach the two skills, teachers gave students exactly whatever in the textbook along with audio CD. It has been noticed that students tend to show low motivation when the course follows certain routine.

Objectives of the Study

The present research's first objective is to evaluate the use of mobile devices in multiple activities during the Listening and Speaking Skills course. The present study addresses the following research question:

Q: How do EFL students at Algiers 2 University evaluate the implementation of multimodal mobile-based activities as a learning experience that brings a new learning paradigm to motivate them and meet their language needs and requirements?

As an attempt to answer the above research question, the following research hypothesis is advanced:

Hypo: EFL students at Algiers 2 University have positive perception of this new learning experience.

Thus, this study aims to evaluate the extent to which mobile devices could support listening and speaking activities in situations where students may wish to collaborate.

Teaching Listening and Speaking Skills

Listening and speaking are considered as two skills that co-occur in real-life discourse and they are not mutually exclusive. At the university level, these skills are stated in the curriculum scope and curriculum objective of ELT in the Algerian syllabus in higher education context. Several studies have put listening before speaking and considered placing speaking before listening in learning language as to "put the cart before the horse.", (Vandergrift, 1999).

In the field of language teaching, various definitions of listening have been provided. Richards (2008) considers the

subject from two different perspectives: *a)* listening as comprehension; and *b)* listening as acquisition. On one hand, as Rixon (1986) notes that the aim of teaching listening comprehension is to help learners of English cope with listening in real life (as cited in Rahman, 2014). On the other hand, Schmidt (1990) clarifies that for language acquisition to take place, students take advantage of what they hear (input) and filter the part of the input that they notice (intake) (as cited in Richards, 2008). Listening skill encompasses a number of sub-skills that the teacher should be aware of. According to Vandergrift (2007), listening skill is as an active activity that listeners have to differentiate between sounds, comprehend vocabulary and grammatical structure, interpret stress and intonation.

As far as speaking skill is concerned, Luoma (2004) argues that "speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop" (p. 1) (as cited in Omari, 2015, p. 10). Speaking is also described as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information, cites Brown (1983) (as cited in Idrissovaa, Smagulovaa, & Tussupbekovaa, 2015, p. 278). In teaching and learning context, the teacher's main purpose behind teaching speaking skills is to enhance the students' speaking performance. Thus, it is significant to design activities which focus more on tasks that are balanced between the need to cover important elements in performing oral communication.

The first element that Hughes (2011) cites is fluency. He asserts that the key to enable students to be fluent is training them to use their personal language freely, to express their ideas and avoid imitations (as cited in Omari, 2015). Second, students should pay attention to the rules that govern the target language; including grammatical knowledge, lexical knowledge, and phonological knowledge, this is called accuracy. Finally, one feature of speaking is the supra-segmental feature which refers to the study of phonological features applied to groups larger than the single segment, such as the syllable or the word, mentions Omari (2015). Goh cited that many researchers view that supra-segmental features contribute to the

comprehensibility of the speech. Therefore, they should be prioritized when teaching pronunciation (2015).

Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Though this new concept is still ill-defined because of the difficulty in characterising the unique nature of mobile learning, John Traxler argued that mobile learning is "certainly not merely the conjunction of 'mobile' and 'learning'."(2009, p.1). Mobile-assisted Language Learning describes an approach to language learning that is assisted through the use of handheld or palmtop technologies (Valarmathi, 2011). In addition to its obvious relation to second language acquisition (SLA), Hubbard and Stockwell (2013) claimed that MALL depends on two major bodies which are mobile learning and computer-assisted language learning. Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) explicate that unlike CALL, MALL opts for a variety of handheld technologies, often with internet connection, ranging from ultra-portable laptops and handhelds to smartphones, mobile phones, MP3 and MP4 players, digital voice recorders and cameras.

This new teaching and learning paradigm provides numerous advantages. First of all, mobile technologies provide learning at the time we want, and in the place we want. That is, mobile learning lies for Just-in-Time-and-Place learning where web browsing and applications can provide instantaneous information to a learner's fingertips in moments. In addition, mobile learning relies on readily available devices. Mobile devices facilitates student's interaction with teachers; administration, and amongst peers (Mehdipour & Zerehkafi, 2013). However, this new approach poses some challenges such as the technical barriers (battery life, small screen, etc.).

Multimodality

With the widespread of educational technologies, it has become necessary to enlarge the scope of the study of meaning making and meaning interpretation processes. Multimodality theory provides a tool kit for the analysis and interpretation of different semiotic modes as well as the ways these modes are put together when used in communication. The semiotic modes include anything which delivers meaning such as writing, speech, image, gaze, gesture, colour, etc. In fact each mode carries a partial meaning of the message and once all the modes

are put together the meaning of the whole message is completed (Bezemer.J. et al, 2012). Multimodality is based upon three major premises. First of all, this theory assumes that the process of meaning making is realized thanks to the multiplicity of modes. Second, culture, context and society have major influence on the use of modes to create and interpret meaning. The last assumption highlights the fact that meaning is orchestrated through the selection, configuration, and combination of different modes (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010). It is worth mentioning that the concept of multimodal teaching first appeared in the work of a group of researchers (The New London Group) who expanded the definitions of literacy and literacy pedagogy.

To sum up, as a consequence of the above changes in the social and technological landscapes, the field of education, in particular, TEFL has been influenced, as the traditional literacy pedagogy, which considers language as a central means of communication, has been challenged to expand beyond the skills of encoding and decoding texts to include other modes of communication (Kern & Schultz, 2005).

EFL Students' attitudes Towards Mobile-assisted Language Learning: Towards an Evaluation of Mobile Learning Experiences

Although mobile technologies have been proven to be effective and successful media for educational purposes, their implementation requires the focus not only on the learning outcomes in terms of cognitive gains but also on the students' evaluation of the learning experience itself. Attitude surveys have been used extensively in the mobile learning literature to measure learner attitudes towards the technology and their enjoyment of the experience. Bogardus (1931) (as cited in Bashar, 2012) defined an attitude as "a tendency to act toward or against something in the environment which becomes thereby a positive or negative value" (p. 62).

Researchers like Demouy and Kukulska-Hulme (2010) investigated students' experiences when using portable devices for listening and speaking practice. They found that learners will need to be helped towards recognizing the specific value of this type of practice. Another study was conducted by Nassoura (2012) to examine students' acceptance of m-learning for higher

education in Saudi Arabia. Results showed a high level of students' acceptance for using m-learning.

Research Methodology and Design

Method

The choice of the method is dependent on the nature of the topic, the nature of the data, the aim of the research, and the sample to be investigated. Accordingly, and as advanced beforehand, the present research aimed to evaluate the integration of mobile-based activities in an EFL class. Hence, the research methodology used in this study is the descriptive one. The research instrument is the course evaluation form. The independent variable is mobile-based learning, and the dependent variable is the subjects' evaluation of mobile learning.

Research Setting

In order to carry out this research, a group of first year LMD degree students had followed a multimodal mobile-based instruction in order to develop their listening and speaking skills. The programme lasted for 12 weeks (during the first semester of the academic year 2017/2018) and ended up with a summative course evaluation which intended to check students' rating of the level of the course success or failure and "provide feedback for programme improvement" (Bailey 2009, p. 707). As Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle (2006) state, "summative data focus on determining whether a programme"s goals were met" (p. 18).

Population and Sampling

Thirty eight (38) students participated in the multimodal mobile-based course. The experimental subjects were invited to complete the evaluation checklist in order to evaluate the use of the mobile devices.

Data Gathering Tool

The students' evaluation checklist form is used as a research instrument to rate the effectiveness of the mobile-based course and the extent of the instructor's success in bridging the objectives of the course to the needs of students. Moreover, the evaluation checklist form provides responses to certain

questions related mainly to the course effectiveness, the attainment of objectives and the well application of teaching materials.

However, the mobile learning community has yet to produce standardised attitude measurement instruments such as those available in other fields (Moore & Sutman 1970). Therefore, the evaluation form used in this study was adapted from Vavoula and Sharples (2009) and Meddour's (2014) to fit the study's objectives. The former includes a three-level framework for evaluating mobile learning, comprising a micro level concerned with usability, a meso level concerned with the learning experience, and a macro level concerned with integration within existing educational and organisational contexts. Meddour, in his phd thesis, used an evaluation check list to evaluate the effectiveness of a web-based instruction. The layout of his evaluation form has been adapted in this study.

Thus, the present evaluation form comprises six sections that covers the following key elements:

The instructor;
The Mobile-based Activities;
Lessons and Activities;
Objectives;
Attitudes;
Challenges.

The present evaluation form of mobile-based programme relied on a checklist survey as an evaluation tool to fulfill the requirements of the rating with Likert scale of evaluation in which participants had to choose the appropriate choice that matches the degree of their approval to the statements.

Results Description

Evaluating the instructor

Table N°1: Students' evaluation of the instructor

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Instructor was knowledgeable about the course.	10	24	4	0	0
	26.32%	63.16%	10.53%	0%	0%
b.Instructor encouraged participation and answers students' questions.	24	10	4	0	0
	63.16%	26.32%	10.53%	0%	0%
c. Instructor was prepared to use mobile technologies.	23	14	1	0	0
	60.53%	36.84%	2.63%	0%	0%
d. Instructor was enthusiastic about teaching the subject and using mobile technologies as learning/ teaching tools.	13	20	5	0	0
	34.21%	52.63%	13.16%	0%	0%

Table 1 demonstrates students' ratings of the various instructional ingredients that are directly bound to the instructor's teaching behaviour. To begin with, out of 36, participants 24 (63.16%) agree that the instructor is knowledgeable about the subject, 10 participants (26.32%) strongly agree, and 4 are unsure (10.53%) about the statement. As far as encouraging participation is concerned, the majority of students agree that their Listening and Speaking Skills teacher motivates them to demonstrate effective involvement during classroom practice. Similarly, over half of the participants agree that the instructor was prepared to use mobile technologies. The last item in the evaluation rates the instructor's enthusiasm towards teaching the subject using mobile technologies. The table shows that 13 students (34.21%) strongly agree that their teacher is enthusiastic about using mobile technologies as teaching/ learning tools, 20 students (52.63%) agree with the

statement and 5 other students (13.16%) are unsure of their opinion.

Evaluating the multimodal mobile-based materials

Table N°2: Students' evaluation of learning materials

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. The instructor used a variety of mobile-based learning materials such as audio recordings, videos, pictures, mobile apps, etc.	20	18	0	0	0
	52.63%	47.37%	0%	0%	0%
b. The mobile-based materials fit the course objectives.	10	20	2	4	2
	26.32%	52.63%	5.26%	10.53%	5.26%
c. The affordances offered by the mobile dictionary helped me not only acquire new vocabulary but also learn their phonological, morphological, and contextual aspects.	3	23	6	2	4
	7.89%	60.53%	15.79%	5.26%	10.53%
d. Listening to the audio recordings via my mobile device was more effective than listening to them via a speaker.	9	21	8	0	0
	23.68%	55.26%	21.05%	0%	0%
e. The audio-visual activities helped me decipher the meaning of the tasks.	8	24	3	2	1
	21.05%	63.16%	7.89%	5.26%	2.63%
f. The use of the Pronunciation app helped me be aware and have control of the English sound system.	7	25	3	2	1
	18.42%	65.79%	7.89%	5.26%	2.63%
g. The use of the mobile recorder and the Audio Transcriber app helped me work on my speaking skills.	10	22	5	1	0
	26.32%	57.89%	13.16%	2.63%	0%

Table 2 indicates that most students agree with the statements related to the role of the mobile learning materials in assisting them to cope with the course requirements. Over half of the students report that the instructor used a variety of mobile-based learning materials which are multimodal in nature. In addition, the vast majority of students agree on the fact that the different mobile-based materials fit the course objectives.

Evaluating lessons and activities

Table N°3: Students' evaluation of lessons and activities

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Lessons prepared me to use English in academic, workplace, and daily life settings.	06	26	01	05	00
	15.79%	68.42%	2.63%	13.16%	0%
b. In-class activities were eclectic and met my preferred type of class work (working in pairs, individual work, working in groups, etc).	30	04	02	01	01
	78.95%	10.53%	5.26%	2.63%	2.63%
c. The activities helped me produce correct and relevant instances of discourse with ease and confidence.	10	20	04	02	02
	26.32%	52.63%	10.53%	5.26%	5.26%

As can be shown from table 3, there is an agreement among students with the three statements related to material and lesson development. First, the vast majority of students agree that lessons prepared them to use English in academic, workplace and daily life settings, with only 5 (13.16%) who disagree, and 1 (2.63%) who is unsure. Second, with regard to the in-class activities, over half of the students (78.95%) agree that the instructor opted for a variety of activities that met their preferred type of class work. Finally, the majority of the students agree that the activities helped them produce correct and relevant instances of discourse with ease and confidence.

Evaluating course objectives

Table N° 4: Students' evaluation of the course objectives

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. The mobile-based activities met my preferred learning style(s).	23	11	02	02	00
	61.47%	28.95%	5.26%	5.26%	0%
b. The mobile-based activities helped me overcome my listening and speaking difficulties.	05	22	03	05	03
	13.16%	57.89%	7.89%	13.16%	7.89%
c. Mobile-based activities motivated me to practice listening and speaking better than traditional classroom.	25	09	02	02	0
	65.79%	23.68%	5.26%	5.26%	0%

In the fourth aspect which is related to course objectives, 23 (61.47%) students strongly agree that the different mobile-based activities met their preferred learning styles, 11 (28.95) students agree so, while only 2 (5.26%) who are unsure, and 2 (5.26%) who disagree. When it comes to the listening and speaking skills difficulties faced by students, over half of the students (57.89%) agree that the mobile-based activities helped them overcome their difficulties, 5 (13.16) students strongly agree, 3 (7.89%) are unsure, 5 (13.16%) disagree, and 3 (7.89%) students strongly disagree. With regard to the extent to which the mobile-based activities are source of motivation compared to traditional classroom, the vast majority of students (65.79%) strongly agree with the statement.

Evaluating the mobile devices usage

Table N°5: Students' attitudes towards mobile devices usage

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Studying with my mobile device was an effective method to study language, and practise my listening and speaking skills.	03	15	07	08	05
	7.89%	39.74%	18.42%	21.05%	13.16%
b. Mobile devices offered a wide range of modalities (e.g. audio, and visual) that satisfy my needs.	15	17	05	01	00
	39.74%	44.74%	13.16%	2.63%	0%
c. Mobile-based learning helped me being autonomous student.	12	15	06	02	03
	31.58%	39.74%	15.79%	5.26%	7.89%
d. Mobile learning made learning dynamic.	20	13	03	01	01
	52.63%	34.21%	7.89%	2.63%	2.63%
e. Mobile learning provides advantages to create personalized learning.	07	12	09	04	06
	18.42%	31.58%	23.68%	10.53%	15.79%
f. Overall I felt that studying using my mobile device was a positive experience and I want to study English with my mobile device again	22	12	02	02	00
	57.89%	31.58%	5.26%	5.26%	0%

As can be depicted from table 5, 15 (39.74%) students agree that studying with mobile devices is an effective method to study language, and practise listening and speaking skills, 3 (7.89%) strongly agree, 7 (18.42%) are unsure, 8 (21.05%) disagree, and 5 (13.16%) strongly disagree. Second, with regard to the modalities offered by mobile devices, there is an agreement among students (over half of the participants) that mobile devices offer a wide range of modalities that satisfy their needs. In addition, most of the students evaluate positively

mobile devices as tools that provide autonomy, dynamicity, motivation, and personalization. Finally, the vast majority of students reported that studying using their mobile device was a positive experience and they want to study English with their mobile device again.

Evaluating the challenges
Table N°6: Students' evaluation of the challenges

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. The use of my mobile device was challenging and uncomfortable.	00	10	02	04	22
	0%	26.32%	5.26%	10.53%	57.89%
b. The technical challenges (screen size, keyboard size, etc.) affected learning via my mobile device.	04	13	05	06	10
	10.53%	34.21%	13.16%	15.79%	26.32%
c. The use of my mobile device distracted me.	00	01	05	12	20
	0%	2.63%	13.16%	31.58%	52.63%

The last item in the evaluation form concerns the challenges faced when using mobile devices. First of all, when asked if the use of mobile device was challenging and uncomfortable, the vast majority of the students disagree with the statement. However, there was a disagreement among the student when it comes to the technical challenges. 4 (10.53%) students strongly agree that the technical barriers affected their learning, 13 (34.21%) agree, 5 (13.16%) are unsure, 6 (15.79%) students disagree, and 10 (26.32%) strongly disagree. When asked if the use of mobile devices is a source of distraction, the vast majority of the students disagree with the statement.

Results and Discussion
M-learning is a new concept in the Algerian educational system. Therefore, evaluating the different aspects related to the development of a mobile-based course has become necessary. The first main aspect in a

classroom is the teacher. Having over half of the participants
considering the teacher knowledgeable about the subject (Listening and Speaking Skills) confirms the assumption that EFL teachers should use a simple language full of explanation and clarification to help students understand the given input in the correct way (Guo & Robin, 2013). In fact, teachers are considered as a primary resource of the input in the classroom; therefore, it is significant for the teacher to be knowledgeable about the course. It is with no doubt that interaction, enthusiasm, and participation are core elements in the Listening and Speaking Skills class. In this context, teachers should be facilitators of communication tasks rather than dominant 'lecturers' to students (Hughes, 2011).

The participants seemed to agree on the fact that their teacher encouraged participation and answers students' questions. As far as mobile technology integration is concerned, the majority of the participants agreed that their teacher was prepared to use mobile devices inside the classroom which is probably due to the enough exposure and expertise in utilizing and adopting technology. Accordingly, Mahmood, Abdul Halim, Rajindra, and Mohd Ghani (2014) claim that teachers who are still fresh from universities are at the great interest and rate in using technology in the classroom because they were given ample of trainings and practice. Therefore, they have more confidence in using them. Teachers who feel comfortable with students using the technology and understand how to embed technology into the content being presented are required. These educators are vital to creating an appropriate learning environment for their students (Coley, Cradler & Engle, 1997).

As far as the mobile-based activities used in the programme are concerned, since the approach upon which the present study was based on is multimodality, the researcher opted for a variety of modes to transmit the mobile-based contents. Therefore, all the students agreed that their instructor used a variety of mobile-based learning materials such as audio recordings, videos, pictures, mobile apps, etc. This reflects the concern of the instructor to cover a wide range of content knowledge to avoid monotony and keep the course dynamic. As far as the suitability

of the learning materials to the course objectives is concerned, there was an agreement among students that the diversified mobile-based materials fit their course objectives set at the beginning of the programme. Setting objectives for the course gives a guided vision of instruction for both the teacher and the student to identify priorities and make relevant decisions (Graves, 2000).

Regarding the effectiveness of each mobile-based activity used in the present study, many students consent on the advantages that each activity provides to facilitate understanding, acquisition, and production of speech. It is worth noting that the researcher opted for a variety of authentic mobile–based materials to teach listening and speaking skills, based upon a multimodal approach. Educational mobile apps have been used in this research to tackle specific aspects in the listening and speaking skills course. All in all, the responses in terms of the effectiveness of the used mobile apps revealed positive attitudes from the students.

First, a mobile dictionary app has been used, basically to teach vocabulary-related aspects. More than half of the students believed this app was useful and helped them not only acquire new vocabulary but also learn their phonological, morphological, and contextual aspects. This is supported by Kukulska-Hulme (2012) who found that among mobile apps, using dictionaries is highly regarded by students. The mobile dictionary used provides not only the definition of the word, but also its phonological transcription and pronunciation, its translation into different languages, verb conjugations, some examples, and other different features.

The different modalities (visual, auditory, spatial) offered by the mobile dictionary allowed the students for better learning of new vocabulary. Other two mobile apps that have been employed were the Pronunciation app, and the Audio Transcriber app. The former aimed at helping students be aware and have control of the English sound system, while the second helped them work on their speaking skills. The findings revealed positive attitudes in terms of usefulness of these two apps. These findings corroborate with what Soler-Urzua (2011) found on an experiment designed to test the effects of TTS on phonological acquisition.

The researcher observed a trend showing improvements in perception and production by the TTS group, a pattern that was not observed for the other two groups. Finally, the use of audio, visual, and audio-visual modes was perceived as being helpful in deciphering the meaning of the listening tasks. The amalgamation of authenticity and specificity of materials stimulates students to make sense of learning and simulates the real world in the classroom (Baghban and Pandian, 2011).

Students were also asked to evaluate the lessons and activities in which the decisions on the skills, knowledge, competencies and tasks are taken. In fact, the conceptualization of the lessons and activities content is determined by the purpose of the course and its objectives. Concerning the replies, students agreed that the lessons and activities prepared me to use English in academic, workplace, and daily life settings, and they helped me produce correct and relevant instances of discourse with ease and confidence. This is due to the fact that the teacher relied on a syllabus that covered a variety of topics and themes that are tightly related to real-life situations. In addition,

the in-class activities were found very eclectic and met the preferred type of class work of the majority of the students. Indeed, the teacher varied in the type of class activities to satisfy the students' needs.

For any instruction, objectives should be set at the very beginning as one of the decisive procedures of course design that determines its success or failure. The first objective behind applying the multimodal approach to mobile learning is to meet the different learning styles. Students claimed that the use of mobile devices met their preferred learning styles. Along the same vein, Sankey (2006) asserts that learners are more comfortable learning in an environment which reflects their predominant learning style. In addition, presenting learning materials in a variety of modes has been used to encourage students to develop a more versatile approach to learning (Morrison, Sweeney, & Heffernan, 2003) (as cited Gilakjani, Ismail, & Ahmadi, 2011).

When it comes to listening and speaking skills, students perceived the usefulness of the mobile-based activities in helping them overcome their listening and speaking difficulties.

The activities also motivated them to practice listening and speaking better than traditional classroom.

When expressing their overall attitudes towards the use of mobile devices as learning tools, students perceived studying with their mobile devices as an effective method to study language, and practise their listening and speaking skills. They also emphasized on the fact that mobile devices offered a wide range of modalities (e.g. audio, and visual) that satisfy their needs. Fernandez-Pacheco (2016) suggests that the development and employment of language teaching materials with suitable orchestrations of modes according to our students' needs, may favour students' language learning experience.

Another advantage of mobile devices usage is helping students being more autonomous, self-regulated, and dynamic. It is worth mentioning that one aspect of mobile devices that influence students' engagement and autonomy is their multimodal feature. Mobile apps, for instance, allow EFL students to learn English through a multitude of mediums and give them opportunities to interact with, negotiate, interpret and make meaning of texts available, whether these are orthographic, audio, audiovisual or visual texts (Murray, 2008).

In his study, Jiang (2016) investigates the validity of multimodality in non-English majors' autonomous listening through an experimental study. The results indicate that multimodality could boost students' autonomous listening significantly and improve their comprehension, as well as multiliteracy capacity.

It is inevitable to address mobile learning without tackling the challenges that might face the learning experience. While implementing a new type of technology, which has not been used before in a formal setting (the classroom), students may feel uncomfortable and find it challenging to use it. As far as the present study is concerned, over half of the students claimed being comfortable while using their mobile devices.

In addition, they said that the use of mobile devices did not distract them. This is due to the fact that the students are "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1) who were exposed to the different types of digital technology from the early ages of their lives. However, results revealed statistically significant differences among the students' attitudes in terms of the technical

challenges facing MALL. Unsurprisingly, the unprepared infrastructure, the device-related issues, and other issues add additional work to the instructor in order to fix any emerging problems.

Pedagogical Implications

In sum, this particular group of students had overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the use of mobile digital devices as multimodal tools. The results strongly suggest that most of the students perceived mobile learning as attractive multimodal learning tool to learn listening and speaking skills. The findings of this study also suggest that mobile technologies have the potential to provide new learning experiences; students can engage more frequently in learning activities inside and outside of the classroom; students can obtain resources and multimedia learning materials on their mobiles.

With regard to MALL activities, EFL teachers should consider employing creative and motivating activities that address learners' language learning skills. In addition, instructors should pay enough attention to design activities that build students' language skills so as to satisfy the different students' needs and learning styles.

Because the learning process can hardly be accomplished without a teacher's direction or guidance, teachers should direct their students on choosing the appropriate learning materials. Instructors should encourage and assist learner' autonomy this enables learners to combine formal and informal learning. Resistance to change is challenging when using technology in education. It is believed that mobile learning increases instructors' work, because it adds additional preparations. Therefore, special training for teachers is required in order to prepare them to face any challenges that might face the integration of mobile technologies.

As for a future work, it is interesting to compare male and female students regarding Mobile Technology Acceptance in education (MTA). Furthermore, research on how to design educational content for mobile learning that can accommodate Arab learners, and their culture, traditions and norms, is valuable. Further research should be done to measure how the orchestration of verbal and non-verbal modes could be influential on students' audio-visual comprehension. This fact

could help foreign language teachers to better select the materials they use to teach listening and speaking skills.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation is an essential part in the process of integrating a new type of interactive learning system. The present article aimed at evaluating the extent to which the multimodal mobile-based instruction the students received has been effective. It emerged that a well-planned course has encouraged students to engage effectively in the different class activities, allowing them to be more autonomous. Hence, the role of the instructor is quite significant in achieving better outcomes. The instructor should be well prepared to use technology.

Mlearning remains in its infancy in Algeria, and it is hoped that with adequate awareness of the requirements of m-learning and its challenges, academic policy makers in Algeria should consider the possibility of creating true mobile learning programs taking into consideration the social and cultural issues in the country. Hence, it is pivotal to raise awareness on the part of all EFL practitioners so as to know how well invest in these digital devices.

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