A Quantitative Analysis of the Students' Experience with Digital Media in L2 Acquisition[*]

Квантитативний аналіз досвіду студентів із використання цифрових медіа з метою оволодіння другою мовою (L2)[**]

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ABSTRACT

Aim. *Foreign language education widely utilizes various forms of eLearning or blended learning techniques and tools, and this trend has recently been supported and speeded up by the global pandemics of COVID-19. The study attempts to analyse the students' experience with the use of digital media used for foreign language education with the aim of providing clear implications needed for future digital (online) language higher education.*

Methodology. *The methodology used to collect data was a questionnaire distributed online to the students of the University of Diyala in Iraq in July 2021 with n=394 making it a very representative and statistically relevant sample. Five hypotheses (H) were created and tested with these results. (**H1**) there is no correlation between a well-prepared teacher and subjective satisfaction of the students with online classes. (**H2**) the students will significantly prefer traditional teaching to online L2 acquisition. (**H3**) there will be a correlation between increased screen time and students' dissatisfaction with online learning. (**H4**) the more they have to use digital media, the more they will prefer print text for their L2 acquisition. (**H5**) the most important subjectively perceived negative aspect of online learning will be reduced communication possibilities both with the tutor and with their peers.*

Results. *The students significantly supported traditional foreign language techniques over digital ones despite the fact that the tutors were evaluated with very high grades by the students. Thus, the fact that the tutors are well prepared, they use modern technology and attempt to motivate the students very successfully, the final result of the online foreign language class did not prove to be parallel to the traditional class regarding students' satisfaction.*

Conclusions. *The results could be important for applied linguistics and psycholinguistics as they provide a clear overview of the current state of affairs in L2 acquisition with the use of digital technologies, which is a crucial topic that is more and more*

important for the development of both psycholinguistics and applied linguistics. Despite the fact that this study deals only with the subjective satisfaction of the participants, it can be generalized and can be transferrable on a large geographical scale. This geographical limitation can be rectified by larger-scale research that can be initiated by this early study. There are many implications connected to these findings, such as moving towards non-digital learning tools, such as print textbooks, focusing on more personal discussions rather than just various online assignments. Moreover, the results of the study should be a contribution to the current scientific discussion about the development of psycholinguodidactics and its role in solving the problem of mastering foreign languages.

Key words: EFL, ESL, L2 acquisition, foreign languages, higher education, applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, eLearning.

Introduction

The situation of second language (L2) acquisition in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts has recently changed dramatically due to a few reasons: the main one is the global presence of the COVID-19 pandemic that leads universities to the use of virtual learning environments and to all various circumstances that will naturally accompany it. In addition, the rapid expansion of technology with the foundation of all types of media applications also affects the situation which in turn affect the educational process with all its fields and English language teaching is one of them. The third point is that EFL learners began to accept the idea of using technology through using a blended learning environment (Al-Obaydi, 2021), which paves the way to the total use of online education. Therefore, EFL students were ready to join virtual classes and be part of the new transformation wave in education. Some of the most common terminology recently used in instructional and technological contexts includes online instruction, distance education, e-learning, asynchronous / synchronous learning, online training, distant education, and web-based teaching approach (Gluchmanova, 2015; Moore, Dickson-Deane & Galyen, 2011). This article should bring the importance of linguodidactics to the attention of curricula makers, to the tutors of various language courses and university L2 educators.

In the field of L2 acquisition, the e-learning environment, combined with the widespread usage and the obtainable situation of

internet-connected computers and smartphones, has sped up the rate of L2 acquisition, particularly among students. The advancements and breakthroughs in technology that offer unique characteristics in the language learning arena, such as audio, visual, and animation effects, have made e-learning platforms very promising (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). Therefore, researchers consider EFL online classes as a novel solution that can solve students' problems in English classes because of its merits and the benefits these classes can provide for English students (Alahmadi & Alraddadi, 2020; Bianchi et al., 2019; Hamouda, 2020; McBrien, Cheng & Jones, 2009; Tawafak, Romli & Alsinani, 2019), though some teachers do not agree with the use of virtual classes and prefer the integration of face to face teaching in addition to virtual learning (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Al-Obaydi, 2020; Lassoued, Alhendawi & Bashitialshaaer, 2020). In this concern, it is essential to mention that learners can use e-learning in two ways: they can use it either individually to meet their specific needs, or they can use it in groups. It is also common that e-learning can be used as an alternative to formal schooling. It can be used to augment formal education; that is, it can be utilized as a supplement that can be incorporated into formal education in a learning environment. Despite the use of e-learning primarily as a substitute for traditional classes, its use provides a considerable extension to formal teaching in schools (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006; Gluchmanova, 2015).

Literature Review

Virtual classes, as mentioned by Beatty (2013) is a type of "electronic classroom that can be expandable in time, space, and content" (p. 156). In most cases, teaching becomes synchronous (live) as the students and their teachers join the class at the same time. Teachers can share audio chat, PowerPoint presentations, texts, videos, break-out virtual rooms, use of whiteboards, shared web browsing, and sharing different types of applications and online tools (Çakýroglu, 2014; Hamouda, 2020). In a virtual synchronous classroom, all of the students check in at the same time online, and a single teacher or instructor provides the educational content in the form of a lecture.

There are several benefits of virtual classrooms. Virtual EFL classrooms and internet learning environment can help with a variety of issues and there is sufficient research into this topic. Virtual classrooms can facilitate interactions between students and teachers as well as between students themselves. Creating venues in which learners may communicate in English is a specific problem in teaching English as a Foreign Language. So, interaction in the L2 is highly desired since research suggests that, in addition to understanding language material, continuous interactions in the L2 result in significantly improved language acquisition results (Mackey & Goo, 2007; Plonsky & Glass, 2011). This fact is also supported by Hussein (2016) who have proposed that one of the explanations for learners' relatively low speaking abilities could be insufficient opportunities for them to practice speaking.

A very recent study by Al Shlowiy, Al-Hoorie and Alharbi (2021) investigated a number of 674 language learners and 61 language teachers who participated in the study. The participants were asked to rank a variety of education-related issues that could arise in the state of an emergency remote teaching situation. Learners were asked to rate how much they had actually experienced these issues, while teachers were asked to assess how much they thought these were concerns for their pupils. According to the findings, teachers believed that students needed more training on how to use learning management systems, that students did not take online teaching seriously, and that emergency remote teaching would encourage students to cheat.

An interesting study was done by David and Grosu-Rădulescu (2016) concerning students' enthusiasm to learn foreign languages both in the classroom and online. According to the findings, students were required to see themselves as members of a learning community in order to attain good grades and a sense of personal accomplishment was achieved. There is also significant research into the negative aspects of various forms of digital / virtual learning. Aydin (2011), for example, mentioned that anxiety in using computers has a major negative impact on student achievement. Students become dissatisfied when a computer or network system goes down because they may not be able to follow the lessons. This can lead to higher levels of anxiety and it can spread among the lower Internet skilled students (Ekizoglu & Ozcinar, 2010). From a plethora of studies that dealt with the context of English language teaching in relation to online education, this study stems

from the experience of the students to determine their real opinions and attitudes.

The previous research into the use of online tutoring in higher education is seemed very promising. Many of them focus on the merits of online education for EFL students (Al-Qahtani, 2019; Bianchi et al., 2019; Hamouda, 2020; Sallbego & Tumolo, 2015). In the context of English language classes, Alahmadi and Alraddadi (2020) concluded that the use of e-learning has a positive impact on EFL Saudi students' interaction in English classes as they responded positively in the questionnaire used and most of them think that virtual classes enhance their language skills. In the same line, Hamouda (2020) found that virtual learning affects the interaction and engagement of the students positively as they are considered digital natives. Grosu-Rădulescu and Stan (2018: 186) believed that Romanian young people are more likely to use virtual learning platforms to improve their foreign language skills. They add that teaching will continue to take place in classrooms, but professors will need to include more and more online teaching approaches to keep students engaged and motivated.

In the opposing trend, David and Grosu-Rădulescu (2016) according to their study mentioned that students prefer face-to-face instruction over virtual classrooms. eLearning use is frequently embedded into the formal education in educational institutions beginning with primary schools to higher education all around the world (Harandi, 2015), in addition, Iraq provides all the institutions of higher education with all required equipment primarily to support blended learning then these procedures paved the way for the transformation to virtual learning. The aim of the present study is in line with Organero, Munoz-Merino and Kloos (2012) who stated that it is important to investigate motivational problems that some students suffer from early to give a chance for teachers to create additional novel activities to overcome the students' negative attitudes. This means that if teachers can determine the problems of students' refraining from attending the online classes, they can help satisfy students' interests and needs by designing new tasks and activities. Yet, there is no research highlighting the significant drawbacks of online L2 acquisition. There are many other studies recently conducted as the topic is very relevant and many of them have reached rather opposing findings. Therefore, it is necessary to continue with the research to obtain reliable and globally transferrable

results. To contribute to the research area, the following five research hypotheses were formulated.

Research Hypotheses

In the given context of previous research described above, these hypotheses were formulated as follows. Despite the fact that generally the students evaluate the tutors and their preparedness for online classes with high scores, we claimed – for the purpose of this research – that they would be significantly dissatisfied with online tutoring. Therefore, (**H1**) there is no correlation between a well-prepared teacher and subjective satisfaction of the students with online classes.

Most previous research into online L2 acquisition claims that it can substitute or supplements traditional classes very well and it only brings benefits to the educational process and improves students´ satisfaction. Therefore, (**H2**) the students will significantly prefer traditional teaching to online L2 acquisition.

Screen time can be perceived as a very negative aspect that no one had realised before the time when students spend long hours in from of the screen. Nowadays the situation is different. They use their smartphones and computers basically all the time for communication, entertainment and now also education. That means they will spend most of their day in from of the screen and they may realize all the drawbacks of it. Therefore, (**H3**) there will be a correlation between increased screen time and students´ dissatisfaction with online learning.

We also wanted to test whether the students will significantly prefer print media over digital media. Again, having realised that they are surrounded too much by various digital media, there might realize it and want to switch to traditional textbooks. Therefore, (**H4**) the more they have to use digital media, the more they will prefer print text for their L2 acquisition.

And finally, the communication they conduct online via various digital platforms is naturally efficient and creates social bonds, however, the students may realize that they are missing real-life communication that cannot be substituted and that L2 acquisition cannot be moved online. Therefore, (**H5**) the most important subjectively perceived negative aspect of online learning will be reduced communication possibilities both with the tutor and with their peers.

Methodology

To verify / falsify the hypotheses the following methodology was observed to yield statistically relevant and valid data. In Iraq generally, and in the University of Diyala specifically, the use of blended learning was used in the years that preceded the pandemic o COVID-19. So, the students there were prepared well to use the electronic devices and to interact with their teachers' virtually. The situation in the previous year can be expressed in terms of using computers inside the class to present videos and / or other visual presentations. After the pandemic, the students in the English department were told to join the virtual classes via using the Google classroom platform. In 2020, virtual learning was dependent totally on teaching and examining. In 2021, teaching material in undergraduate levels was presented virtually, but some final examinations happened face to face or it was paper-based with the personal presence of the student and the tutor.

The research was conducted in the form of a questionnaire at the University of Diyala in Iraq in July 2021. The idea of the research was to collect relevant data to be able to create a pilot study from one country to be later extended into a large, ideally global, scale. All the respondents were students of the given university, both male and female, the total number of responses was nearly 400 (n=394). The questionnaire was submitted to them at the end of the semester and the respondents were told they will evaluate the semester and the results will be used to improve language education at the university.

The questionnaire had two parts. First, it collects basic information about the participants, such as age, nationality and gender. Moreover, it was also crucial to collect exact information regarding the time the participants spend in front of the screen. We needed to investigate how much time the participants spend in front of their computer on working days (Monday-Friday) including all activities, such as studying, entertainment, social media, emails, etc. This part was followed by a question of whether they have a foreign language online course where they would use e.g. Google Meet with their teacher every week during a semester at their university. In case they replied positively, they could move to the second part of the questionnaire that specifically focused on individual items regarding their use of digital media for L2 acquisition.

The second, and the major, part of the questionnaire contained 20 statements and the respondents expressed their preferences using a 5-point Likert scale:

- Strongly disagree.
- Disagree.
- Undecided.
- Agree.
- Strongly agree.

Some of the key questions were doubled and rephrased to verify the respondents 'answers (such as *I prefer printed learning materials to electronic ones* and *Electronic texts are better for me than printed books*). Some of the questions were used to know the extrinsic motivation of the students (such as *I think that foreign languages will be useful in my future career*).

The last part of the questionnaire contained three open-ended questions where they could express their personal feelings and preferences. The questions were as follows:

(1). What do you LIKE about online language classes?
(2). What DON´T you LIKE about online language classes?
(3). Think about one thing that is important for you and you would like to change in online language classes?

Naturally, these open-ended questions were not used for the statistics and they were just qualitative support of the results. They were used to create a feeling that the research focuses on language class improvements rather than on the respondents' subjective preferences regarding digital media, print media, online courses, etc., as stated in the hypotheses.

Adherence to Ethical Standards

The questionnaire was anonymous and sent to them via Google classrooms using Google Forms. No personal data about the participants were collected, no names, email addresses or any kind of identification of the participant, except for the age, nationality and gender. GDPR was fully followed and there was an agreement with the research issued by the University of Hradec Kralove Ethics Committee no 2/2021.

Conflict of interests. The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Results

These are the first-hand experience findings we obtained from the questionnaires as follows and they had to be verified statistically so as to achieve relevant and valid results:

- Strong preference for print media over digital.
- Strong preference for in-class lectures over online.
- Social deprivation online.
- Online communication is not preferred.
- Online class efficiency is reduced.
- The students revealed that the teacher is very well prepared but it does not help when it is online as they are generally dissatisfied.
- Very low preference for online classes.
- Very high levels of screen time are perceived very negatively.

The statistical analysis of the results is as follows. Table 1 shows the sample profile of the participants of the current study. From the sample, the majority were with higher participation (75.5%) and were aged from 20–25 years (67.7%).

Table 1

Demographic attributes

Variable	Attribute	Count	%
	Male	50	19.5
Gender	Female	194	75.5
	Prefer not to say	13	5.1
	Below 20	72	28.0
Age	20–25	174	67.7
	Above 25	11	4.3

Note: n = 257

Table 2 briefly outlines the responses of 257 respondents on the statements covered subjective motivation, preferred material and medium of learning (print versus digital), reduced communication, and instructor preparedness for online delivery of classes. As prescribed in table notes, all numbers are presented as a percentage of the total of 257 respondents, for example, 38.9% of respondents (n = 100) prefer

to learn with a teacher. Alternatively, 35% (n = 90) respondents do not encourage online language learning classes. From the perspective of human-computer interaction, 48.6% agreed and 25.3% are strongly agreed on the increased computer interactional time.
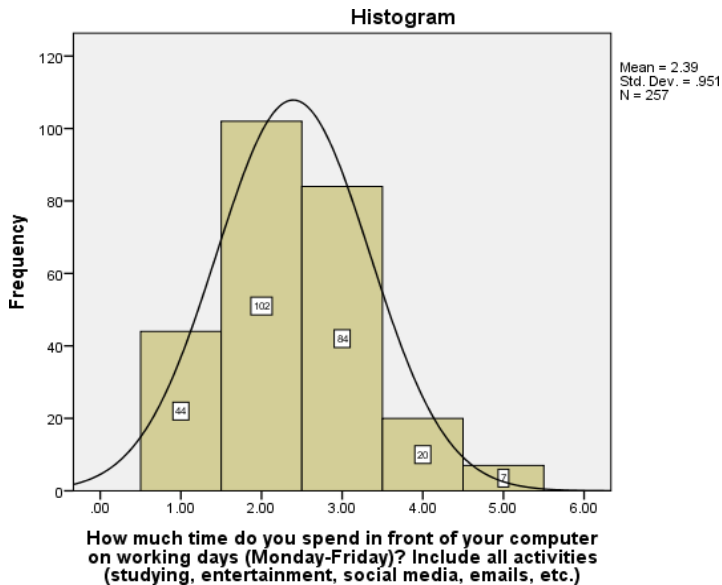
Table 2
Overall response on statements

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I like learning foreign languages.	7.0	2.7	2.3	49.4	38.5
Online classes are more efficient for me than traditional classes with a teacher.	20.2	32.7	16.3	24.5	6.2
I think that online language learning is more effective than traditional learning in a classroom.	22.6	32.3	14.0	22.6	8.6
I feel I am improving my language skills while studying online.	12.5	16.3	18.7	44.4	8.2
I enjoy using a virtual foreign language learning environment (e.g. Google Meet, etc.).	11.7	23.3	16.3	41.6	7.0
I think that we spend too much time in front of the computer.	7.0	10.1	8.9	48.6	25.3
I prefer printed learning materials to electronic ones.	11.3	21.4	13.2	38.9	15.2
Electronic texts are better for me than printed books.	22.2	37.0	13.6	20.6	6.6
I miss meeting my classmates while I have online classes.	8.9	11.7	7.8	46.7	24.9
Online communication with the teacher via email and eLearning platforms is better for me than physical communication at school.	30.7	30.4	12.5	19.1	7.4
I prefer learning with a teacher in a classroom to online learning.	14.8	16.3	9.3	38.9	20.6
Online classes are more convenient for me than learning in a classroom.	26.8	26.1	14.0	24.9	8.2
I prefer online language teaching to face-to-face teaching.	23.7	35.0	12.8	19.8	8.6
I think that my language teacher is well prepared to give instructions online.	5.4	9.7	16.7	57.6	10.5

Note: n = 257, all numbers in this table are in percentage.

Figure 1 represents the screen time in hours. On average, the sample of 257 respondents spent 2.39 hours on average a day on-screen with a standard deviation of 0.951 which implies the mean can be either 3.341 (2.39+0.951) or 1.439 (2.39-0.951) hours a day on-screen. The majority of the sample (n = 102) spend regularly 2 hours a day on-screen which is in line with the findings in Table 2 of increased screen time.

Figure 1
Screen Time

Histogram

Mean = 2.39
Std. Dev. = .951
N = 257

How much time do you spend in front of your computer on working days (Monday-Friday)? Include all activities (studying, entertainment, social media, emails, etc.)

The results in Table 3 show a correlation matrix, all values are positive which means there is a positive correlation among all variables listed down. Notably, all variables are correlated at a significant level of 0.01 except 'screen time' and 'preferred material' for language learning (0.035) which implies there is a very weak positive relationship among these variables. Moreover, the correlation between 'screen time' and 'preferred medium' of learning (0.135*) is statistically significant at 0.05. Among others, there is a strong relationship (0.534**) among 'subjective motivation' and 'preferred medium' for language learning. For hypothesis 1, the correlation among 'subjective motivation' and 'instructor preparedness' is at a significant level of 0.01 with the correlation magnitude of 0.397** that represent a positive yet very weak correlation.

Table 3
Correlations Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Screen Time (1)	-					
Subjective Motivation (2)	.211**	-				
Preferred Material (3)	.035	.453**	-			
Reduced Communication (4)	.213**	.474**	.339**	-		
Preferred Medium (5)	.135*	.534**	.450**	.464**	-	
Instructor Preparedness (6)	.164**	.397**	.220**	.225**	.192**	-

Note: ***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
              *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 outlines the results of hypothesis testing. All hypotheses are supported with statistical significant H1 (β-value = 0.515, p-value < 0.05), H3 (β-value = 0.141, p-value < 0.05), and H5 (β-value = 0.474, p-value < 0.05).

Table 4
Hypothesis testing (regression)

Hypothesis	β	t-value	p-value
H1: Instructor preparedness → Subjective motivation	0.515	9.749	0.000
H2: Traditional learning versus online learning			
H3: Screen time → Subjective motivation	0.141	2.677	0.000
H4: Traditional learning material versus online learning material			
H5: Subjective motivation → Reduced communication	0.474	8.601	0.000

Note: H2 and H4 are based on the preference of the traditional learning environment over the online learning environment.
R2 for H1 and H3 = 0.305, for H5 = 0.225.

Table 5 specifically presents the test of hypotheses 2 and 4.

Table 5
Hypothesis testing (preference traditional versus online)

Hypothesis	Mean	S.D	Decision
H2: Traditional learning versus online learning	3.34	1.29	Supported
H4: Traditional learning material versus online learning material	3.25	1.26	Supported

Note: H2 and H4 are based on the preference of the traditional learning environment over the online learning environment. S.D = Standard Deviation

The statements used to measure students' preferences of the traditional learning environment and reading material in digital learning environment were rated on average towards agreement (value 4 = Agree) with a 5-point Likert scale. Hence, the results of the current study show that students support a more traditional learning environment compared to the digital learning environment.

Discussion

As the results of the present study show, there is a positive correlation among all variables listed in the current study. For the first hypothesis, results show that there is a significant correlation among 'subjective motivation' and 'instructor preparedness' of 0.01 with a correlation magnitude of 0.397** that represent a positive yet very weak correlation which means that the first hypothesis of the study is accepted. This result implies that though teachers are well prepared, it does not provide much help when the classes are online as the students were generally subjectively dissatisfied. So, the students' dissatisfaction is not due to their teachers' unpreparedness or any objective reason caused by the tutor, but to the whole situation caused by the fully online educational process. It's worth noting that online instructors must oversee and facilitate the learning process smoothly and follow the needs of the students which is very difficult when all classes are conducted online. Even experienced and theoretically well-equipped teachers can find this situation difficult to manage. Blake (2013) mentioned that those who express their doubts about the effectiveness of L2 acquisition are particularly concerned about oral proficiency. He added that:

> *"Finding the answer is particularly important in the case of the less commonly taught languages, where access to beginning instruction is especially limited due to teacher shortages, low enrolments, and the concomitant financial constraints"* (Blake, 2013: 130–131).

Lindzon (2020) also concluded that students' learning suffers from many weaknesses as a result of the lack of face-to-face instruction.

It is not enough for an online teacher to be a knowledgeable person but to mimic the surrounding environment of the learners specifically in these difficult times of anxiety and fear during the pandemic. Al-Obaydi (2021) in the same concern, argues that:

> *"... what English language teachers need is not only scientific knowledge of the content or technology but also the knowledge of humanistic learning in all its aspects to deal with learners morally and to pay more attention to ethical considerations in class"* (ibid.: p. 11).

A shift in the educational paradigm is also required while teaching online (Cranfield et al., 2021). Whereas traditional teaching focuses on the teacher attempting to impart his or her information to pupils, online teaching (not just instructional) focuses on the relationship between the teacher and the student on one hand, and the student and knowledge on another.

Concerning the second hypothesis, which states that the students will significantly prefer traditional teaching to online learning, the results show that the students support more the traditional learning environment compared to the digital learning environment. So, the second hypothesis is also accepted. It is not something new that students' preference comes in favour of traditional education which is usually situated in colleges or other educational institutions due to the social communication in these communities in addition to the existence of teachers in teaching situations. But one could assume that the students who belong to Generation Z would prefer online classes due to their very intimate connection to technology and social media (Polakova & Klimova, 2019). However, it can be seen that a discrepancy can be observed between results gained before and after the pandemic as the situation is different completely. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, where the circumstances were natural, most studies concluded that students prefer communication in online education or at least the blended one (Nevas, 2010; Sanders, 2012; Hariri & Bahanshal, 2015). This is in line with all the facts we have about Generation Z and eLearning 4.0, for example (Bujang et al., 2020, Pikhart & Klimova, 2020; Park et al., 2021; Vizcaya-Moreno & Pérez-Cañaveras, 2020; Kamenidou et al., 2020; Kruger et al., 2015; Pousson & Myers, 2018). Nowadays, when the students are experiencing social isolation caused by the pandemic when online education is imposed on their everyday education, their viewpoints have changed radically and this is proved by the present research.

Moreover, the teachers were not fully satisfied with online education during the pandemic but preferred to use at least blended learning (Al-Obaydi, 2020). The students looked for any chance to

come back again to classes as the online courses are not sufficient for their learning needs as supported by Bettinger et al. (2017). Macaro, Handley and Walter (2012), on the other hand, in the pre-pandemic situation, point out a faint and indecisive proof of a very positive impact of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) that must be reformulated in the light of the present findings.

The results of the third hypothesis, which states that there will be a correlation between increased screen time and students' dissatisfaction with online learning, show that the majority of the sample (n=102) are spending regularly 2 hours a day on-screen, and the rest of the sample 257 respondents averagely spending 2.39 hours a day on-screen. This implies that there is a very weak positive relationship among these variables. Therefore, the third hypothesis is also accepted. The sample of the study thought that they spend too much time in front of their computers for the sake of online education that was imposed on them due to the circumstances of the pandemic. This caused one of the difficulties to which online education is connected and that is the easily accessible internet connections that potentially supports the broad over/use of various technologies (Herrera, 2017). Students usually use their computers and/or smartphones for many purposes; gaming, communication, attending social media, and many others but in all these uses, they are not specified with a predetermined time. The determination of time for the scheduled lectures led to a state of grumbling among the students. All these aspects have to be taken into consideration to facilitate sustainable education (Klašnja-Milićević & Ivanović, 2021; Navarrro-Espinoza et al., 2021).

In hypothesis four, the researchers hypothesised that the more the students have to use digital media, the more they will prefer print text for their L2 acquisition. Results generally show a strong preference for print media over digital. It further shows a clear preference of the traditional learning environments over the online learning environments. This means a positive yet very weak correlation, so this hypothesis of the study is accepted. The use of printed material in schools and colleges is still considered indispensable despite the vast research into online learning, eLearning, blended learning and hybrid learning. It can be summarised that in all times, before and after the pandemic, the use of technology can be and should be only a kind of support to the educational process.

Moreover, in foreign language classes, the use of online material can never compensate for the original printed texts and textbooks. The process of L2 acqusition depends mainly on the use of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) complementarily and it is very challenging, if possible at all, to handle them all in online learning formats (Sánchez-Serrano, 2008). Therefore, it is very difficult to turn fully into an online mode of learning without compromising basically all positive aspects of second language acquisition that are obtained face-to-face. This sheds the light not only on the preference of the students of the printed texts but also on their choice of the traditional teaching though they confessed that their teachers were good and well prepared, as proved by hypothesis one. In the context of EFL, skilled English teachers are needed who can work with more than one pivot to compensate students' urgent needs in online education. This viewpoint is in line with De Paepe (2018) who mentioned that "the institutions have smaller scales and correspondingly lower budgets and fewer skilled teachers to develop online courses and to teach online" (p. 67). It needs real interaction and required real engagement.

Hypothesis five indicated that the most important subjectively perceived negative aspect of online learning will be reduced communication possibilities both with the tutor and with their peers, and it has been verified and accepted as the results of the current study show. This means that the students suffered from social deprivation in the online mode of teaching and they did not prefer online communication at all. This result comes in agreement with Bansal (2020) who concluded that only a few pupils continue their learning activities outside of school because they demand a classroom environment; the majority of students do not. Schools are more than simply classrooms for teaching and learning; they are also social centers where students learn about human behaviour by interacting with one another in addition to their courses. Again, these findings are in opposition with pre-pandemic research that clearly supported online communication via various communication platforms. When testing this assumption in real-life conditions, such as the pandemic, it has been proved that this assumption was false. After approximately a year of the pandemic and the use of online education completely without any lectures in college, it is not surprising to see the very negative reaction of the students. In a classroom setting, the interaction between students is a critical component of a successful

learning environment and previous research into eLearning vastly neglected this aspect. Contacts with peers, interactions with native speakers and other aspects of natural human communication facilitate dramatically effective English learning (Adams, 2007; Adams, Nuevo & Egi, 2011; Costado et al., 2021) and they cannot be substituted by any online surrogate. The chance of communication via online classes may be reduced to the time filler at the end of each lecture, which can never be satisfactory, and it can also be observed that the communication abilities of students decreased to a large extent, which needs further verification by future research.

Finally, though many studies in the EFL has agreed on the benefits of online learning environments for English language learners (Bianchi et al., 2019; Hamouda, 2020; Hussein, 2016; McBrien, Cheng & Jones, 2009), the current study comes to demonstrate that still many aspects of the educational process suffer from online education and that students' viewpoints which flow from their experience show the other view of this platform that had previously been neglected and this conclusion seems to a large extent in line with Lindzon (2020). The limitations of the present study are mainly that it was conducted in one country only, i.e. Iraq, but if this study is replicated in other countries, it can be verified on a much large scale. However, there is no reason to suppose that the situation in other countries will be dramatically different. Therefore, the study provides a true and fair view of the current situation and the findings can be utilized in optimizing any kind of learning process that must utilize online tools.

Conclusions

All these findings could be important for applied linguistics and psycholinguistics as they provide a clear overview of the current state of affairs in L2 acquisition with the use of digital technologies, which is a crucial topic that is more and more important for the development of both psycholinguistics and applied linguistics. The situation in L2 acquisition is very much rooted in various kinds of digital foreign language learning, therefore, it is necessary to analyse the topic in depth so that clear findings for these two areas of linguistics are systematically developed. This article wanted to bring some basic ideas to the attention of scholars in psycholinguistics and applied linguistics.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета. *У навчанні іноземних мов широко використовують різні форми електронного навчання або змішані методи та інструменти мовного навчання. Ця тенденція нещодавно була підтримана й прискорена глобальною пандемією COVID-19. Мета дослідження − проаналізувати досвід студентів у використанні цифрових засобів для оволодіння іноземними мовами.*

Результати дослідження є важливими для організації майбутньої цифрової (онлайн) мовної вищої освіти.

Методологія. *Для збору даних використовувалася анкета, поширена в Інтернеті серед студентів Університету Діяла в Іраку. Анкетування студентів проводилось у липні 2021 року. В анкетуванні брали участь 394 студентів, що робить вибірку репрезентативною та статистично значущою. Було сформульовано та перевірено п'ять гіпотез, по кожній з яких зроблено певні висновки. Гіпотеза (1): немає кореляції між добре підготовленим викладачем та суб'єктивною задоволеністю студентів мовними онлайн-заняттями. Гіпотеза (2): студенти віддають перевагу традиційному мовному навчанню, напротивагу онлайн оволодінню другою мовою (L2). Гіпотеза (3): існує кореляція між збільшенням екранного часу та незадоволеністю студентів мовним онлайн-навчанням. Гіпотеза (4): чим більше студентам доводиться використовувати цифрові медіа, тим більше вони віддають перевагу друкованим текстам для оволодіння другою мовою (L2). Гіпотеза (5): найважливішим суб'єктивно сприйманим негативним аспектом мовного онлайн-навчання буде скорочення можливостей спілкування як з викладачем, так і з однолітками.*

Результати. *Студенти значно підтримують традиційні методи оволодіння іноземною мовою, порівняно з використанням цифрових, незважаючи на те, що репетитори були оцінені студентами дуже високо. Таким чином, незважаючи на те, що тьютори добре підготовлені, використовують сучасні технології та успішно намагаються мотивувати студентів, кінцеві результати мовних онлайн-занять із оволодіння іноземною мовою не виявилися ідентичними традиційним заняттям у плані задоволеності студентів.*

Висновки. *Отримані результати можуть бути важливими для прикладної лінгвістики та психолінгвістики, оскільки вони дають чітке уявлення про наявну ситуацію в оволодінні другою мовою (L2) з використанням цифрових технологій, що є найважливішою темою, яка стає все більш важливою для розвитку як психолінгвістики, так і прикладної лінгвістики. Незважаючи на те, що це дослідження розглядає лише суб'єктивну задоволеність учасників мовним он-лайн навчанням, воно може бути узагальнене й перенесене на ширші географічні масштаби. З представленими у статті результатами пов'язано безліч перспектив, наприклад, перехід до нецифрових засобів мовного навчання, таких, як друковані підручники, фокусування на дискусіях, а не тільки на різних онлайн-завданнях. Крім того, результати дослідження мають стати внеском у сучасну наукову дискусію щодо розвитку психолінгводидактики та її ролі у вирішенні проблеми оволодіння іноземними мовами.*

Ключові слова: *англійська мова як нерідна мова, англійська мова як друга мова, оволодіння другою мовою, іноземні мови, вища мовна освіта, прикладна лінгвістика, психолінгвістика, електронне мовне навчання.*