

Learning Through SMS in Saudi EFL Classroom: An Inter-University Study of Learner Perceptions and Achievement of Autonomy

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Abstract—Technology as a learning tool or otherwise holds great attraction for learners today. The current study explored the impact of Short Messages as Learning Tool (SMLT) on EFL Saudi learners learning confused English words. It also gauges learners' satisfactions towards using such tools on their autonomy and language proficiency. The study pursued a quasi-experiment research design. It recruited 80 EFL learners across Najran University and Qassim University, KSA. To ensure parity of existing language proficiency and learning success, the Oxford Placement Test is administered once before and once at the end of the intervention to all of the 80 participants to obtain comparative values.. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview is also used with three randomly selected participants from each of the experimental groups to obtain data on individual perceptions of the EFL learners to the use of MALL in the EFL classroom. Content analysis is used to identify dominant themes in these. Findings revealed that learners acquisition for confusing words were developed to a great extent in both universities. Moreover, the study found that there is no significant difference in the students' achievement attributed to the learning sittings, $Z = .935$. Finally the students expressed satisfaction in terms of their autonomy ratings and complementary points of view on the use of SMS, based on the semi-structured interviews. The current research is useful as its findings can apply to mobile teaching and text messaging in the English classroom for EFL curriculum developers and English language teachers.

Index Terms—autonomy, homonyms, homophones, Saudi EFL students' perception, text messaging

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the essential tools influencing all forms of foreign exchange. Learners of English need to use various facets of their English language proficiency for ease of learning or vocation. However, there remain certain aspects of language that are as much as challenging to the foreign learners as they are to the native user. When dealing with these challenges in the classrooms, innovative pedagogy can help accomplish learning more satisfactorily. In other words, one of the important facets of literacy is the method that instructors utilize in their classes to facilitate the language acquisition phase. Modern classrooms are a wonderful example of this. Computers are considered an important instructional instrument in language classes where teachers have convenient access, are properly qualified and have certain freedom in the curriculum (Polákov & Klínová 2019). Most educators agree that information technology is an important part of offering a high-quality education (Chen et al., 2019; Epp & Phirangee, 2019; Hoi, 2020; Pérez-Paredes et al., 2019). Usability and other features, such as size, cost-effectiveness, and user-friendliness, are some benefits of mobile devices (Al-Emran et al, 2018). Since cell phones are today an inalienable part of our lives because of ease of use and affordability, the study of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) is becoming a significant field of study (Chen & Hsu, 2020). Owing to its performance, it is not uncommon for it to be used as a learning tool.

Emerging technological interventions such as, cellphones, laptops, pods, pads, personal digital assistants, electronic pocket dictionaries, MP3 players, and other mobile devices are changing the learning context from conventional to interactive (Azli et al., 2018; Al-Ahdal, 2020; Al-Ahdal & Al-Awaid, 2018; Pérez-Paredes et al., 2018). The applications of these resources are being established day by day in the educational contexts. Regardless of location and time, they have been found useful in fostering learning due to their flexibility, connectivity, and universal appeal. In the educational scenario, mobile phones are the most widely available means, in the aggregation of movable and immovable electronic items. In the past decade, numerous studies have focused on the usage of mobile phone technology for educational purposes, and a gradually growing number of learners have been found to be readily engaged in learning because of this change (Ali & Bin-Hady, 2019; Esmaeili & Shahrokhi, 2020; Jiang & Zhang, 2020; Li et al, 2019; Sarhandi et al., 2018).

Effective foreign/second language learning processes include interaction with people and communication in the target language. In other terms, when learners communicate and engage with others, they get richer opportunities to improve their foreign language skills. Thanks to the growing involvement of the young generation of EFL learners in the modern environment, these immersive and cooperative learning dimensions are proving useful. Using smart phones,

outside of the educational sense, is an outstanding aspect of their everyday life. Multimedia learner-centred educational experience is today a reality through mobile learning (m-learning), with a more interaction-focused style of learning (Alsowat, 2017). M-learning offers learners the opportunity to experience the natural world's thoughts and emotions by interacting with the real learning possibilities, and enhancing their inspiration and curiosity in learning (Alnajjar, 2020; Mutambara & Bayaga, 2020; Parsazadeh et al., 2018; Ramos, 2020; Yang, 2019). It should be remembered that m-learning is not a replacement for today's current learning experiences and strategies, but it is an expansion of learning with contemporary skills in a modern setting. The awareness, skills, and attitudes of learners toward m-learning are very critical as the degree of performance closely depends on it. Thus, for a non-native user of a language, MALL is deemed a convincing way of learning a language (Jamshidian & Salehi, 2020).

Today educational institutions all over the world adopt a plethora of tech aids from email correspondence to text messaging as these are seen by learners as realistic learning solutions. By definition, text messaging or texting is a two-way communication between phone users with such brief, written messages, called short messaging service (SMS). Since learners frequently use text, it has been noticed that learners whose teachers have sent such text messages stay inspired (Hadah et al., 2020).

In the 21st century, given the wide variety of electronic devices, instruments and collaboration offered, teaching methods have much scope for innovation. And outside education, independent of place and period, the portability of mobile phones has encouraged learning. In these times of learner autonomy (LA), mobile assisted language learning (MALL) has, in particular, been a successful way to foster the development of English as a foreign language (EFL). It has been suggested that learners exposed to EFL learning resources use their own mobile sets, applications and learning strategies to facilitate autonomous learning capacities and thereby improve their language skills in a person-learning context (Alberth et al., 2020; Bin-Hady et al., 2020; Dağdeler et al., 2020). Consequently, this study investigates the potential of Saudi students at EFL universities, through the usage of text messaging, to learn often confused English words because they form homonymous or homophonous pairs and triplets, a particularly challenging component in foreign language learning.

A. Problem Statement

The reality is that we don't know if it's secure and beneficial for college students to use mobile apps to learn English alone. For Saudi college students, MALL is a novel way of learning English. Therefore, the thoughts of students on it are not yet crystallized. Further, there is the question of too much technology finding its way into the classrooms, a fear most often voiced by the teachers who feel that technology is also a big distractive force in the learning process. Developing the computer technology-related knowledge and capabilities of learners provides equality of opportunity, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. However, even with learners born into a technologically rich nation, the impact of ICT on specific learning components may not be predictable and would need empirical analysis to gauge its efficacy as an educational tool. Practical development of technology-based abilities is important for all learners to optimize their learning.

B. Research Gaps and Objectives

Previous MALL analysis studies have continued to discover the expectations of learners regarding the features of the mobile device and its usage in schooling (Barjesteh et al., 2020; Ghallab, 2020; Helwa, 2020; Klimova & Polakova, 2020; Nuuyoma et al., 2020; Udenze. & Oshionebo, 2020; Zarei et al., 2020), but few have explored the autonomy achieved by learners who use mobile devices in an educational setting. To overcome this void, this current work aims at answering the following research questions:

1. How effective is the use of text messaging as a language instructional tool (TMLIT) in terms of language proficiency achievement?
2. Are there any significant differences in the participants' perception on the use of TMLIT attributed to the learning settings?
3. To what extent does using TMLIT contribute to autonomy for the EFL learners?

C. Significance of the Study

Now, more than ever, the optimum integration of technology in the educational process is being seen as the need of the hour with a large chunk of the process shifting to the off-campus mode to keep the pandemic at bay. The other features of online education such as accessibility, lower costs, time and space saving, have further alerted institutions to adopt this as a viable inclusive educational platform. In this study, the researchers discuss some of the main issues related to technology use in the creation and teaching of English language skills, specifically related to words that have close morphological or phonic semblance. Moreover, results of this study are expected to offer a new perspective and enrichment of the available corpus in the language education milieu of Saudi EFL.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of communicative competence means not only learning the grammatical laws of but also recognizing when, when and by whom the language can be used in a contextually target language but also, learning the syntax and

terminology (Hymes, 1972). For example, a person with communicative abilities will know how to execute tasks by using English, such as purchasing, asking for guidance, persuading others, expressing personal feelings, and learning how to handle formal and informal language types (speaking to a peer). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) helps learners practice English in a communication community as it is already spoken and equips them with the language skills they would need before reaching the real-world classroom (Bin-Hady, 2017; Elder et al., 2017). As teachers look for alternatives to broad class sizes and unmotivated students, projects that comply with CLT values assume greater importance. Project work allows students to engage on projects involving actual, meaningful and real-life communicative experiences, instead of teaching a structural syllabus with a preponderance of grammar and vocabulary lessons. This real communication technique ultimately allows students to develop communication abilities in a second language, just as a person discovers his or her first language.

A. MALL

Users of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) are focused on mobile technology (Rao, 2019; Ali & Miraz, 2018). There is no need for learners to sit in a classroom or in front of computer in the MALL environment. Literally, in terms of time and location, MALL can be seen as an optimal response to language learning challenges (Dağdeler et al, 2020). This interface provides a combination of versatility, accessibility, and interactivity for mobile applications, unlike most conventional classroom technology. This combination would facilitate language learning by using real, contextualized possibilities, allowing students to react to previously learned experiences, gain new information and develop more problem-solving skills (Keezhatta & Omar, 2019).

More significantly, according to Faramarzi et al., (2021), MALL offers students with major advantages; they can use several mobile apps to access video lessons, read materials, and watch English videos. Students can delay or progress rapidly through materials if they want, granting them individual control based on the pace at which they receive information, enabling students to decide their own content (Fang et al., 2021). The task of MALL is to facilitate teamwork and the co-building of skills. To achieve an overarching understanding of a practical dilemma, students need to discover and share information with their peers. Education authorities all over the globe have realized the implications of this new technology. Any finding that seems to point towards MALL is a support mechanism for learners (Al Mulhim, 2021; Gao & Shen, 2021). Wide-ranging, diverse channels and technologies have been made accessible via mobile devices to promote English language education. Such accessibility has profound effect on developing learners' listening and speaking skills. Learners discover that MALL is expanding from a text-based environment of teacher-learner education to an environment which encourages multimedia, integrates listening and speaking exercises and enables students to co-construct knowledge to recognize concerns and fill information gaps (Panagiotis & Krystalli, 2020; Peng et al., 2020), via carefully documented mobile devices; powerful language learning variables can be created. In fact, several studies pay attention to the pedagogical methods implemented on mobile devices through utilizing apps. For joint preparation and self-regulated techniques, these mobile devices have auto-action. For example, collaboration may be promoted by sharing academic ideas on an internet site or debating a proposal with cell phone colleagues (AlQarni et al., 2020; Byrne, 2020; Esfandiari & Sokhanvar, 2020).

The degree of autonomy of learners may be enhanced by the use of a mobile phone in the area of language learning (Radin, 2017). Radin's (2017) study suggested that mobile phones could be beneficial, for many reasons. The key reason, however, is that with the usage of mobile phones, learners can effectively track their own learning. That is to say that learners may use this option to self-direct and personalize their learning experience with the required learning pace without time and location constraints. The second reason that goes in favor of the usage of mobile phones is that it encourages students to connect and communicate with their instructors and friends quickly, such that they can support them to focus on certain collaborations, metacognitive abilities, and reflection (Koenraad, 2019). Finally, mobile phones enable students to provide teacher-created instructional materials with convenience (Muchtar, 2017).

B. Learner Autonomy

It should be remembered that there is no general agreement on learner's autonomy between linguists and educators (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Nosratinia & Zaker, 2017; Yasmin & Sohail, 2018). Rather there is a dichotomy between collaboration and autonomy in the light of recent literature, each with its own supporters. In this respect, learner's autonomy depends on interdependence above and below equality, and autonomy for the definition of learning through taking active responsibility for one's learning (Alrabai, 2017; Lai, 2019). The autonomy of learners in their capacity as learners to take responsibility for their learning is one of the most influential ideas (Iamudom & Tangkiengsirisin, 2020; Lenkaitis, 2020; Tseng et al., 2020). Meanwhile, it includes learners' decision-making during learning, especially in setting learning goals, deciding content and growth, selecting learning methods, assessing and reviewing learning. It shows that learners are free to plan and track their learning by choosing when, where, and how to learn according to their needs, necessities, and abilities (Judy Shih, 2020; Chang, 2020; Tran, 2020). The autonomy of learners is proposed to be functional in the following five modes: 1) situations in which learners study entirely on their own; 2) a set of abilities that can be learned and utilized in self-directed learning; 3) an intrinsic ability that is suppressed by structured education; 4) the exercise of learners' duties for their learning; and 5) the right of learners to settle on a court judgment. Pasaribu (2020) stated that autonomy refers to attitude as the responsibility of learners to make decisions for their learning and skill as a statement on decision-making and growth.

C. *Technology in Language Classroom*

Education as we understand it, is inseparable from technology as information and knowledge are becoming more readily available to users at the click of the mouse. Therefore, learners must see technologies as an integral aspect of their learning system (Abdurahmonov et al., 2020; Webb & Doman, 2020). Teachers today are compelled to model the use of technology to support the curriculum, so that students can maximize the real use of technology to enhance their language skills (Zhou & Wei, 2018). Technology will reinforce the relationship between learners because teamwork is one of the major learning experiences. Learners work together cooperatively, reading their peers' jobs or to build tasks and, in the process, learn from each other. The advent of automation has strengthened English teaching habits deeply. It provides many alternatives in terms of production that make teaching pleasant and more effective. In standard classrooms, teachers stand in front of learners and offer lectures, graphs, and feedback with the use of blackboards or whiteboards. Both practices have to be updated with respect to the progress in technology (Medina & Hurtado, 2017). The use of multimedia texts in curriculum allows students to become comfortable with words and phrase structures. To establish learners' linguistic knowledge, the implementation of multimedia also uses print, film, and internet texts (Kassem, 2018). The use of paper, film, and the internet gives learners the opportunity to gather information and provides them with both language and context through different learning and comprehension resources (Jewel & Alauddin, 2018).

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Design*

This study uses a quasi-experiment with pre and post-tests blend of quantitative and qualitative procedures to gauge the success of the intervention which lasted six weeks totaling to 22 hours of exposure, semi structured interviews, and a questionnaire to gauge learners' perceptions of the use of the SMS app in learning homophonous and homonymous English words, and how far they believe it contributed to autonomous learning.

B. *Participants*

Eighty undergraduate university students of Najran and Qassim universities constituted the respondent groups in the study (one control and one experimental group in each of the universities). A convenience sample was isolated for participation as the collaborating researchers are academic staff in these universities. Participants included only male students given the segregated nature of education in KSA. Comparison of results across two universities and between the outputs of males and females was initiated at the end of the intervention and data collection period to gain a broad spectrum of conclusions. The control and experimental groups from Najran University (NU) were coded as NUC and NUE for control and experimental group respectively. Likewise, those from Qassim University (QU) were coded as QUC and QUE for control and experimental group respectively. The aim behind conducting the study across two universities was to arrive at more generalizable results that could also represent the possible trends in other universities in KSA.

C. *Research Tool*

An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was conducted before and after the intervention to first, isolate a homogeneously proficient study group, and two, to measure the learning that takes place as a result of the intervention. The duration of the test is typically fifty-five minutes. Two sections of 60 multiple-choice elements and close-up questions comprise this test. The first part comprises of 40 questions and 20 questions are made up of the second part. According to the test requirements, the scores of the participants are graded into 6 groups, from beginners to advanced levels. This step of the study tested the first part of the study that concerns itself with the efficacy of SMS as a tool to learn confusing EFL vocabulary.

The second part of this study concerns itself with learner autonomy and to test how far using SMS achieves autonomy, an adapted version of the 21-item questionnaire set up by Zhang and Li (2004) was used. The Cronbach alpha was determined for internal reliability, which turned out to be 0.89 for the questionnaire used by Zhang and Li (2004). However, whereas the original version consists of ten out of the twenty questions in force-choice format, the researchers in this study lacked confidence in the participants' proficiency to grasp them to answer sufficiently authentically. Hence, these were coalesced as Likert-type artifacts unlike Zhang and Li (2004). To ensure the relevance of the questions to the aim of the analysis, two EFL teachers were requested to review the questions to determine if the challenges were relevant concerning the targets and if they were formulated clearly and coherently. All suggestions would be incorporated. The adapted version consisted of 16 statements in all to be answered on a scale ranging from 'never' to 'always'.

The semi-structures interviews were conducted on the same day as when the questionnaires were administered. All conversations were duly recorded on the researcher's mobile phones and prior written and verbal (recorded) consent was duly taken. The content analysis was taken up by the researchers collaboratively.

D. *Intervention: Control Groups NUE and QUE*

EFL syllabus for the participating universities includes content on ‘Confusing English Vocabulary’ running into eight lectures in the second semester. Effectively, this translates to four hundred minutes. For every lecture scheduled for this, the researchers took novel approaches to help the participants differentiate the confusing words. For instance, for one of the lectures, humorous slides with descriptive pictorials were shown, word play clips from popular shows were included in others, and sometimes, the learners were divided into teams to compete on the correct meanings of the homophones and homonyms.

The control groups, NUC and QUC, however, did not receive any treatment and the same syllabus content was dealt with in their classes using the printed material that the universities provide. In all, fifty pairs of words were included in the study. Most frequent and common words are introduced early whereas the difficult and less common words were introduced in the later weeks; it is a kind of a natural progression.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

As stated earlier, the first part of the analysis comprised pre and post conduct of the standardized Oxford Placement Test. Table 1 below summarizes the comparative frequency scores for NU and QU in the pre and post intervention phases.

TABLE 1
PRE AND POST-TEST FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF GRADES IN OPT AT NU AND QU

OPT Grade	NUC Pre-test	NUE Pre-test	NUC Post test	NUE Post test	QUC Pre-test	QUE Pre-test	QUC Post-test	QUE Post-test
C2	00	00	00	01	00	00	00	01
C1	00	00	00	02	00	01	01	03
B2	00	01	01	02	00	00	00	01
B1	02	00	00	04	01	03	01	05
A2	07	07	09	05	05	05	08	04
A1	11	12	10	06	14	11	10	06
Group mean	19.95	19.15	23.0	41.55	19.0	17.02	24.0	40.53

The study computed the P-value to test the null hypothesis (efficacy of SMS as an effective tool in learning confusing words in English). The P-value rules out the play of chance in obtaining results, establishing the lowest level of significance for the rejection of the null hypothesis. Following are the result details and computations for group mean scores of NUE in the pre and post-tests.

X Values

$$\Sigma = 400$$

$$\text{Mean} = 66.667$$

$$\Sigma(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 36733.333$$

Y Values

$$\Sigma = 840$$

$$\text{Mean} = 140$$

$$\Sigma(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 12600$$

X and Y Combined

$$N = 6$$

$$\Sigma(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 6300$$

R Calculation

$$r = \frac{\Sigma((X - M_x)(Y - M_y))}{\sqrt{((SS_x)(SS_y))}}$$

$$r = 6300 / \sqrt{((36733.333)(12600))} = 0.2928$$

Meta Numerics (cross-check)

$$r = 0.2928$$

With $N=20$, the p value for the pre and post-test means of NUE group comes to 0.210276 which can be interpreted to mean that the null hypothesis (using SMS for learning challenging vocabulary for EFL learners) may be accepted.

Similar computations for QUE in the pre and post-tests are as follows:

Values

$$\Sigma = 500$$

$$\text{Mean} = 83.333$$

$$\Sigma(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 23533.333$$

Y Values

$$\Sigma = 880$$

$$\text{Mean} = 146.667$$

$$\Sigma(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 41333.333$$

X and Y Combined

$$N = 6$$

$$\sum(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 15066.667$$

R Calculation

$$r = \frac{\sum((X - M_x)(Y - M_y))}{\sqrt{((SS_x)(SS_y))}}$$

$$r = 15066.667 / \sqrt{((23533.333)(41333.333))} = 0.4831$$

Meta Numerics (cross-check)

$$r = 0.4831$$

With N=20, the p value for the pre and post-test means of QUE group comes to 0.030948 which can be interpreted to mean that the null hypothesis (using SMS for learning challenging vocabulary for EFL learners) may be accepted.

Casting the frequencies (Table 1) on a stacked chart, Figure 1 emerges.

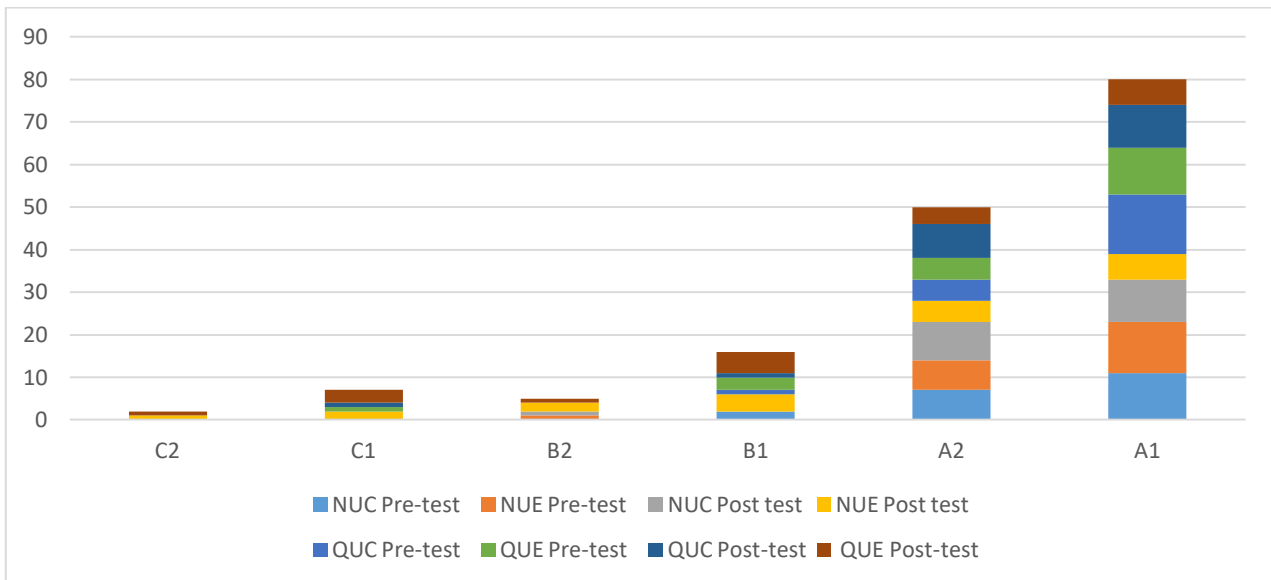


Figure 1: Pre and Post-test Frequency of Grades on OPT

Figure 1 clearly depicts that in the pre-test phase, all the four groups viz., NUC, QUC, NUE, and QUE are at reasonable par with frequencies showing a tendency to stack towards the bottom of the grade scale, with at least half the group falling in the A1 (beginner) grade in each of the four groups. This was also the purpose of conducting the OPT as a pre-test: to establish the parity of all the eighty participants in terms of proficiency on a standardized test.

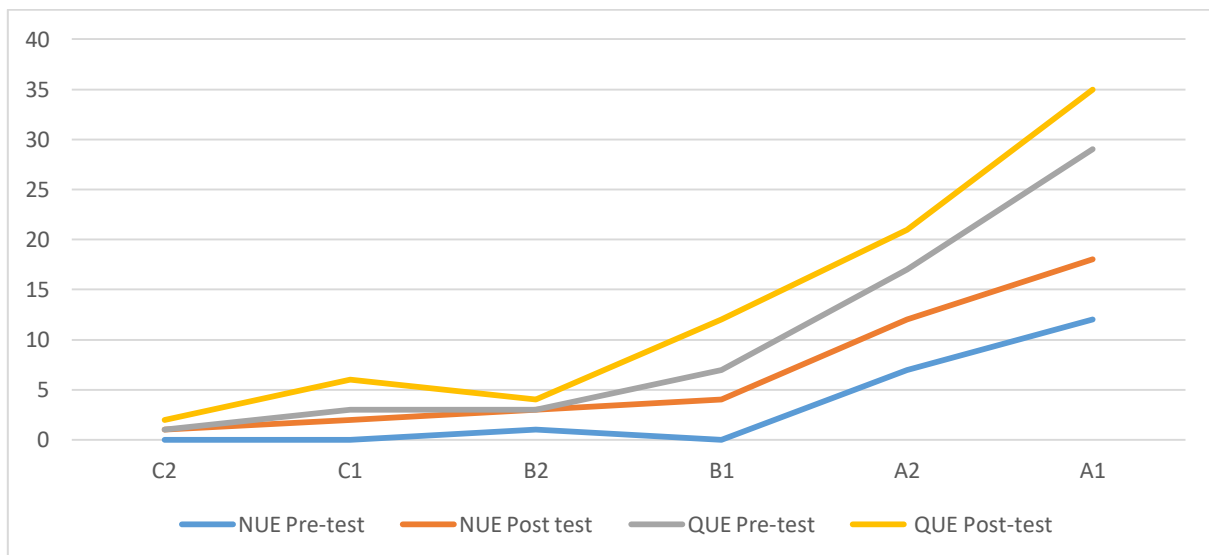


Figure 2: Pre and Post-test Frequency of Grades of NUE and QUE

Figure 2 above shows that in the post-test stage, when a similar but not the same test was again conducted with the four groups, remarkable improvement can be seen in the frequency distribution of the participants on the grade scale with numbers reducing in the lowest grade score that is, A1 by as much as 50% in NUE and 54.5 % in QUE. Similarly, frequencies in the experimental groups, NUE and QUE show a tendency to begin to be distributed in the higher grades, to the tune of 1 versus 0 in grade C2, 2 versus 0 in grade C1 for NUE, 2 versus 1 in grade B2, 4 versus 0 in grade B1, and 5 versus 0 in grade A2 in post and pre-tests respectively. In other words, change in distribution reflects better

scoring in the case of NU. QU tends to follow a similar trajectory with 1 versus 0 in grade C2, 3 versus 1 in grade C1, 1 versus 0 in grade B2, 5 versus 3 in grade B1, 4 versus 5 in grade A2 in the post and pre-tests respectively. Moreover, according to Table 2, it shows that the main rank is relatively the same for the students' achievement in the post test in both universities. The sig value shows that $Z < .005$, which means there is no significant difference between the variables.

TABLE 2
TWO INDEPENDENT SAMPLE TEST

	University	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Najran University	6	6.58	39.50	.935
	Qassim University	6	6.42	38.50	
2	Total	12			

The statements in the questionnaire were spread across four factors as follows:

- i. Approach to learning new but confusing words in English using SMS collaboratively
- ii. Learner's confidence in studying independently
- iii. Perception of language learning via SMS
- iv. Learner's perception of autonomy achieved via using SMS to learn confusing words in English.

Factor analysis of the responses gathered from the experimental groups NUE and QUE showed participants' positive perception to opportunities for collaborative learning afforded by the use of the SMS tool with 53% of the total (N= 40) participants in the experimental groups responding with 'always' for all the four items loading onto the factor, and another 31% responding with 'most of the times'.

The second factor, learner's confidence in studying independently, received moderate to high response with 47% responding with 'mostly' and an additional 8% responding with 'often'.

Perception of language learning via SMS elicited positive response with 57% responded with 'always' to looking forward to an extended use of the tool, in English as well as other courses, and an additional 24% responded with 'mostly'. Finally, the question of autonomous learning opportunities when the SMS tool was applied was answered with better output than the other three factors, with 61% opting for it with 'always' and 26% going with 'mostly'. The statements pertaining to autonomy were designed to elicit responses on the principles of learner autonomy:

- Setting learning goals
- Planning towards achievement of learning goals
- Making choices and availing opportunities for decision-making
- Tracking one's progress
- Evaluating ability

While the participants' responses showed them to be active in the first three of these, they appeared mostly clueless about the remaining two, viz., tracking progress, and evaluating ability.

In the final stage of the study, semi-structured interviews were carried out with three randomly selected participants from each of the experimental groups, NUE and QUE. The aim was to deduce the general perception and experience of the participants with the use SMS as a collaborative tool to learn confusing vocabulary in English. The key concepts that emerged in these were learners' satisfaction with having peers to fall back upon for collaborative work, and the easy access to the teacher (researchers in this case). Overall, the interactive nature of the tool was the one feature that most attracted them to the use of SMS in learning confusing English words.

V. DISCUSSION

This study set out to answer three questions pertaining to tech use in EFL.

To answer the RQ1, "How effective is the use of text messaging as a language instructional tool in terms of language proficiency achievement," data suggested that significant improvement was achieved in learners' output with the use of the SMS tool in learning confusing vocabulary. Comparing learners' achievement between the pre and post-tests, in the post-test stage, when the OPT was repeated with the four groups, remarkable improvement was seen in the frequency distribution of the participants on the grade scale with numbers reducing in the lowest grade score, that is, A1 by as much as 50% in NUE and 54.5 % in QUE. Concurrently, some participants in both the groups improved their performance after the intervention and reached higher grades. This finding is in line with the findings of (AlQarni et al., 2020; Byrne, 2020; Esfandiari & Sokhanvar, 2020). They found that using mobile applications may promote learners' collaborations to share academic ideas with friends which surely boost their language learning achievement. Likely, Keezhatta and Omar (2019) confirmed that using mobile applications in teaching/learning would facilitate language learning by using real, contextualized possibilities, allowing students to react to previously learned experiences, gain new information and develop more problem-solving skills.

RQ2 pertained to the comparative perception of the participants from Najran and Qassim Universities in using text messaging as a language instructional tool. Comparing the two independent samples values for responses (converting

the scale to numerical gradation from 1-5), showed there is no statistically significant difference in the responses of NU and QU learners, $Z = .935$. In other words, their responses are comparable, making the findings available to other similar settings in KSA. This finding can be interpreted that both participants are belonging to the same country where students have the same or relatively life condition including the use of SMS in their learning.

Finally, RQ3 query was to what extent using text messaging as a language instructional tool contributes to autonomy for the EFL learners. Responses to the autonomy factor based items showed that this is partly achieved by the tool as only three out of the five principles of autonomy are fulfilled in this study. This finding is confirmed by Lenkaitis (2020), and Tseng et al., (2020). They found that encouraging the autonomy of learners boosts their capacity as learners to take responsibility for their learning.

VI. CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to gauge the impact of text messaging as a language instructional tool (TMLIT) on Saudi EFL students learning of confused vocabulary. The study found that students' achievements in the post OPT were higher than their performance in the pre-test, which show their achievements were enhanced to a great deal. (19.15 into 39.5) for students of Najran University and (17.02 into 38.5) for students of Qassim University. Moreover, the study found that there is no statistical significant difference in students' performance attributed to the learning sittings. Finally, the study found that participants showed their satisfactions on the use of TMLIT while learning confused vocabulary.

Recommendations

The key emphasis of this study is on learning the frequently confused words in English which share certain features of homophony and homonymy, use of SMS app to make learning more effective and interesting, and learners' autonomy. Although this analysis targets the pre-intermediate learners, further testing is recommended to be carried out for contrast and broader impact measurements for other levels of ability. The results would reflect equally upon technical preparedness of teachers and learners, new learning methods, and the question of autonomy, which is closely connected with MALL.

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