Exploration of EFL Freshman Law Students’ Attitudes on Telegram Messenger Usability in a Legal Terminology Course

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Abstract—In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency for educational institutions and EFL instructors to integrate social media platforms in English language learning environments. The hypothesis is that social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram, have positive impacts on the development of reading, writing, and communication skills, as well as the vocabulary development of EFL students. Despite the prolific literature on the effectiveness and usability of social media platforms, including Telegram, in EFL contexts, very little research has been done on the impact of Telegram Messenger on language development in general and the vocabulary development of ESP students. Thus, this study explores EFL law students’ views of the usability of Telegram Messenger in a Telegram-supported legal terminology course. This quantitative study applies convenience sampling and adapts Kusuma and Suwartono’s (2021) survey questionnaire to collect data. The findings reveal a multi-faceted and very clear picture of Telegram Messenger as an informal form of virtual learning media. The findings confirm that Telegram Messenger is a very beneficial and effective tool, as demonstrated in the legal terminology course. Students express satisfaction with Telegram Messenger due to its easy accessibility and flexible use. They have positive attitudes concerning the educational applications of Telegram Messenger, especially in establishing learner–learner and lecturer–learner types of interaction and keeping them updated with lectures and examination-related issues. Telegram Messenger assists students in catching up with the lectures they cannot attend due to unfavorable circumstances.

Index Terms—EFL, ESP, legal terminology, mobile-assisted language learning, Telegram

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital technology can play a pivotal role in developing language teaching and learning processes (Alakrash et al., 2020). Its rapidly increasing use in language learning has arisen from the need to integrate technology more efficiently into language teaching as a means of enhancing students’ development of the four language skills (Alodwan, 2021). Integrating digital technology in language learning has proven to be successful and effective in executing tasks and reforming language teaching environments (Gilakjani, 2017), and in boosting students’ willingness to communicate and interact during teaching activities (Chotipaktanasook, 2016). By integrating technology, students can participate in a blended learning environment, involving both in-class learning and online learning, such that students can attend traditional classes and undertake online assignments outside the classroom (Yinka & Quendarline, 2018). Blended learning paves the way for students to engage in semi-independent learning. Thus, it is common to find universities incorporating social media with traditional learning methods and allocating students’ learning time outside face-to-face teaching for specialized and non-specialized courses. In addition, it facilitates teacher–student cooperation and interaction.

E-learning has become an indispensable evaluative component in educational programs. Many countries have come to rely heavily on e-learning to support traditional modes of education (Auer & Tsiatsos, 2019; Polly & Binns, 2018; Zayani, 2018). During the COVID-19 pandemic, education ministries around the world called for the total replacement of face-to-face learning with online learning as a measure to curb the spread of the virus and to guarantee students’ safety (UNESCO, 2021). In such e-learning environments, students can learn the same lessons and lectures online as
they do offline. Some researchers have opted for e-learning based on its practical strengths, characterized by facilitative activities that lend themselves to the teaching and learning process (Kusuma & Suwartono, 2021). E-learning is a cost-effective, time-saving, and knowledge-enriching means of educational provision (Agarwal & Pandey, 2013).

ESP technology-assisted courses have come to be in great demand, particularly at educational institutions that have adopted blended learning. In this regard, electronic devices have gone beyond being tools of entertainment in leisure to necessary educational media (Embi, 2018). The incorporation of e-learning in ESP courses has been found to promote students’ interest in language learning (Alodwan, 2021). Moreover, technology-assisted language learning programs account for individual differences through the analysis of learning input and the provision of feedback. Recently, most ESP technology-assisted courses worldwide have employed mobile-assisted language learning applications. Mobile-assisted language learning is an informal language learning tool that exploits the relationship between technology and language learning to provide greater room for learner-centeredness and autonomy (Lestari & Wardhono, 2020). Mobile language learning applications can augment students’ language, communication, motivation, and thinking skills (Lestari & Wardhono, 2020). In addition to aiding language teaching, they are of use in educational research projects.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the appropriate selection of a technology prior to its implementation in e-learning programs (Nova, 2020). This requires teachers to know how such a technology functions and how to incorporate it effectively in their practice (Faramarzi et al., 2019). More importantly, employing a certain technology in e-learning programs depends on the accessibility of the technology itself to teachers and students (Kusuma & Suwartono, 2021). Furthermore, the decision to employ a specific technology is based on its potential to assure multidimensional outcomes, demonstrated in increasing students’ concentration and maintaining their interest in the subjects they study, strengthening their analytical skills, and allowing them to explore new concepts independently, and gain an understanding of the world (Muslimah, 2018). Technologies can positively impact classrooms since they serve many learning styles, build genuine learning experiences, reinforce critical thinking skills, and train students to apply multiple media (Azman et al., 2018). Students are increasingly becoming technophiles, not only harnessing technology to learn course materials, but also seeking to adopt new digital technologies of all types. Smart digital technologies have proven to be productive in the learning process, particularly as students’ use of smart cell phones has become almost ubiquitous. Mobile-supported classes expedite the accessibility of information, make the learning environment interactive, and increase students’ enthusiasm for learning (Muslimah, 2018).

The field of digital technology has witnessed the development of a great variety of digital applications that have positively influenced English language teaching and learning (Abdullah et al., 2020). An example of these digital applications is Telegram, which is viewed as a mobile-assisted language learning application that is suitable for language assessment, lesson delivery, and assignment setting and evaluation (Lestari & Wardhono, 2020). Telegram is a relatively new arrival in the e-learning field, competing with WhatsApp, Google Chat, and many more instant messaging applications. It has been found to assist students’ foreign language learning and international communication (Heidar & Kaviani, 2016). It has advanced rapidly, being used extensively to facilitate teacher–student interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed the delivery of language teaching and learning around the globe. Telegram Messenger has various creditable features that make it among the most favored platforms with technology users, such as guaranteed cyber-security, effortless use, high-speed uploading and downloading of files, and trouble-free connection (Faramarzi et al., 2019). Moreover, its cloud-based system ensures constant access to files exchanged across various channels and groups, and maximizes language learning by increasing interaction among learners and pushing them to cooperate in activities (Ahn, 2021).

This study is motivated by the fact that most university students around the world possess the latest smart phones and spend much of their valuable time browsing various social media applications. They sit for hours checking their Facebook and Twitter accounts, playing video games, and watching movies and sports. Hence, there is a need to integrate educational applications in university programs to balance students’ study and fun time. One interesting way of doing this is to employ Telegram Messenger as it is one of the smartest means of learning required materials (Faramarzi et al., 2019). The aim of this study is to explore the use of Telegram Messenger in the teaching and learning process. It is anticipated that the study findings will benefit lecturers and students alike through analyzing the significance of employing Telegram Messenger in a real educational setting. Further, it will provide an insight into the successful utilization of Telegram Messenger for teaching and learning. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore EFL freshman law students’ perspectives on the use of Telegram Messenger in a legal terminology course. The study is guided by the research question: “What are freshman law students’ perceptions of the use of Telegram Messenger in their legal terminology course?”

This study draws on and extends the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis et al. (1989). TAM is an information system theory that sheds light on users’ acceptance of an information technology (Ramamurthy et al., 2022). It is the most broadly employed theoretical framework and is based on two key factors that impact users’ intention to utilize a new technology, i.e., perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Charness & Boot, 2016). TAM is well-known for its flexible application in various research contexts since it provides a fast and efficient means of establishing users’ perspectives concerning a certain technology application (Han, 2003). To obtain additional information about users’ technology behaviors and enhance learning in technology-supported environments (Weerasinghe & Hindagolla, 2018), various researchers have made several modifications to the original TAM.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some previous literature has specifically focused on the use of Telegram in the domain of language teaching and learning. For instance, Ramamurthy et al. (2022) examined students’ perceptions of the use of Telegram to improve speaking skills in Malaysian tertiary education based on questionnaire and interview data. They used descriptive statistics to analyze their quantitative data and content analysis to analyze the interview data. They found that students had positive attitudes toward the use of Telegram and the language content posted on the app, but considered that appropriate guidance was needed for speaking activities. Kusuma and Suwartono (2021) investigated students’ perceptions of the use of Telegram in English classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing specifically on the challenges the students encountered in using the app. Their study findings showed that the students considered the use of Telegram to be highly effective, implying that the app was a useful and efficient tool in English classes. Further, Aladsani (2021) looked into ways of exploiting Telegram as a social network application and enhancing students’ educational interactions in a university course. The study noted some instructional activities that can be conducted on Telegram to promote student interaction. Moreover, it reported that students view Telegram as a technology that helps boost interaction, and they elaborated on both the benefits and drawbacks of using the app in their course. The study explored the influence of the Telegram app in enhancing EFL students’ writing skills and found that the writing of those in the experimental group improved significantly compared to that of those in the control group. Moreover, students’ perceptions of the app were positive as it assisted them in saving and recording their writing. Putra and Inayati (2021) sought to describe the use of Telegram as a teaching medium in English and to establish students’ perceptions concerning its use. The study found that using Telegram had positive effects on English language teaching. The app helped students become self-reliant and learn independently as all the course materials were pre-posted on Telegram. Moreover, the results showed that the students liked using Telegram as a teaching and learning tool. Nosenko et al. (2021) empirically investigated the application of Telegram Messenger in the high school context during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that Telegram Messenger supported the educational process under the conditions of forced quarantine restrictions and made it possible to accomplish the educational objectives.

Alakrash et al. (2020) examined the effect of the use of Telegram on EFL Arab students’ English vocabulary learning and showed that was an efficient means of stimulating students to learn vocabulary. They suggest that Telegram can expedite the process of learning and foster interaction outside the classroom. In a similar vein, Abu-Ayfah (2020) contended that most EFL students recognized Telegram as a practical tool for enhancing English vocabulary learning. Lestari and Wardhono (2020) focused on the influence of Telegram as a mobile-assisted language learning application on EFL students’ grammar learning. The study found evidence of a significant improvement in EFL students’ grammar. What is more, most students expressed their satisfaction with Telegram due to its user friendliness, flexibility, and ability to provide a timely response. Furthermore, Ghobadi and Taki (2018) showed that the use of Telegram stickers in teaching vocabulary greatly contributed to students’ learning of new items. More broadly, Klimova (2018) maintained that mobile phones, serving as multi-functional tools, could promote language skills, help students’ retention of new vocabulary, and heighten students’ learning motivation. These tools boosted students’ self-confidence, encouraged engagement in class activities, and enhanced students’ willingness to use technology in class for educational purposes. Shirimbakhsh and Saedi (2018) examined the effectiveness of Telegram as a presentation technique for teaching reading strategies in IELTS preparatory courses employing experimental and control groups. The statistical data analysis showed that the experimental group performed better on the posttest than the control group. The authors argued that teaching reading comprehension via Telegram enhanced students’ learning and guaranteed more constructive, positive outcomes. According to Yinka and Queendarline (2018), students made use of Telegram to fulfill teaching and learning goals, and they concluded the platform was an important extension of traditional learning methods that should be used in blended learning environments. Wahyuni (2018) also concluded that Telegram Messenger is a useful form of media that can be used both in teaching and learning and in daily media communication. Naderi and Akrami (2018) additionally pointed out the increasing trend for using Telegram in instruction and noted that students turned to their mobile phones as the best devices for reading short texts. According to Aghajani and Adloo (2018), learning through Telegram was more meaningful in promoting students’ writing outcomes, providing a supportive learning environment, and fostering students’ enthusiasm and motivation for learning. Ghaemi and Golshan (2017) also concluded that applying smart phone learning and Telegram-based learning could solve students’ vocabulary learning difficulties.

The studies reviewed above demonstrate the effectiveness of employing Telegram Messenger in education, specifically in language teaching and learning, noting that educators and students alike recognize its efficacy in various areas of EFL. Recently, mobile-assisted language learning has been rapidly incorporated in the teaching and learning process to accomplish a great range of educational purposes, and this has coincided with educators’ and researchers’ application and investigation of the potential role of mobile device learning applications in English language learning. However, there is a lack of research in ESP contexts, and more particularly in English for legal purposes. Thus, to address this gap in the existing literature, the aim of the current study is to examine how EFL freshman law students at the University of Tripoli perceive Telegram, and whether they view it as an effective informal learning tool in their legal terminology course.
III. METHODS & PROCEDURES

A. Method & Design

This study employed a quantitative methodology, consistent with the analysis of trends in teaching and learning and the exploration of students' attitudes toward a certain learning application (Creswell, 2012). Moreover, quantitative research is known for its objectivity (Muslimah, 2018). Following a cross-sectional design, data were collected at one point in time (Creswell, 2012).

B. Population & Sample

A research population is defined as the entirety of those from whom the subjects of research are recruited as the sample (Muslimah, 2018). The technique for selecting the sample in this research was convenience sampling, the procedure most commonly applied in studies such as this (Creswell, 2012). Convenience sampling is alternatively known as haphazard or accidental sampling, a non-probability or non-random sampling method in which the target population must meet particular practical criteria for inclusion, such as respondent availability, geographical immediacy, and willingness to take part in the study (Etikan, 2016). The limitation is that the findings drawn from such a sample cannot be generalized (Zhao, 2021).

The target population of this research comprised EFL freshman law students registered as full-time students at the University of Tripoli, a public university in Tripoli, Libya. They are taught a legal terminology course using face-to-face lectures and Telegram Messenger. The legal terminology course is based on lessons taken from Wyatt’s (2006) book entitled Check Your English Vocabulary for Law. This book provides training activities aimed at developing knowledge of legal terms for those working in or interested in the legal profession. It contains many “generic” terms that can be applied across international legislation, being recognized in the USA and Canada, and other countries worldwide. It also contains exercises focused on essential legal vocabulary that every law student needs to know and use on daily basis. Each exercise is accompanied by a full answer key at the back of the book. This key gives teachers and students information about particular vocabulary items, including synonyms and alternative words and expressions that are not covered in the exercises themselves.

This study was applied with freshman students who were using Telegram Messenger in their terminology course, the only subject taught in English, in the second half of the 2021–2022 academic year. It explored the students’ perceptions of the usability of Telegram Messenger in the legal terminology course in terms of ease of access, perceived usefulness, communication and interaction, student satisfaction, and obstacles to its use. In total, 318 out of 553 students (57.5% of the total population) completed the electronic survey. The majority were female (236, 74.2% vs. 82, 25.8% male). They ranged in age from 18 to 24 years.

C. Data Collection & Analysis Techniques

This study employed an electronic survey to identify students’ responses to the use of Telegram Messenger in their legal terminology course. Surveys are commonly used in education, a field in which researchers typically gather data via two basic methods, questionnaires and interviews. This method offers a numeric account of trends, attitudes, or perceptions through researching a sample of a given population (Creswell, 2012).

Data were collected through a close-ended questionnaire adapted from Kusuma and Suwartono (2021). The questionnaire is based on five indicators: ease of access, perceived usefulness, communication and interaction, student satisfaction, and obstacles to its use. The survey is divided into two sections: the first contains demographic questions about the gender and age of the students; the second is the main questionnaire. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement/disagreement with 15 statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Likert-scale questions are useful in sampling opinions and the format makes it easy for respondents to answer. The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to determine frequencies (%) in SPSS v.24. Descriptive statistics display data that assist in describing responses to given statements and identifying overall trends (Creswell, 2012) when the intention is not to generalize.

The students’ anonymity and confidentiality of data were assured throughout. The researchers informed the potential participants about the research purpose, significance, and ethics during the first lecture and via the electronic survey. The concept of Telegram-supported learning was explained thoroughly to familiarize students with the benefits of learning legal terminology using technology and to give them complete freedom to take part voluntarily in the electronic survey.

IV. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The students' responses to the survey are presented in cross-tabulation charts showing the levels of agreement and disagreement with the given statements for the five main indicators. The results are then discussed, highlighting the key aspects and interpreting the findings in line with other studies to elicit the overall picture of the merits and demerits of using the Telegram Messenger application in the context of the legal terminology course.
As can be seen in Table 1, the overall response concerning the ease of accessibility of Telegram Messenger was positive, with the responses strongly agree and agree having the highest percentages for all statements: statement (1) 50% and 40.9%, statement (2) 50.9% and 40.3%, and statement (3) 40.3% and 44%, respectively. Thus, the results indicate that students find Telegram Messenger easy to download and operate. Moreover, it expedites access to course materials anytime and anywhere. This is in agreement with the studies of Putra and Inayati (2021), Lestari and Wardhono (2020), and Abu-Ayfah (2020), who report that Telegram is readily accessible for download on smart phones in the Play store or App Store and on personal computers, making it easy for EFL students to access required lessons and lectures.

Responses Concerning Perceived Usefulness

Table 2 presents students' responses concerning the perceived usefulness the Telegram Messenger. As can be seen, the overall response is again positive, with strongly agree and agree having the highest percentages for all statements: statement (1) 42.5% and 45.3%, statement (2) 36.5% and 45.3%, and statement (3) 34% and 47.2%, respectively. These results are indicative that students perceive the value of Telegram Messenger as a multimedia-sharing tool in delivering course materials through various file formats that ultimately increase students' ability to understand course materials and guarantee that they obtain up-to-date information and constructive feedback. These results are compatible with Aladsani (2021), Al-Abdli (2018), and Xodabande (2017), who consider that Telegram’s media-sharing features aid students in remaining well-informed with course updates and understanding lectures in a way that is impossible using traditional methods.

B. Responses Concerning Communication and Interaction

Table 3 presents the responses regarding communication and interaction in Telegram Messenger. It can be noted that there is once more a positive response overall, with strongly agree and agree having the highest percentages for all statements: statement (1) 36.2% and 41.5%, statement (2) 38.1% and 45%, and statement (3) 34.3% and 46.5%, respectively. These results attest to the effectiveness of Telegram Messenger as a communicative and interactive platform in language learning settings. This demonstrates that students find Telegram Messenger a convenient means of discussing course materials and examinations. It establishes learner-centered interaction based on mutual respect and strengthens lecturer–student bonding built on trustworthiness and honesty. These findings support those of Aladsani (2021), Aghajani and Adloo (2018), and Prestridge (2014), who point to the benefits of Telegram Messenger in supporting learner–learner interaction, particularly in giving emotional support and fostering a sense of community and

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<td>2. Telegram Messenger helps students to access the course materials easily</td>
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<td>3. Telegram Messenger can be used anywhere and anytime</td>
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<td>of pdf, ppt, video files, website links, and images</td>
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<td>2. Telegram Messenger promotes students' understanding of course materials</td>
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<td>3. Telegram Messenger enables students to get timely class updates and</td>
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<td>useful feedback</td>
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<td>1. Telegram Messenger allows students to discuss course materials and</td>
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<td>examination-related issues comfortably</td>
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<td>between lecturers and students</td>
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belonging among students. Further, regular lecturer–student interaction leads to the construction of a reliable online academic community that eliminates emotional barriers between lecturers and students.

C. Responses Concerning Students’ Satisfaction

As can be seen in Table 4, the results indicate an overall positive response from the students regarding their satisfaction with Telegram Messenger. The highest percentages for all statements are again assigned to strongly agree and agree: statement (1) 44.3% and 39.6%, statement (2) 38.4% and 41.5%, and statement (3) 32.7% and 41.8%, respectively. These results signify the value of Telegram Messenger in enhancing students’ interest in learning and in offering them trusted solutions when they encounter adverse conditions. These findings are consistent with the studies of Putra and Inayati (2021), Abu-Ayfah (2020), and Yinka and Queendarline (2018), who affirm that Telegram Messenger assists students in accessing course materials. Telegram Messenger develops students’ autonomy, connects them with their lecturers when they have difficulty understanding certain course materials, makes them more engaged in learning, and raises their self-confidence to take the initiative to resolve problems. The results also correlate with those of Khansarian-Dehko and Ameri-Golestan (2016), who report that mobile-assisted learning with Telegram aids students in acquiring and practicing new vocabulary, and leads to more satisfactory outcomes than traditional methods of vocabulary learning.

D. Responses Concerning Obstacles

Table 5 presents the results concerning the challenges students face in using Telegram Messenger, which signify a negative response overall. However, the responses with the highest percentages vary across the statements: statement (1) 29.6% strongly agree and 38.1% agree, statement (2) 32.1% agree and 21.1% disagree, and statement (3) 33.6% agree and 19.8% neutral. These results indicate that students face some difficulties with poor Internet coverage in the areas where they reside. In addition, Telegram Messenger takes up a great deal of their time and has a disruptive effect on their study of legal course materials and other course materials due to the nonstop flow of messages and updates. These findings concur with the works of Putra and Inayati (2021), Aladsani (2021), Li (2017), and Inayati (2015), who note that network failure and poor Internet connection are the most prevalent technical obstacles facing students and disrupting their studies. Further, Aghajani and Adloo (2018) and Alizadeh (2018) claim that using Telegram can be a diversion, taking students’ focus off their courses as they start surfing other websites, joining irrelevant chat groups and fun sites, or reading their friends’ posts (Aladsani, 2021). Aghajani and Adloo (2018) and Alizadeh (2018) warn that allocating too much time to Telegram can result in students neglecting their work and may ultimately lead to Internet addiction.

V. CONCLUSION

The students’ responses concerning the use of Telegram Messenger pinpoint the advantages and disadvantages of its integration as an informal educational platform. Notably, the results show that Telegram can serve as a valuable extension to traditional teaching and learning methods in English for specific purposes (ESP) courses. The attitudes of the EFL freshman students at the Faculty of Law, University of Tripoli (batch 2021 and 2022) presented here are highly positive overall regarding the use of the Telegram Messenger application in their legal terminology course. The students report that accessing Telegram Messenger is easy and that it is useful. The results indicate that it is effective in making
their communications and interactions easier. However, although the students recount being broadly satisfied with Telegram Messenger, they also sometimes have technical difficulties due to a poor Internet connection. Moreover, at times their progress is impeded as they become distracted and lose their focus on the course materials.

REFERENCES


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