

Transformation of traditional EFL instruction into Web 2.0: Azerbaijani Undergraduate Students' Readiness to Use Online Technologies in EFL Lessons

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Abstract: The present study meant to shed light on Azerbaijani undergraduate students' readiness to use contemporary electronic devices in EFL classes. To get the required data, the researcher applied to the questionnaire. The survey took place at Qafqaz University (Current Baku Engineering University). By and large, 442 learners participated in this questionnaire with different English levels and class profile. The result of this investigation has revealed that modern technologies have become an integral part of the overwhelming majority of Azerbaijani undergraduate students. The findings also indicate that undergraduate students in Azerbaijan have a high potential to learn English through Web 2.0 technologies.

Keywords: EFL, Modern Technology, Language Acquisition, Web 2.0

1. Introduction

The significant advancement in information and communication technologies (ICT) made them an integral part of human race. ICTs have a strong impact on our lifestyle, the way we communicate, have fun, learn, work, and even they influenced our beliefs and ideas. In a short time, contemporary technology has reached every sphere of our life and keeps continuing increasingly. In particular, the internet is one of the most leading and outstanding parts of business, education mass media and other spheres around the world; thus, it is impossible to imagine the world without it. Almost everybody from children to mature has an account in social networking world such as Facebook, Instagram, and so forth.

“Indeed, whatever becomes popular in people’s life is normal to be brought into the classroom environment” (Aliyev & Ismayilova, 2017, p. 2). Hence, information and communication technologies almost with its development have been integrated into the educational process so as to improve the quality of education. Even some criteria and standards were set by some organizations, such as ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) in order to provide leadership and service to the educational processes regarding using technology efficiently (Catherine, John & Peggy, 2010).

2. Literature Review

The integration of information and communication technologies into EFL classes has always been broadly contemplated subject among the linguists and instructors. Their uses are believed to have many advantages for the students in EFL classrooms. Since modern technologies provide students with many opportunities, thanks to them classes become more engaging and alluring. ICTs with the internet foster learner autonomy and let English learners practice a language. Besides this, computer technologies let English students evaluate themselves and get feedback. The use of online and digital technologies assist learners in the acquisition of the language at their own pace or students can join any online team which can make the learning conditions more enjoyable (Alsied & Pathan, 2013).

ICTs offer the EFL learners with a gateway to numerous tasks to develop their language skills. Using the computer as a listening device is argued to be one of the most significant learning devices for improving EFL students' listening abilities. It enables students to acquire on their own and get immediate feedback on the completion of tasks (Hoven, 1999). Teaching listening via different media (colorful pictures, better sound, and texts) involved in ICTs can help to trigger the learner's interest; hence, beautify the skill and assist in producing better results. Using computers also provide learners a chance to develop language learning by bringing in the real English speaking environment (Yusof, 2012). Digitized speeches and videos, suggested by the utilization of the internet, can also be advantageous to develop the listening. The use of technologies can also be helpful for acquiring, fostering, practicing and assessing speaking skills. EFL students can use different gadgetry, such as tablets and Smartphones (which have access to the internet) to interact with native speakers and improve their language production in real and friendlier environment. Payne & Whitney (2002) support the view that social websites (e.g., Facebook) create an opportunity for English learners to improve speaking skill as well as proficiency. Even the application of computer technologies motivates the reluctant learners to speak. Therefore, applying ICTs for developing speaking provides myriad learning opportunities where there is a less teacher centered environment. Information and communication technologies can assist in improving EFL students' reading comprehension skill and other sub-skills. Using computers technologies provides many creative, authentic reading materials as opposed to textbook reading material. Since most of the computer programs are featured with verbal, visual, and audio systems, it helps EFL learners to imagine the situation better, which contributes to comprehend the reading material easily and keep in mind long enough (Bhatti, 2013). Alsied and Pathan (2013) note that in terms of vocabulary, digital sources help EFL students learn unfamiliar words faster than the traditional way of learning them. An endless number of reading sources available online that encourage EFL learners and gives opportunities to read extensively in English (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012). Thus, it is held that modern digital devices can promote extensive reading; build reading fluency and rate (Alsied & Pathan, 2013). Technological conditions indisputably have affected teaching writing and its processes (composing, planning and editing and so on) (Salomon, Kosminsky & Asaf, 2003). The nature of writing is initially changed by the PCs, especially word processor and then Web.2.0 technologies. Technological tools (e.g., PCs) influence students' writing positively since they enhance students' attitudes toward writing competence and build up their self- confidence. As it is innovative for students, writing has become more efficient (Pennington, 2003).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Overview

This section includes breakdowns about questionnaire, methods, subjects, procedures, the findings, and discussions. The questionnaire aims to measure Azerbaijani undergraduate students' potential and willingness to use contemporary Web 2.0 technologies.

3.2 Procedure

In order to get an accurate result, a quantitative method was applied. Questions for the survey were prepared on Google-Forms. Multiple choice type questions were preferred by the researcher. The link of the survey distributed via Facebook and WhatsApp groups to the bachelor learners. After collecting data, the results were analyzed in the SPSS 16.

3.3 Participants

All participants were Qafqaz University students (current Baku Engineering University). Overall, 442 participants took part in this survey with different English levels and class profile. 53.3% (232 - N) of the subjects were females, and 46.7% (203 - N) were males. Participants to this questionnaire were bachelor students. Of the 46 participants (10.7%) were foundation year students (school of languages) and 160 participants (37.1%) were first-year students at the university. 87 participants (20.2%) were in their second year at university and the number of respondents who were in their third year was 79 which amounted to 18.3% of participants. 13.7% of respondents(N=59) were senior students. As regards students English proficiency level, almost one in three of the participants (30.6%) were upper-intermediate and 27.1% of them were advanced. The proportion of subjects who were intermediate amounted to 25.5%. Pre-intermediate and elementary level participants amounted to 11.4% and 5.3% in turn.

It is worthy to mention that, the numbers of respondents are different for each question in the survey. For details see:

(<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfxG8vppm3pDEhdr3Q6owtvVW0f8n40t1OHYpqZZH2UIRdMlg/viewanalytics>)

3.4 Significance Test

Significance test was applied to each question so as to draw a conclusion. The agreement level with the statement was determined on the 5- point scale and means of answers were compared with the test value of 4 which shows that participants agree with these opinions. Very low p-value shows its significance that students inclined to agree that online websites like Facebook, Twitter and so on can be used in English classes, although it's not at the highest level of agreement.

Table 1: SPSS Analysis of the Study
 One-Sample Test

Test Value = 4						
	T	Df		Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
To what extent do you agree that online websites like Facebook, Twitter and so on can be used in English classes?	-10.131	436	.000	-.462	-.55	-.37

4. Findings

If we look at details, in this part of the survey the researcher measured students' interest in Web 2.0 technologies. What stands out from this part is that most of those surveyed (82%) have Smartphones. The share of those who own laptop accounted for 59.1% and 37.9% of the students stated that they use the cellular phone. Just over one-third of the students (36.5%) noted that own PCs and approximately a quarter of the subjects (26.9%) have tablets. 41 subjects (9.4%) stated that they use other devices as well (See figure 1).

I have these Electronic Devices. Aşağıdaki cihazlardan hansıları sizdə var? (1 den cox cavab seçmək olar)

(437 responses)

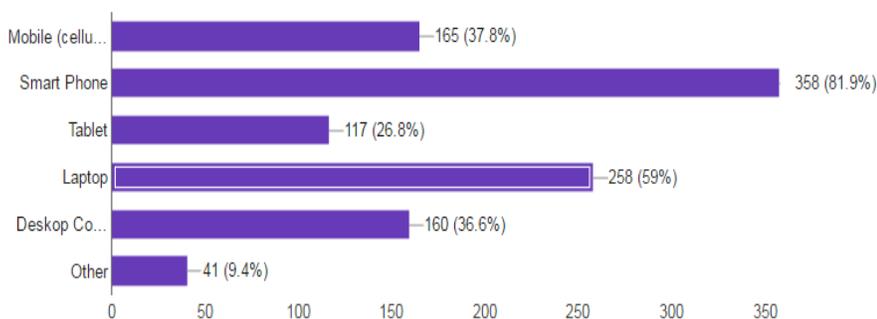


Figure 1: Interest in Electronic devices

Next question targeted at measuring the time students are allocating the devices mentioned in the previous question. Therefore, 43% of the participants (188 students) state that they use these electronic gadgets for 4-6 hours. 29.7% of learners (130) use electronic devices for 7-12 hours. 12.8% chose the choice indicating 2-3 hours. Those who use electronic tools more than 12 hours account for 11.7% of total subjects. A tiny minority of students use electronic devices for 1-2 hours, at 2.7%.

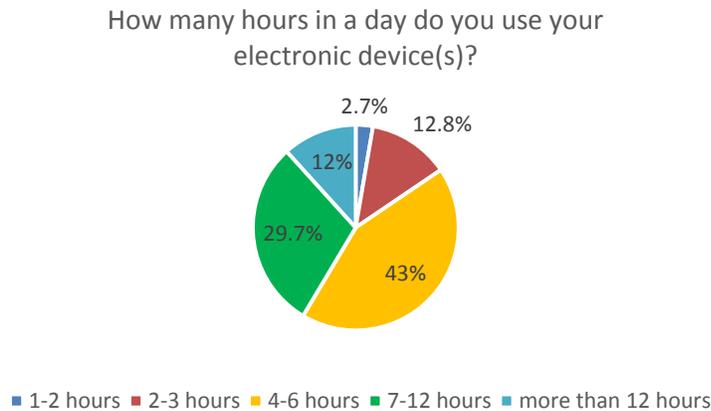


Figure 2: Spent Hours on the Usage of Electronic Devices

The present study also found that half of the participants use these gadgets mainly to surf the internet. 23.6% of subjects use electronic gadgets for educational reasons. 16.2% of the participants use these modern devices for fun and entertainment (e.g., games) and 10.1% of them use electronic tools for other reasons (See Figure 3).

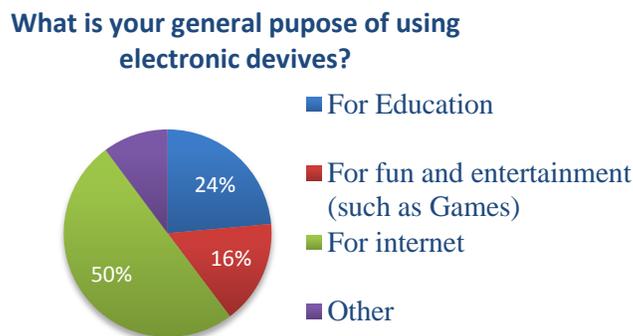


Figure 3: Purpose of Using Electronic Devices

The following question aimed at determining how much time undergraduate students spend on using the internet in a typical day. 175 learners which make up the 40.1% of total respondents use the internet for 4- 6 hours. 23.3 % (101 students) of participants spend their 7-12 hours on the internet, and 18.8% (82 students) use the internet about 2-3 hours a day. The proportion of students who use the internet for more than 12 hours amounted to 9.2% (40 students), as opposed to 8.3% (36) who use the internet for 1-2 hours daily. Surprisingly, just 2 participants (0.5%) stated that they almost do not use the internet.

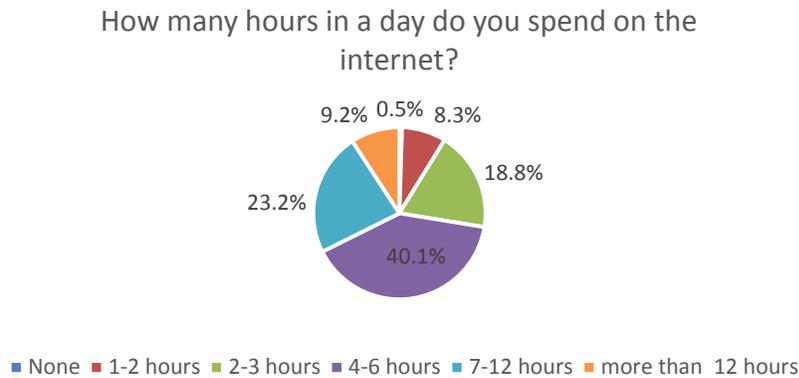


Figure 4: Spent Hours on the Internet

It is evident from the results of this question that Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are the most popular social media tools. 85.5% of participants which is 375 students use Facebook. Additionally, 81.9% (358-N) noted that they have an Instagram account and YouTube is another most popular online social tool among the undergraduate learners with being accounted for 74.6%. Furthest, 19.2% of participants noted that they use Twitter and 9.2% of subjects use Blogs and Wikis. Only 5 students stated that they do not use any other online social tools. The rest of the participants also use other Social network websites such as LinkedIn, SnapChat, Myspace, Tumblr WhatsApp and Vkontakte as is mentioned in the comment part of the option “Others” (See Figure 5).

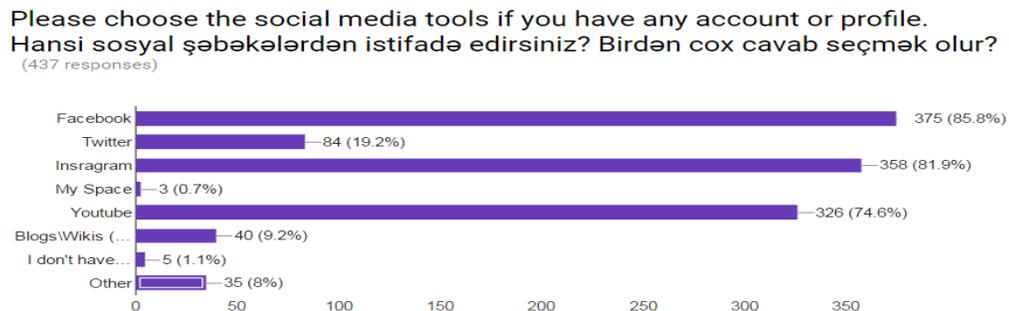


Figure 5: Preference for Online Social Tools

Regarding the time the students spent on the online social tools, it is apparent that 38.2 % spend 2-3 hours and 32.9 % spent 4-6 hours. Those who spend 1 hour accounted for 19.4%. Of the 30 students (6.9%) spend 7-12 hour for social media and just 11 respondents (2.5%) showed that they spend more than 12 hours on social media.

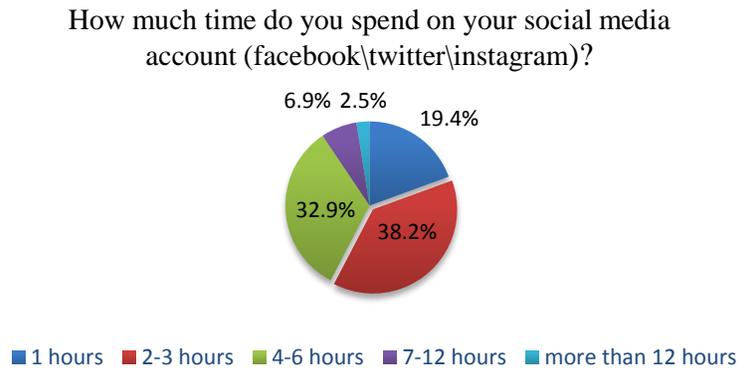


Figure 6: Time spent on Social Media

Concerning the aim of using the mentioned social network websites, 73.3% noted that they use for chatting and communicating with mates and 12.2% use them for educational reasons. 14.6 % of participants stated that they use it for other purposes, such as getting information about the latest news across the globe (as is written in the comment part) (See figure 7).

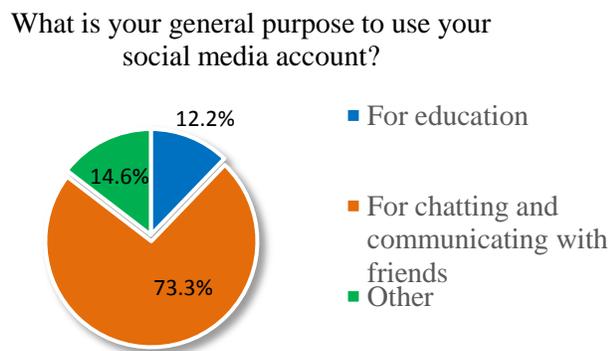


Figure 7: Purpose to use Purpose Social Media

The last question of the questionnaire was about the integration of social web technologies in English lessons. The purpose of the question was to measure learners' belief about teaching English through social websites. As is illustrated by the graph, 42.1% (184- N) agree that social web tools can be applied in EFL lessons. 13.7% of the total participants strongly support the view that it can be used in English lessons. 31.8%, on the other hand, stayed neutral. Nonetheless, 12.3% of subjects oppose the view that social web technologies can be integrated into EFL classes where 8.9% disagreed, and 3.4% strongly disagreed.

To what extent do you agree that online websites like Facebook-twitter and so on can be used in English classes?

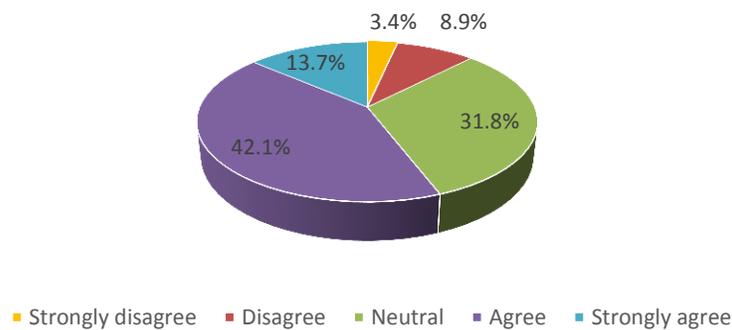


Figure 8: Measuring Students thought about integrating ICT on EFL

5. Discussion and Conclusion

An objective of the current study was to figure out Azerbaijani undergraduate students' readiness to use Web 2.0 technologies in EFL lessons. One of the most crucial findings was that of 359 subjects which accounts for 82% of total participants use smartphones, and many of students have laptop tablet and other electronic tools. In addition to this 188 of the participants mentioned that in a typical day they use these devices 4 to 6 hours and 138 of them use them 7-12 hours. It can thus be suggested that modern technologies were spread highly among Azerbaijani students. According to the findings, students mainly use these devices for the internet. Findings reveal that learners primarily use the internet for education (37.3%), entertaining (26.9%) and for chatting (21%). Apart from this, the findings of the current survey indicate that a massive 85.8% of participants registered Facebook accounts and 82% of them have Instagram accounts. Of 165 subjects spend 2-3 hours and 143 respondents spend 4-6 hours on mentioned social networking websites. Besides, 308 participants noted that they use social networking websites for chatting; while a modest 12.1% of learners use social networking websites for education. To the question whether social networking websites can be integrated into English classes, over half of the subjects gave a positive answer. 42.2% of them chose the option "agree," and 13.7% of them strongly agreed. It should also be noted that 139 students stayed neutral to this question.

Hence, based on the results and facts are listed below it could conceivably be hypothesized that Azerbaijani undergraduate learners can easily adapt the use of Web 2.0 technologies in EFL classes.

- ✚ the availability of the technological devices in Azerbaijan
- ✚ the time students spend on electronic devices and internet
- ✚ students' high interest in social networking websites (e.g., Facebook and Instagram)
- ✚ learners' own believe that WEB 2.0 technologies can be integrated into English classes

Consequently, the study has indicated that undergraduate students in Azerbaijan have a high potential to learn English through Web 2.0 technologies.

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