

## **Undergraduate Students' Relevance to Social Media Platforms and Their Attitudes to Mobile Learning: A Case Study in Ishik University**

Tahsin Yagci<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Language Teaching, Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq

Correspondence: Mustafa Altun, Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq. Email: tahsin.yagci@ishik.edu.iq

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**Abstract:** Rapid developments in smart mobile devices and social networking sites with a high speed internet access forces us to consider how to implement and integrate them into higher education learning process. These innovations have been met with multi-interaction in educational environment in developing countries in Middle East like Iraq. Thus, a survey was conducted through undergraduate Ishik University students to realize the awareness of the students. This investigation sought how undergraduate students deal with social media network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Edmodo and other tools. This study searched what type of electronic devices they use and their usage frequency during their academic life. In this study a descriptive research was designed in which a questionnaire was used as the main research tool. Undergraduate students became respondents themselves by responding to the survey link which was sent to their Facebook groups. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS. It has been explored that there is a great potential to embed and implement mobile learning in higher educations, especially in Ishik University.

**Keywords:** Mobile Devices, Social Networking Tools, Mobile learning, Ishik University

### **1. Introduction**

Nearly there is nowhere that we use permeated technology. Rapidly developing mobile and wireless innovations forced us to integrate them to all fields in our lives. It is unavoidable to involve ubiquitous and pervasive ICT to educational process (Simyo and Ahead of Time, 2009). Nowadays developed countries like USA, UK and most European countries and far East countries Like Japan, Korea, Malaysia etc. sustain mobile learning projects and investigations throughout their current educational system. Future is theirs who integrates LESOME (Learning with Social Mobile Media) to their teaching-learning process.

We all have a treasure in our hands which is called hand held devices. These are smart mobile phones, tablet Pcs, laptops etc. These devices are the gate way to whole digital world (Kukulka-Hulme, 2010). They comprise unpredictable features such as HD video camera audio visual recording and playing tools, embedded social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, mail browsers, internet providers etc. beside communication tools.

We have at least one of them nearby. One can forget to put money in his pocket, but not his smart phone. Educators and learners must turn them into a teaching and learning media. It has been proven that using mobile devices empowers learners to transcend the conventional concept of the classroom (Pachler et al.,

2010). Using technology in teaching and learning process can be highly engaging, motivating and interactive. The provision of authentic materials is significant for real language learning. Mobile devices present us personalized lifelong learning.

## **2. Literature Review**

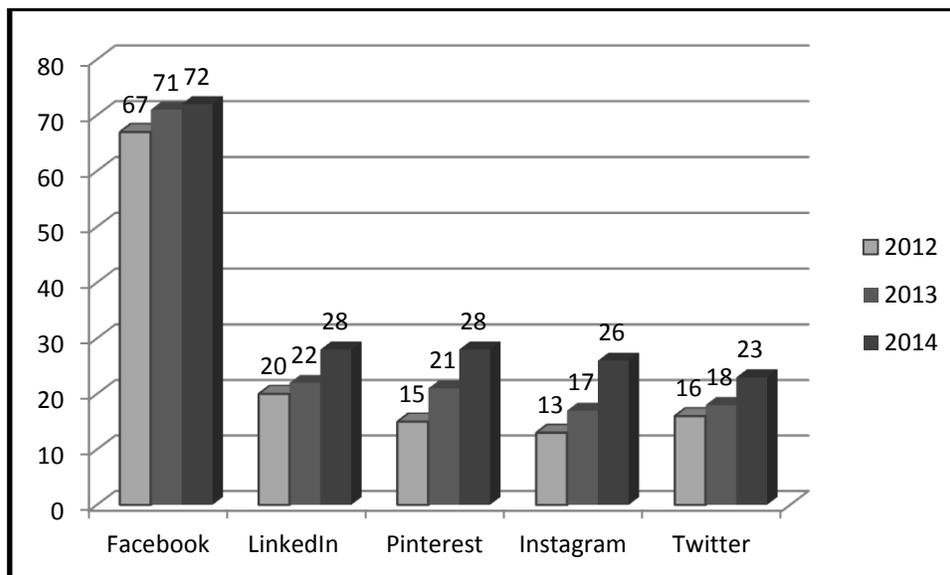
The new generation has been twins with electronic smart devices. It cannot be considered that they can live separately. This new “Google generation is called Digital Natives, Gen Y, Net Gen or Digital citizens are experts of new mobile devices” (Zimmermann, 2012, p.39 ). Students’ perceptions are about integrating mobile learning into their learning process. Prensky (2001) claims that the current generation of students have "spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age" (p.9). These “digital natives have created their own communities of interest on Facebook and Twitter as well as chosen to be there virtually even during class time” (Akhras, 2012, p.87). On the other hand, in some other studies it is understood that “some of the digital citizens are somehow reject to involve social media tools in learning process” (Yagci, 2014, p.50).

## **3. The Usage of Social Media in EFL Learning**

First of all it is a must to increase the awareness of the potential features and feasibility of using social mobile media tools in education. None the educators nor the students are aware of the treasure in their pocket. First step should be convincing the teachers the benefits of engaging students with social media. They should be open for innovative opportunities using technology in the classroom. Beside social media literacy is crucial to deal with. Of course we are not completely pessimistic. Because there is a large number of social media friendly teachers in some institutions. They integrate social media tools in their practical lesson to flip the traditional way. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Blogs, Wikis, Edmodo etc. presents a breadth usage in formal and informal education.

The survey conducted in 2014 found that Facebook was at the top for its popularity (% 72) among adult social media network users (Duggan, 2015). However the ratio of Facebook is slowing down. On the other hand the network like Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest etc. are significantly increasing. Here are some other important values on social media in America. A common usage for multi-platform is % 52. More than % 56 of older use Facebook. The youngest ones prefer using Instagram Or Pinterest (Please see figure 1).

Figure 1: Social media sites percentage among adult users and their development



**Facebook** has always been on the top among the social media tools. On Facebook, real and authentic connections are available. Three kinds of Facebook accounts provide teachers and learners a broad opportunity to use it for learning process. You may have pages, groups and profiles of Facebook. Grouping is the best way for EFL learning to share audio visual language supplementary. Edmodo is a social media application just designed for educational purpose similar to Facebook. Twitter's fame is all around the world. You can deliver your ideas in a brief way with 140 characters. Learners can have micro blogs on twitter. Social media tools do not consist of these applications. There are lots of it. We mentioned some of them in this study.

**YouTube:** A teacher may have nearly 3,000 students in his or her academic life but through YouTube educators make much more contribution to learning process. If you consider one lecture duration as 45-50 minutes, you can just address a full of students in a classroom. But throughout YouTube thousands of learners could be taught. In blended education system learners can listen to their teacher once, but on YouTube many times until he or she understands better. It will be an easy revision before exams. Learners can reach many videos or slides related to their topic. On YouTube students can be assigned for video homework.

#### 4. Methodology

Especially in developed countries it is very common to use social networking sites and smart mobile devices. To achieve the goal of gathering the data for Iraqi case we conducted a survey at Ishik University which is located in Northern part of Iraq. The study aimed to measure the perception of social media usage and students' readiness for integrating mobile media. Their attitudes are significant indicator for following researches. In the questionnaire there were four parts to be lightened. (Please see Appendix for the questionnaire.)

- The demographic structure of the respondents,
- The diversity of electronic devices.
- Social networking sites and students attitudes.
- Attitudes to internet accessibility.

To analyze the collected data SPSS v.22 was used. Some tables and charts were added to findings to understand better. Actually Google drive form was very convenient to design and establish the survey. When the questions were ready they were tested among 15 students to ensure for validity in the pre-survey. After that the survey link was shared and put through some social networking sites such as students Facebook groups and one educational social platform 'Edmodo'. Additionally the survey link was sent to some students' email addresses. Totally 76 students participated to the study. They responded themselves just by sharing the link in their Facebook groups. The link was online nearly for three weeks. At the end of the period the collected data from Google drive was converted to Microsoft Excels file. The data was analyzed in SPSS and the results were shared in this paper.

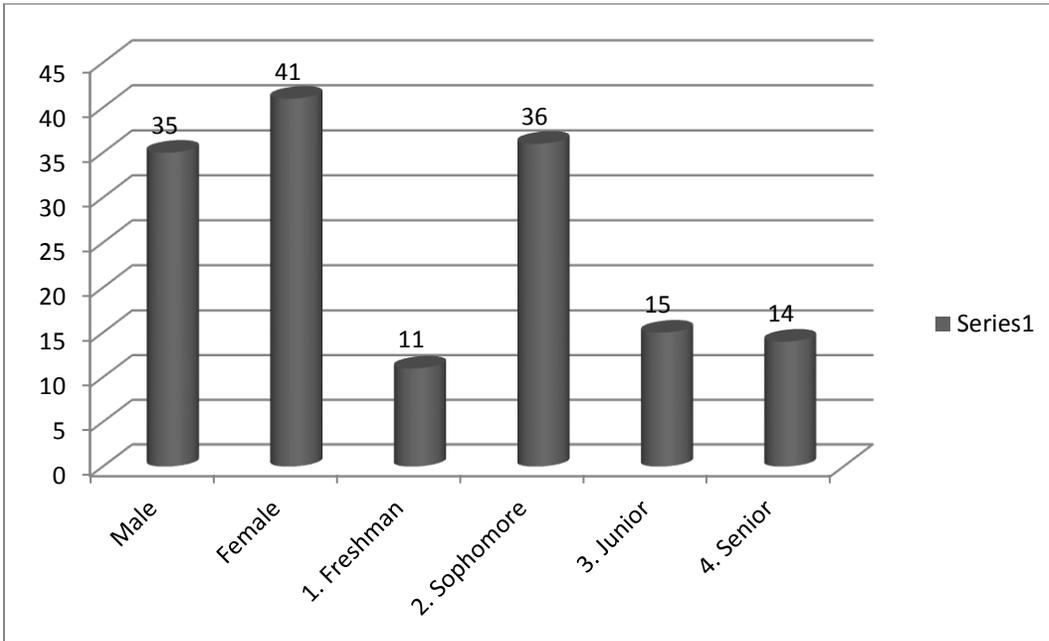
#### **4.1 Participants**

76 respondents participated in this survey in Ishik University. 41 of them were females and 35 were males. All the respondents study at Ishik University. As it is shown in table (1) 11 of them were freshmen, 36 of them were sophomores, 15 of them were juniors, and 14 of them were seniors.

In figure 2 the diversity of the respondents can be seen according to their grades. Freshmen are 20, sophomores are 41, juniors are 13, seniors are 15 and the others are preparatory school and graduate students.

1. Freshman	<b>11</b>
2. Sophomores	<b>36</b>
3. Junior	<b>15</b>
4. Senior	<b>14</b>

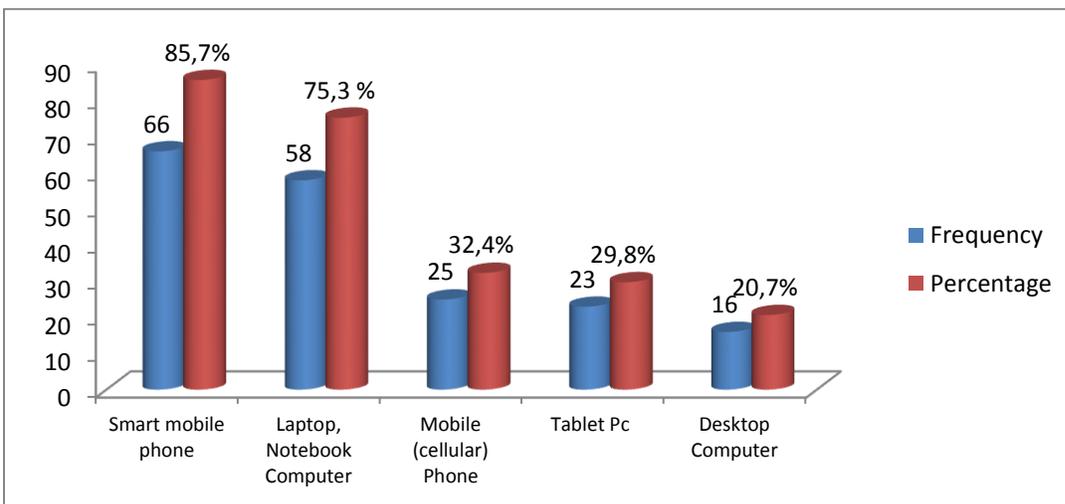
Figure 2: Respondents Demography



## 5. Findings

In the research the second part was about mobile and electronic devices that we asked to responders. The responds are shown in figure (3). According to the results out of 76 respondents 25 of them have mobile (cellular) phone (32, 4%), 66 of them have smart mobile phone with Android or IOS operation system (85, 7 %). 23 of them own Tablet Pc (29.8 %) (E.g. Ipad, Samsung Galaxy Tab etc.). 58 of them own Laptop, Notebook Computer (75.3%). 16 of them own desktop computer (20.7%) at home.

Figure 3: The usage of electronic devices



Also in this research we asked about respondent's frequency of device usage. Respondents have been using their electronic devices 21, 1 % between 1 and 3 years, the highest ratio 71, 1% is about more than 3 years (See Table 1). These results show how important to integrate mobile devices to mobile learning.

Table 1: How long have you been using your electronic device?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 month	1	1,3	1,3	1,3
1-3 years	16	21,1	21,1	22,4
4-6 months	2	2,6	2,6	25,0
7-12 months	3	3,9	3,9	28,9
more than 3 years	54	71,1	71,1	100,0
Total	76	100,0	100,0	

Additionally it was curious for us to get some data about the usage of smart devices during the day? We really wondered about the duration. So the question was 'How many hours in a day do you use your electronic device(s)?'

After the survey we found that % 43. 4 were using their devices nearly between 4-6 hours in a day which is good to learn something concerning the language. % 21.1 of the respondents use between 7-12 hours in a day. The details were shown in table (2).

Table 2: How many hours in a day do you use your electronic device(s)?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1-2 hours	9	11,8	11,8	11,8
2-3 hours	13	17,1	17,1	28,9
4-6 hours	33	43,4	43,4	72,4
7-12	16	21,1	21,1	93,4
More than 12 hours	5	6,6	6,6	100,0
Total	76	100,0	100,0	

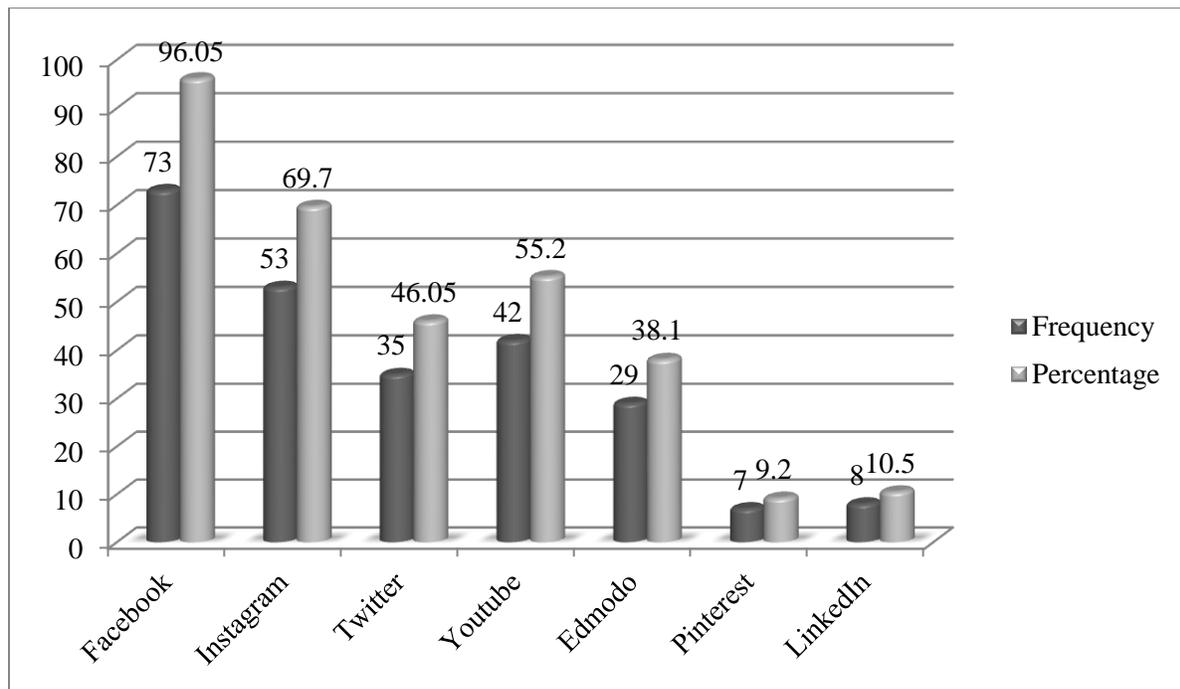
In Table (3) we will see the frequency of intensive usage of students' mobile devices. Generally the classes finish in Ishik University at 15:30, for this reason students use their devices intensively in the evenings with the percentage of %39, 5 which is very close to the all-day ratio. All day percentage is %46, 1. However most of the respondents use them during the day, even during the lecture. 49, 4% of the respondents use them for general purposes. They do not only use devices for learning, but also 34, 2% claim that they need their devices for fun and entertainment.

Table 3: I generally use my electronic device intensively...

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid all the day	35	46,1	46,1	46,1
in the afternoons	6	7,9	7,9	53,9
in the evenings	30	39,5	39,5	93,4
in the mornings	5	6,6	6,6	100,0
Total	76	100,0	100,0	

And now the most important part of the research is diversity of social networking sites in Ishik University. Looking at the chart in table 6 you can analyze the sociocultural structure of social media platforms in Kurdistan Region. The most popular social networking site is Facebook. 96,05 % of the respondents have user account. Also Instagram is another tool with a 69,73%. YouTube is the 3<sup>rd</sup> one with 55.2 %. Edmodo is new among Ishik University students yet 38,1 % of the participants use it.

Figure 4: Social Networking Sites Rank among Ishik University Students.



As the electronic devices have a very low tax in this country, it is very cheap to obtain one of the smartest machines. People buy and renew their devices very often. 48,73 % of the students login to their profiles 2-3 hours in a day. 23,7% percent of the students login for one hour during the day. 33,6% of the students login to social media for communicating and chatting with friends. Just 25% of them use it

for educational purpose. They intensively use their social accounts in the evenings (in the evenings 47, 4%, all day 38, 2%, in the mornings 6, 6%).

Table 4: How much time do you spend on your social media account?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 hour	18	23,7	23,7	23,7
2-3 hours	37	48,7	48,7	72,4
4-6 hours	15	19,7	19,7	92,1
7-12	5	6,6	6,6	98,7
More than 12 hours	1	1,3	1,3	100,0
Total	76	100,0	100,0	

Table 5: I generally use my social media account intensively....

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid all the day	29	38,2	38,2	38,2
in the afternoons	6	7,9	7,9	46,1
in the evenings	36	47,4	47,4	93,4
in the mornings	5	6,6	6,6	100,0
Total	76	100,0	100,0	

In the survey we asked if the respondents possess their own internet access. 88, 2% of the students have their own internet suppliers. The percentage of those who does not have their own suppliers is 11, 8%. However almost everybody has internet access. 44, 7% of the respondents login to internet in the evenings. 39, 5% claim that they use internet any time during the day. Those who use in the morning have a percentage of 6, 6 %. Those who rarely login to internet in the afternoons are 9, 2 %.

Table 6: Do you have your own internet access?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No	9	11,8	11,8	11,8
Yes	67	88,2	88,2	100,0
Total	76	100,0	100,0	

Table 7: How many hours in a day do you login your internet?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1-2 hours	18	23,7	23,7	23,7
2-3 hours	13	17,1	17,1	40,8
4-6 hours	18	23,7	23,7	64,5
7-12	15	19,7	19,7	84,2
More than 12 hours	12	15,8	15,8	100,0
Total	76	100,0	100,0	

Table 8: I generally log into internet access intensively....

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid all the day	30	39,5	39,5	39,5
in the afternoons	7	9,2	9,2	48,7
in the evenings	34	44,7	44,7	93,4
in the mornings	5	6,6	6,6	100,0
Total	76	100,0	100,0	

## 6. Discussion

In the course of analysis for the usage of mobile devices, social networks and internet access clarifies the readiness for implementing mobile learning in Iraqi Higher Educational institutions. The majority of the undergraduate students (68, 7%) are ready for blended learning. The results of research show us that the average of mobile device owners (smart phones, tablet Pcs, laptop computers) is around 60%. There is a great potential in this region to use blended learning. However, neither students nor the academic staff is ready and aware of this treasure. The students and the academic staff of universities need to be properly enlightened and guided to use the social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Edmodo, Moodle etc.

## 7. Conclusion

It is inevitable to be surrounded by internet technology and mobile devices. Social media became undisputed phenomenon. The educators and young learners must be armed with them. Social media literacy is important and it should be taught at schools. Adopting the social media into education system is crucial. Curriculum designers should consider engaging social media into learning system. This concept cannot be ignored by policy makers of education. Banning mobile devices in the learning process is not a sensible option. Here the question is how to harness this social media and its devices in learning process. Education policy makers, curriculum designers, academician should encourage the

teachers to integrate them into their classes. Parents should be involved into the process. Respondents in this research have the opportunity to integrate social media tools via their smart mobile devices. Educational policy makers and the curriculum designers should consider how to embed mobile learning into learning environment. They should lead the relevant people into action. As a conclusion mobile devices and internet usage via mobile devices should be encouraged and implemented in educational process.

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## **Appendix A**

### **How Digital Native Are You?**

#### **A) Personal Information**

**What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

**Which educational institution do you study in?**

- Ishik University
- Salahaddin University
- Cihan University
- Other

**What grade are you in?**

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- other

**I study at the faculty of... Please choose your faculty.**

- Education Faculty
- Business and Management
- Faculty of Law
- Dentistry
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Science
- Other

#### **B) Mobile and Electronic Devices**

**I have these Electronic Devices**

- Mobile (cellular) Phone
- Smart mobile phone
- Tablet Pc ( e.g. Ipad, Samsung Galaxy Tab etc.
- Laptop, Notebook Computer
- Desktop Computer
- Other Devices

**How long have you been using your electronic device?**

- 1 month
- 2-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 1-3 years
- more than 3 years

**How many hours in a day do you use your electronic device(s) ?**

- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours

- 4-6 hours
- 7-12
- More than 12 hours

**I generally use my electronic device intensively....**

- in the mornings
- in the afternoons
- in the evenings
- all the day

**What is your general purpose to use electronic devices?**

- For education
- For fun and entertainment
- Other:

**C) Social Media Tools & Platform**

**Please choose the social media tools if you have any account or profile.**

- Facebook
- Twitter
- My Space
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Youtube
- Pinterest
- Edmodo
- Weblog or Blog
- I have no social media account
- Other:

**How much time do you spend on your social media account?**

- 1 hour
- 2-3 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 7-12
- More than 12 hours

**What is your general purpose to use your social media account?**

- For education
- For fun and entertainment
- For chatting and communicating with friends
- Other:

**I generally use my social media account intensively....**

- in the mornings
- in the afternoons
- in the evenings
- all the day

**D) Internet Accessibility**

**Do you have your own internet access?**

- Yes
- No

**How many hours in a day do you login your internet ?**

- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 7-12
- More than 12 hours

**I generally log into internet access intensively....**

- in the mornings
- in the afternoons
- in the evenings
- all the day