

## **Tertiary English Language Learners' Beliefs on TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning)**

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### **I. Introduction**

Korea is wired, boasting some of the fastest internet connections in the world. Today's university students grew up on digital technology while their English instructors may not have. Is there a teacher-learner technology gap? Would university students prefer more technology be incorporated into the English classroom? Would they prefer more digitally based out-of-class projects and assignments? This presentation aims to answer these questions.

For the presentation of second language (L2) materials in the English language teaching (ELT) classroom, technology has broad-ranging applications. As well, it has the potential to greatly impact the motivation of the English language learner (ELL). The use of computers and other types of technology in the classroom gives ELLs a sense of encouragement to develop their language skills (Wang, 2004). The application of technology in the classroom for real, meaningful communicative interaction motivates them to be more involved in the language learning process (Kang, 1999; Stepp-Greany, 2002). Because of the pervasiveness of English on the internet and in other types of communication, Crystal (1997) concludes that technology has a great role to play in the EFL classroom.

The internet offers well-selected activities and interactive learning that not only provide more avenues for learning, but better quality (Schwartz & Phillips, 2003). This has a positive effect on student motivation, increasing the potential for autonomous learning (Ellinger, Sandler, Chayen, Goldfrad, & Yarosky, 2001), as well as increasing teacher satisfaction (Jonassen, 2000; Schwartz & Phillips, 2003). The use of technology in the classroom not only motivates learners but engages them in listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities for the development of those skills (Anderson and Speck, 2001; Case & Truscott, 1999; Harmer, 2007; Leu & Leu, 1997).

Studies report increases in student motivation through the use of electronic books (Leu & Leu, 1999), authentic film (Capple & Curtis, 2000), other authentic materials (Mayora, 2006), authentic video (Arcario, 1993), and even telecollaboration (Belz, 2002) and videoconferencing

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(Teeler & Gray, 2000). Baker (2006) suggests that "giving EFL students opportunities to use English through a variety of media enhances academic skills and assists in applying that knowledge to a broader audience" (p. 369).

Through a survey of tertiary-level students of English, the participants are canvassed on their frequency of use of a variety of digital devices (a) in everyday life, (b) in the English classroom, (c) in doing out-of-class projects and assignments, and (d) in autonomous language learning, as well as whether they would like to use technology more or less and the reasons why. Additional, in-depth data is obtained through selected student interviews.

The data on student use of digital technology and their beliefs about the use of digital technology for language learning, as obtained through the questionnaire and interview results, are compared with data obtained on English instructors on their use of technology and their reasons for using as much or as little as they do. The results of the comparison of these two sets of data have implications not only for the individual EFL teacher and their classroom teaching, but also for educational institutions with respect to equipment handling and personnel training, as well as for curriculum planners of teacher training programs in terms of incorporating instruction in technology use into ELT programs.

## II. Method

The participants in this study were 85 EFL students at a large private university in Korea. The participants broke down into 26 males (31%) and 59 female (69%), and their mean age was 22.5 years. All the participants were juniors or seniors majoring in an English language-related major.

The instrument was an online survey whose URL was provided to the prospective participants. The online survey tool employed in making the survey questions was SurveyMonkey. The participants were asked to complete the survey online and submit it as instructed. The survey contained biographical questions about the participant and questions about the participant's use of technology. The technology-related questions included the frequencies with which they used the technology items contained in the list below (Table 1) and the frequencies with which they used technology for out-of-class work. The frequencies from which they could choose were (a) almost daily, (b) 1-3 times a week, (c) 1-3 times a month, (d) less than once a month, (e) almost never, and (f) never. They were also asked how often they used digital devices for autonomous learning and general use.

TABLE I. Educational Technology Items Surveyed

Category and Items	Category and Items
<p><b>Computer: Offline</b>            Digital presentation (e.g., PowerPoint)            Spreadsheets (e.g., Excel)            DVD player            English lesson software            Language game software            Pronunciation software</p>	<p><b>Computer: Online (cont.)</b>            Voice chat (e.g., Skype)            Social networks (e.g., Facebook)            Class website</p>
<p><b>Computer: Online</b>            Internet searches            Reading material            Listening material            Writing laboratory (OWL)            Reference material (e.g., Wikipedia)            Podcasts            Email            Text chat</p>	<p><b>Digital Devices</b>            Cassette tape player/recorder            CD player            Video recorder (camcorder)            Micro video camera system            Electronic dictionary            Portable media player (mp3)            Smart phone            Digital visual presenter (Elmo)            Tablet PC            Portable multimedia player (PMP)</p>

In addition, they were asked to rate their degree of technology use, their liking for technology, and whether they would wish to use more technology for in-class activities and out-of-class course work.

### III. Results

Of the electronic devices surveyed, the highest number of students have electronic dictionaries (99%), followed by smart phones (79%), portable media players (40%), and tablet PCs (16%). As users of technology, 42% of the participants described themselves as average users and 51% described themselves as above average or very frequent users. Eighty-one percent (81%) reported that they like to use electronic devices.

Responses for in-class and out-of-class use of digital devices was above the 80% level for all devices except electronic dictionaries ("almost every day" = 55% and 67% for in-class and out-of-class, respectively), MP3 players (51% / 46%), and smart phones (71% / 69%). A similar pattern of responses was found for general use and autonomous learning uses of these same devices: electronic dictionary ("almost every day" = 58% for general use and 61% for autonomous learning) and smart phone (87% / 37%; and 45% for "1-3 times per week"). For general use, MP3 players received 34% for both "almost every day" and "almost never/never." Usage was even lower for autonomous learning (8% / 32%).

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In-class use of the off-line computer devices listed in Table 1 was over 50% for responses of "less than once a month" and less: PowerPoint (53%), DVD player (71%), Excel (76%), English lesson software (82%), pronunciation software (83%), English language game software (93%). For out-of-class use of computer devices, responses of "less than once a month" and less were not quite as high: PowerPoint (42%), DVD player (74%), Excel (73%), English lesson software (73%), pronunciation software (75%), English language game software (89%). The most common response for PowerPoint use was "1-3 times per month" (35%).

Of the eleven online educational technology items in Table 1, six of them were used in the classroom by the respondents "1-3 times per month" or less: English writing laboratories (84%), reference material (53%), podcasts (82%), text chat (50%), voice chat (69%), and class websites. The respondents selected only four of the items as being used "1-3 times per month" or less out of the classroom: writing laboratories (74%), podcasts (82%), text chat (50%), and class websites (63%). Online items used "1-3 times per week" or more often in class were: Internet search (90%), reading materials (46%), listening materials (47%), email (60%), and social networks (59%). For out-of-class usage, results were similar: Internet search (91%), reading materials (45%), listening materials (43%), reference material (42%), email (66%), and social networks (51%).

The participants were also given two attitudinal statements to respond to with five-point Likert-scale type responses. To the statement "I would like to use more technology in my English classes' classroom activities," 72% agreed or strongly agreed, while most of the remainder (22%) were not sure. Similarly, to the statement "I would like to use more technology in my English classes' class assignments," 77% agreed or strongly agreed, while most of the remainder (17%) were not sure.

## IV. Discussion & Recommendations

The survey indicated that the respondents consider themselves to be frequent users of technology and that they like using digital devices. They would also like to use more technology in class activities and in out-of-class assignments. Almost all of them have electronic dictionaries and four-fifths of them have smart phones, and they use them often. They do not use off-line computer technology very often, but they do use several online items frequently: Internet search engines, English reading materials, listening materials, email, and social networks. These popular devices and Internet items should be targeted for use in

student activities both in the classroom as in homework assignments. Because of the Internet access available with smart phones and many new apps for smart phones becoming available, many smart phone-related activities can be designed for use in and outside the classroom. As Sharma and Barrett suggest, "Used appropriately, [these digital devices] can provide learners with opportunities for further language practice outside the classroom (p. 90)." If smart phone ownership is limited to only about half of the students, pair work activities can be developed. Similarly, more Internet-related activities can be developed and integrated into classroom lessons (with access from a computer or smart phone) and especially into out-of-class assignments. Since learners are open to the use of more technology in language learning and since the technology is available, teachers should take advantage of this situation to integrate more technology-related materials into classroom lessons and outside assignments. Teachers should be careful not to allow their situation to become one of those that Dudeney (2007) observes around the world: "where the computers sit gathering dust and the teachers ignore their existence."

### **V. Concluding Remarks**

We conclude as An (2007) has – that "technology integration in second/foreign language education has mostly brought improvement in language skills and increased student interests in learning activities" (pp. 14-15). This is supported by the findings of the Shaffer (2011) study that technology be incorporated more frequently in out-of-class activities. However, we must be wary of overuse of technology so that it does not become a distraction, more of a hindrance than a help. We also need to be careful not to expect students to effectively use technology that they have not been trained in using

We must heed the warning of Young and Bush (2004): "The power of the pedagogy must drive the technology being implemented, so that instruction, skills, content, or literacy is enhanced in some meaningful way. Otherwise, the technology itself often becomes the content focus rather than the English language arts" (A Pedagogical Framework, para. 2). There is a need to carefully and thoughtfully balance technology with pedagogy. And the results of this study indicate that there is a student need for more technology to be used and a technology availability to meet that need.

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