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The Relationship between Different Types of Engagement with Digital Media and the  
Armenian High Schoolers' Motivation to Learn English

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partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
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By

Tamara Galoyan

Irshat Madyarov, Ph.D, Adviser

Reader: Liliana Edilyan, M.A, Reader

Yerevan, Armenia

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We hereby approve that this thesis/paper

By

Tamara Galoyan

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Committee on the MA Thesis

.....  
Irshat Madyarov, Ph.D, Adviser

.....  
Liliana Edilyan, M.A, Reader

.....  
Catherine Buon, Ph.D.

Associate Dean of College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Irshat Madyarov. Ph.D, M.A TEFL Program Chair

Yerevan, Armenia

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, digital media have become part of various youth practices. They provide young people with a new platform for socializing, playing, sharing information, and creating content. Moreover, in these various practices with digital media, young people gain autonomy and independence over an activity. As a result, they become more interested and more motivated to learn new things.

This research study aimed at identifying the types of engagement with digital media in the Armenian context. The three types of digital media involvement identified by Mizuko Ito, a research scientist at the University of California, have served as a conceptual framework for this study. Next, this study tried to establish a relationship between the three types of engagement with digital media and the Armenian high schoolers' motivation to learn English.

This research study included 367 Armenian high schoolers from Yerevan. Descriptive Statistics analysis, Spearman Rank-Order Correlation analysis, and Multiple Regression analysis was run to analyze the data collected from a 57-item questionnaire.

As a result of the statistical analysis of the data, a positive relationship was established between the Armenian high schoolers' motivation to learn English and the types of engagement with digital media.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUACTION

Digital media have become inseparable part of today's young people's lives. Today social network sites, online games, video-sharing sites are directly associated with youth culture. Compared to the older generation, the contexts for communication, friendship, self-expression and play have changed; young people are engaged with new media providing them with a new platform for socializing. Various youth practices lead to more networked, individualized and diversified forms of media engagement (Ito, 2008; Shore, 2008). Moreover, as they become engaged in collaborative practices in the digital world, children can take up new roles and develop new identities, such as those of creators, designers and inventors. All these practices foster cognitive development and stimulate critical thinking (Shore, 2008).

However, in spite of all the advantages that the media platform provides young people with, most of the schools in Armenia do not teach pupils sufficient digital literacy skills. As a result, the Armenian young people mostly engage with digital media in an informal setting. In my paper I argue that digital literacy is as important as any other literacy types and can largely affect young peoples' motivation to perform certain activities, one of which is learning English.

Recently, numerous research studies have been carried out to examine the benefits of using digital media tools. However, further research is needed to investigate the effects of digital media on specific groups of learners such as English learners. Furthermore, it would be interesting to identify different types of digital media involvement in the Armenian context.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the Armenian youth practices of engagement with digital media and their attitudes towards learning English. The research question that this paper addresses is the following:

*What is the relationship between different types of engagement with digital media and the Armenian high schoolers' motivation to learn English?*

Initially, the null hypothesis is accepted, according to which there is no relationship between digital media and the Armenian high schoolers' motivation to learn English.

In this research study, we aim at identifying different types of youth engagement with digital media and try to reject the null hypothesis by establishing a relationship between the types of engagement and motivation to learn English. We use an ethnographic approach as we try to understand how media and English are important to people in their everyday lives rather than in the context of explicit instruction. We try to see how Armenian young people are able to negotiate social status among peers, gain autonomy and expertise in digital media.

This thesis consists of five chapters: 1) the introduction, 2) the literature review, 3) the methodology, 4) the results, 5) the discussion and conclusion (the significance of the study, the implications, the limitations and delimitations, and suggestions for further research). In the literature review, I provide a synthesis of some related literature on the role of digital media and motivation. In the methodology, I describe the instruments and the procedure of data collection and analysis. In the results, I focus on the statistical analysis of the data. Next, in the discussion and conclusion, I focus on the interpretation

of the data, discuss the significance of my study and give some recommendations for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **2.1: Digital Media and the English Language**

Both language and digital media are tools for socializing. All human activities are mediated by tools and they have the power of changing human behavior and learning process. On the one hand, the tools of literacy include language itself. On the other hand, they include various physical artifacts, such as paper, pencil, book, and computer. Thus, electronic literacies are not isolated from other types of literacy but rather involve new layers of possibilities presented in the Internet and electronic medium of computers (Warschauer, 2003; Hobbs, 2010).

According to Crystal (2001), the Internet is an electronic, global and interactive medium, and “a user’s communicative options are constrained by the nature of the hardware needed in order to gain Internet access” (Crystal, 2001). In other words, in the communication process participants are constrained linguistically by the nature of the Internet software and hardware linking them.

In one of his speeches Crystal points out to the fact that English is a powerful tool in the process of globalization. It is the dominant language of the Internet, economy and business (Crystal, 2012). English like digital media is a means that helps people to enlarge the audience whom they want to communicate or do business with. As a result, people around the world learn English so as to be able to participate fully in the international life (Johnson, 2009).

Thus, it becomes evident that the knowledge of English has become a prerequisite of computer literacy. Due to computer technologies, English is becoming world language. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the knowledge of English and technological skills

are intertwined. Another major factor affecting the popularity of English is that in peoples' minds it is often associated with the word "modern"; most probably this is the result of the American pop culture. It is a fact that many advertising companies use English to communicate the notions of globality and modernism. (Johnson, 2009). This is also true about the Armenian context, where due to the Internet and TV, young people are exposed to a large amount of information presented in English. Therefore, I also find it important to examine the Armenian young people's perception of the usefulness of and need for learning English.

## **2.2: The Role of digital media in young people's life**

Digital media are a combination of interactive media, online networks, and existing media forms. Media literacy includes not only understanding media but also being able to use media tools as a means of creative and social expression, online search and navigation (Ito, 2010).

According to Jenkins (2009), by means of the Internet today's young people are actively engaged with *participatory cultures*. These participatory cultures can take different forms such as affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulation. *Affiliations* are online communities that can be found in various social sites such as Facebook and Myspace. *Expressions* include producing and creating content. For instance, through digital media people can make videos or write fun fiction. Further, collaborative problem-solving includes working in team and collaborating to complete a task, such as Wikipedia. Lastly, circulation is shaping the flow of media, such as podcasting and blogging.

According to Ito (2010), a researcher from the department of informatics at the University of California, due to digital media young people acquire the literacy and technological skills that they need to succeed in the modern world. The ethnographic study, in which Mizuko Ito was involved, was carried out by the John D. and Catherine MacArthur Foundation between the years of 2005 and 2008. Several teams of researchers participated in the study and interviewed more than 800 young people and their parents. They also observed teenagers online for more than 5,000 hours. This research study describes new media usage and, although it does not study its effects, it has come up with some interesting findings (Lewin, 2008; Ito et. al, 2010).

According to Ito (2008), digital forms of media enhance new forms of engagement with knowledge and culture with unique dynamics. These learning dynamics are triggered by peer based learning and sharing that accompanies young people's engagement with culture and knowledge that they are passionate about. Learning process takes place in a new setting where there is very little explicit instruction and people share information with peers that share the same interests.

Also, instead of learning standard material or skills, participants tend to specialize; they develop a status of an expert in a narrow specialty. Besides, rather than acquiring the same knowledge and skills as one's peers, participants develop a particular style in creative work.

According to Tony Wagner's video called *Play, Passion, Purpose* (2012), the present educational system is obsolete. There is a wide gap between what skills and type of knowledge the students need and what they learn at schools. In another video called *Breakthrough Learning in Digital Age*, Connie Yowell (2009) points out to the fact that

children acquire digital literacy outside schools rather than at schools. Thus, traditional schools seem to lag behind their pupils in terms of digital literacy. As a result of some research studies, Wagner (2012) has come to conclusion that the most important skills that today's young people need in order to succeed are critical thinking and problem solving. He views critical thinking as the ability to ask really good questions. In other words, the formulation of a problem is often more important than the problem itself. Due to developed technologies a huge amount of information is available to everybody, and everybody has the chance of accessing it. Therefore, there might be no need for children to memorize. Processing knowledge is not as important as having the skill of applying it in the right way. As teachers, parents or mentors we should help to develop the capacities of young people to be more creative problem solvers and to be innovators. Young people should be provided with environments where they can explore their potential of solving problems.

Wagner (2012) interviewed twenty young people in their 20s who were very creative in a wide range of fields such as music, arts, and social entrepreneurship. Then he interviewed their parents trying to see if he could see patterns in parenting. He asked if there was a teacher or mentor who have made a significant change in their children's lives and development as innovators. 30 per cent of the parents interviewed could not name a single teacher. The other 70 per cent named teachers from elementary to high school. When he interviewed them he noticed that the teachers used methods different from the school curriculum but similar. As a result, Wagner has come to some interesting conclusions about the culture of learning to become an innovator. He mentions some essential factors such as collaboration and team work, using multiple disciplines, making

mistakes and learning from them. He also points out that culture of learning to become an innovator is an active process where students are creators and producers of real products for real audiences. He discovered that all the young people from both advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds were intrinsically motivated. So the teachers and parents that contributed to the development of creativity focused on intrinsic motivation. They provided the children with different instruments to try out to help them to pursue their passion.

As an educator and a parent Wagner (2012) suggests that there are three interrelated elements to intrinsic motivation: *play*, *passion* and *purpose*. When interviewing young innovators Wagner noticed that the learners progressed from play to passion to purpose. These innovators were engaged in creative plays as children and later on discovered a passion as young adolescents. As these young people continue to explore their interests, ideas and passions they don't stay the same but evolve. The purpose for young people becomes an expression of passion and it becomes a form of an adult play. Innovation is something that drives us to the next level, it is to look at the problem in a new way, to have a passion for that question and make it meaningful. People first become curious than they develop passion to pursue their curiosity. The problem for educator and parents is how to create an environment for children to help them become curious.

According to Dickey (2007), Knight (2009), and Bahous (2011), it is important for learners to be provided with a learning environment which will give them an opportunity to explore and manipulate which contributes to the construction of knowledge.

I believe that the activities that young people engage with are more meaningful to them and less abstract than the content they learnt at school. In digital environment they acquire skills that become tool to be integrated into the society to establish relations with others and help them to pursue their interests and passion. In the interest-driven genres they can share different ways of solving a single problem. This leads to creativity collaborating exchange of ideas and eventually has the potential of innovation. Digital media environment supplement what traditional system at schools cannot offer to children. This might be the reason why so many young people spend a lot of time online instead of learning school subjects. They are more intrinsically motivated to invest their time in different media environments.

Another special feature of digital environments is that participants create amateur communities where they have the chance of receiving an ongoing feedback on their performance and work. Displaying work to the public results in peer review and critique by other interested fans. This in itself serves as a powerful motivation tool for continuous learning and achievement (Ito, 2008; Shore, 2008).

“New media allow for a degree of freedom and autonomy for youth that is less apparent in a classroom setting. Youth respect one another’s authority online, and they are often more motivated to learn from peers than from adults” (Lewin, 2008; Palfrey, Gasser, Simun & Barnes, 2009; Davidson & Godberg, 2009).

According to Ito (2008), the most active form of learning with digital media takes place in youth-driven practices based on communication and recreation. More and more people are engaged in technology-based informal learning outside formal classroom setting. According to Selwin (2012), information and communicative technologies

engage children and young people in a variety of activities most of which may not be considered educational in its conventional sense. In various informal settings, that digital media provide young people with, a great amount of communication, consumption, sharing and creation of knowledge takes place. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, Myspace and Odnoklassniki, can have different functions and be used for different purposes. Here the users can exchange messages, present themselves to others, create on-line communities, and share ideas. Learners use social networking sites as a platform for social exploration and as a place where they can develop social networking skills between their peers and other people. For example, Facebook is considered to be a relatively conventional social-networking online environment where users can exchange messages, virtual gifts, listen to music, join user-created “groups” on particular themes and topics. According to Selwin (2012), Facebook can function in different ways depending on the preference of the users. For instance, people can “hang out”, learn about each other or use it as a directory. Due to its conversational, collaborative and communal qualities, Facebook has started to grow in its popularity in the educational sphere as well. Some colleges, universities and schools consider it to be a good educational technology as it allows for peer feedback and provides social context of learning. In other words, the use of Facebook encourages active participatory role for users. Moreover, some educators hold the view that Facebook can better motivate its users as engaged learners rather than learners who are passive observers of the educational process.

### **2.3: The three levels of media engagement**

According to Ito (2010), media engagement is a social and active process where participants are considered to be part of “shared cultural systems and are engaged in collective social action” rather than just passive and isolated individuals. There are different ways in which youth engage in digital media. These different ways of youth practices can be described by “genres of participation”. Ito distinguishes between friendship-driven and interest-driven genres of participation which are related to different youth cultures, social network and modes of learning. In this research, friendship-driven genres of participation are the dominant and the most popular practices of youth. They refer to everyday negotiations with friend and peers. These are friends that they meet in the local activity groups and school. Friendship-driven networks are the main source of establishing relations with peers for most young people. Social sites, such as Facebook, Odnokloassniki, and Google+, provide young people with space where they can establish such relations.

On the other hand, in interest-driven genres of participation the focus is on specialized activities and interests. This is the domain of smart and creative young people. Here people find a different network of peers that share the same interests and develop friendship through interest-driven practices. In contrast to friendship-driven practices, here mutual interests, hobbies and career aspirations come first and form the basis for their friendship. This type of relations is out of the circle of their everyday school lives. Online sites help youth to connect with interest-based groups which are outside their local community. For example, through sites such as Youtube, fan forums, networked gaming sites or youth media centers, young people can connect to publics that



are engaged in the same hobby or interest. These are niche and specialized publics that help youth to become creators or gain expertise in their area of interests. These tools engage children in creative production and participation (Ito, 2008; Gee, 2003; Ito et al., 2013).

Ito (2010) mentions that it is important to note that the relation between these two types of genres of participation is very complex. Youth can engage in multiple publics at the same time. For instance they may have multiple profiles for different groups of friends. They can maintain friendship-driven practices with some friends and be engaged in interest-driven practices with another group of friends.’ It is important to note that this genre-based approach stresses *modes of participation* with media rather than categories of individuals.

As one aspect of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation study, "Kids' Informal Learning With Digital Media: An Ethnographic Investigation of Innovative Knowledge Cultures," researchers examined the concept of media ecologies, which are collections of interconnected technologies and activities involving new media. As a result of this research study, three levels of learners’ participation in digital media have been identified, which they labeled "*hanging out*," "*messing around*," and "*geeking out*."

### **2.3.1: Hanging out**

In the first level called hanging out, participants engage in “lightweight social contact”. At this level pupils use digital media for friendship- driven practices. Different kinds of social network, such as MySpace, Facebook provide participants with space

where they can be together and develop critical social skills. Given that young people have limited space to socialize with peers without supervision of adults, online communication is considered to be a convenient private space where they can exercise autonomy. While hanging out with their friends both online and offline, youth integrate new media into these informal practices. For instance, they discuss their taste in music, their knowledge of television, and their expertise in gaming. Also, they can watch short videos and TV programs on sites such as YouTube. This mode of video viewing is socially interactive. Besides, video downloads and sites such as YouTube help young people to watch and share videos at times and in places that are convenient for them (Ito, 2008).

However, according to Ito (2010), many parent and teachers consider this type of hanging out to be waste of time. This negative attitude often leads to certain restrictions. For examples, MySpace and similar social sites are often restricted by parents and blocked in schools where using media and technology is common for research and production purposes. In this way schools try to limit hanging-out practices at school so as to keep students on task.

### **2.3.2: Messing around**

In the second level, which the researchers called “messaging around”, pupils view the Internet as space where they can explore their interest. This is a hybrid level, drawing from both hanging out and geeking out. In this level participants engage in many search activities trying to find general knowledge about the subject of their interest. In this way they gain reputation among their peers (Ito, 2010). While hanging out corresponds to

friendship-driven genre of participation, messing around is the beginning of a more intense engagement with digital media. In this case youth use search engines to find the information they need and are interested in. For example, they can use search engines to find information on how to complete their home work or other school projects. Ito especially stresses the importance of experimentation and play. Through trial and error youth learn about the way a particular medium works. For instance, young people often look around online to find materials for customization and alteration of their MySpace pages. This in itself contributes to creative production.

#### **2.3.4: Geeking out**

In the third level (geeking out) the learners have the highest level of commitment with media or technology. This is the most intense Internet use where they delve deeply into the area of their interest, often through a connection to an online interest group (Lewin, 2008). In this level participant learn to evaluate media content, create and share resources and information. This requires intense involvement and high level of specialized knowledge and willingness to alter or break social and technological rules (Ito, 2010).

It is worth mentioning that the level of geeking out is not necessarily driven by technology. The interests that foster geeking out can be found both offline and online. For example, learners can belong to some offline community or a group of interest, and digital media can be helpful to them in pursuing their interests. High-speed Internet can provide access to a significant amount of information related to the area of their interests (Ito, 2010).

## 2.4: Language learning motivation

Motivation is an essential factor influencing learners' success in language learning. It is an inner drive determining a person's behavior ( Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei 2003). In one of his research studies on motivation, Dörnyei (1998) stresses its social dimension; motivation should be examined in the social context as it largely depends on a person's social attitudes and interpersonal relationships.

Heafner (2004), discusses expectancy-value model of motivation which includes three areas: *value*, which is students' beliefs about the importance of the task, *expectancy*, which is the learner's beliefs about his/her abilities and skills to perform the task, and *affective area*, which includes the emotional aspect of the task performance.

According to one of the existing theories, known as Self-determination theory (SDT), motivation can be of two types: *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. According to this theory, people are active organisms that possess an innate tendency to grow and develop psychologically. The phenomenon can be explained by intrinsic motivation, which is an inherent drive to seek out challenges, novelty and opportunities to learn. Moreover, people have the tendency to internalize and integrate the social practices and values that surround them (Ryan, 2009; Ryan, Williams, Patrick, & Deci, 2009). According to Eccles and Wigfield (2002), intrinsic motivation can be reduced if influenced by some external control. Thus, in order to maintain intrinsic motivation, people need to feel competent and self-determined.

Similarly, there are some other research scientists that distinguish between *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the inner force existing in humans, which enables them to initiate an activity (van Lier, 1996). According to Aitio, Hietanoro and Ruismaki (2010) and Ryan (2009), people become intrinsically motivated when they engage in a certain activity out of fun, pleasure and enjoyment. In order to develop intrinsic motivation, people need to have autonomy over what they are doing and be able to relate it to other aspects of their life (Lamb, 2011; Shroff & Vogel, 2009). Extrinsic motivation refers to external outcomes not related to the activity itself; it is created by outside stimuli such as other humans or the environment (van Lier, 1996; Aitio, Hietanoro & Ruismaki, 2010).

According to Rau, Gao and Wu (2006), both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence learning outcomes positively. However intrinsic motivation leads to a better performance and a high quality learning. The reason is that learners are readier to engage in an activity because of their internal interest and curiosity.

An interesting view related to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is expressed in one of the studies carried out by van Lier (1996). According to him, motivation can be characterized as an interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. He argues that if there is a harmony between the two types of motivation they will have a positive effect on the learner's overall motivation. This in itself will result in a better performance on part of the learner.

However, extrinsic motivation can sometimes interfere and destroy intrinsic motivation. For instance, this might happen when social requirements and restrictions have a dominant role in the educational system. This might destroy the learner's intrinsic

motivation (van Lier, 1996). A similar idea was expressed by Wagner (2012), according to whom the norms and restrictions that the traditional educational system imposes often destroy intrinsic motivation. This in its turn leads to destruction of creativity in learners.

Thus, it is the educator's responsibility to try to maximize the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: between the needs and goals of the society and those of the learners.

## **2.5. Motivation and digital media**

The emerging new digital media and technologies offer today's young generation new types of learning communities which foster different attitudes and aptitudes. Young people are engaging in informal learning and virtual communities of practice around such topics as videogames, music, fanfiction, movies. Consequently, daily use of new technologies and media shift their lifestyle towards mediated immersion (Clarke & Dede, 2005; Prasek, Schwartz & Vorst, 2009).

The informal setting provided by various digital media promotes informal learning. We suggest that this kind of environment increases learners' motivation to learn English and to use it as a tool to help them to engage with digital media and establish communication with other people sharing the same interests.

According to Prensky (2001), today's youth are "digital natives"; they were born in the digital world and are comfortable with using various technologies and digital media. Young people form identities not only in the physical world outside classroom, but also in the virtual world of cyberspace and mobile communication.

Nowadays young people put a great emphasis on creating, collaborating and sharing information through digital media (Misler –Jackson & Songer, 2000; Dickey, 2013; Heafner, 2004). Various discussion forums, blogs, microblogs, wikis, live chat, podcasts, social networking sites give them an opportunity to connect with each other and develop new alternative identities and modes of self -representation. At the same time, they become more motivated learn and use English as most of the Web content is dominated by this language (Ushioda, 2011). According to Lamb (2011), people develop sense of identity by taking control over their learning. This sense of identity is closely related to their motivation to learn a language.

Further, English has become lingua franca and nowadays more and more people are becoming motivated to learn it .Given the fact that English is the dominant language of the Internet, the mastery of skills and language becomes essential to function successfully in digital environment (Crystal , 2003; Ranta ,2010 ; Jenkins, 2009). Using these types of context for both formal and informal learning purposes will be more effective as they are more meaningful to the learners. Learners are more passionate, more engaged and more motivated to learn in this case (Genc Ilter, 2009).

Motivation to learn a language of a particular social group is the main force that hinders or enhances intercultural communication. When examining learners' motivation to learn a foreign language, it is worth mentioning that L2 can be taught both explicitly and implicitly. Dornyei (2003) stresses the fact that L2 is different from other subjects taught at schools in various ways. It is both a learnable school subject and a socially and culturally bound phenomenon including many cultural elements. Thus, L2, like various digital media, is related to broader contexts including multiculturalism, language

globalization, language contact, and relations between various ethnolinguistic groups. From the point of view of the integrative aspect of Gardner's motivation theory (1985), integrative motivation reflects interpersonal /affective disposition towards L2 group. This constitutes the learner's willingness to interact with and become member of the target community. Motivation has a significant impact on a person's social nature as it includes changes and adoption of new social and cultural behaviors (Bahous, 2011).

Furthermore, according to Dörnyei (2003), the aim of learning a language is to reach effective communication. Therefore, when learners see the practical purposes of learning a language they become more motivated. For instance, in various social sites learners can interact in English to reach their communicative purpose and be understood by other members of a group sharing the same interests. This requires not only knowing the language but also being aware of the culture and ways of life of others, having respect for other culture groups.

According to Dörnyei (2003) and Higgins (1987), integration into this new community is related to an *identification process* within the *individual's self-concept*. Here the notions of *ideal* and *possible selves* can be highlighted. "Possible self" is the individual's own perception of what he/she might become, and what he/she is afraid of becoming. "Ideal self" is one of the most important possible selves, and is composed of the attributes that a person would like to have; examples of these are the individual's wishes, hopes and aspirations. Further, some researchers (Ushioda, 2011) suggest that a person's integrative motivation to communicate in English and to use the Internet, both of which are global phenomena, is explained in terms of "*desire of self-representation*"



as members of the target communities. Thus, I believe that through various digital media people can discover some of their “possible selves” and come closer to their “ideal self”.

Another interesting viewpoint related to motivation was expressed by Ryan and Deci (2000). According to them, all people have three basic psychological needs: the innate needs for *autonomy*, *competence* and *relatedness*. The first need is fulfilled when they feel responsible for their own choices and decisions. Competence is the sense of mastery through effective interaction. Relatedness is the feeling of being attached to and respected by the target community. Thus, in digital environments young people have the chance of fulfilling these needs. Moreover, fulfillment of these needs leads to an increase in their intrinsic motivation to learn English in order to be fully integrated in digital environments. According to Hafner and Miller (2011), digital media fosters autonomous language learning; in online spaces it is possible to share and discuss interests in the target language.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1: Introduction to the present study

This research is a survey study of the Armenian high schoolers' engagement with digital media and their motivation to learn English. The three levels of American youth's engagement in digital media, namely "hanging out", "messing around", and "geeking out", identified by Mizuko Ito, serve as the conceptual framework for this research study. The survey research methodology was followed by identifying the main types of the Armenian high schoolers' engagement in digital media and correlating them with their motivation to learn English.

Initially, this paper accepts the null hypothesis, according to which there is no correlation between the Armenian high schoolers' engagement in digital media and their motivation to learn English.

It has been assumed that the results of the study might be affected by some other factors such as grade level, gender, type of school, and access to the Internet. Therefore, in the process of data collection and analysis, those variables have been taken into account.

### 3.2: Participants

This survey included 367 participants, aged 13-17 (see table 1 below). The sampling type used for this research study is *clustered sampling*, where the target population was divided into groups based on type of school. Further, a proportionate size was selected randomly from each group. Thus, two public and two private schools in

Yerevan were selected purposefully. Then participants of both genders from 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades were surveyed.

**Table 1**

*The number of participants by gender, type of school and grade*

Gender		School		Grade		
Boys	Girls	public	private	10	11	12
174	193	197	170	121	145	101

All the four schools are situated in Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia. The reason for selecting the schools from the capital city is that in this case a large sample size can be ensured. Besides, we assume that the youth from the capital city are more engaged in digital media as most of them have an Internet access either at home or at school, or both. In other words, in order to be able to ensure variability in digital media engagement, we have to look for samples that have a wide exposure to digital media environments.

### **3.3: Instruments**

A 57-item questionnaire has been administered for the purpose of quantitative data collection. It included 50 closed-ended and 7 open-ended items (see Appendix A & Appendix B). Likert scale was used for most of the closed-ended items; it included a characteristic statement accompanied by five response options. Both nominal and ordinal scale data were presented in the questionnaire, with the latter prevailing.

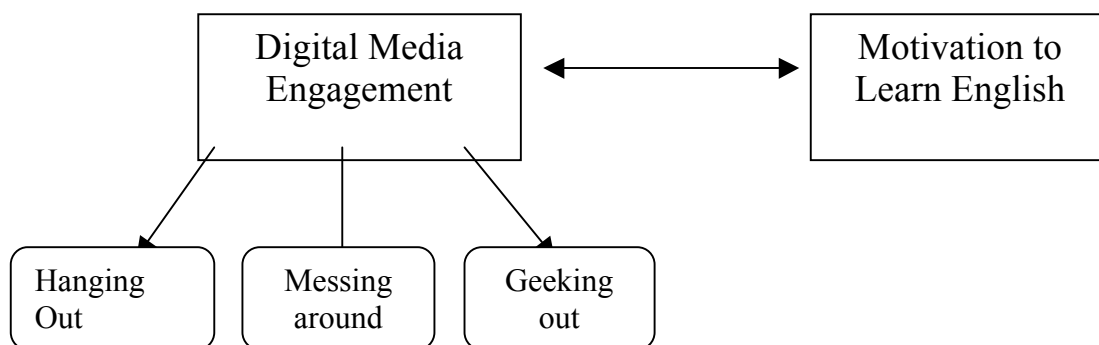
In order to avoid any ambiguities and misunderstandings the questionnaire was translated into Armenian. However, to ensure that all the items are clear and easily

recognizable, certain names of social sites, provided together with their English equivalents. They were mainly names of some popular social sites among the Armenian youth, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+, and other similar sites.

The items included in the questionnaire were grouped according to the two types of constructs used in this survey research; the respondents' engagement in digital media and motivation to learn English; the participants had to provide information on their digital media involvement, by indicating the type of media used, their proficiency level, and frequency of usage. Another group of items determined the types and the degree of frequency of their English language usage. Also, the respondents provided data on their need for learning English.

Apart from this, the questionnaire included items asking for the language they are studying currently at school and the language they would like to study. Also, the respondents were asked whether they have an Internet access at home and at school.

The statistical analysis of the data includes several steps. Firstly, all the items in the questionnaire were clustered according to their relevance to one of the two constructs, based on the theoretical understanding of the constructs: *digital media engagement* and *motivation to learn English*. The construct of digital media included three types of dimensions, namely *hanging out*, *messing around*, and *geeking out*, which were identified by Ito (2010).



In the next stage of the data analysis, the dimension scale was determined for the 4 dimensions. This was done by adding up the maximum numbers on the 5-point Likert scale for each of the items within a dimension.

***Items for Hanging out***

***Scale: 1-5***

- *Facebook*
  - *Odnoklassniki*
  - *MySpace*
  - *Twitter*
  - *Vkontakte*
  - *Google+*
  - *Text chatting and online communication*
  - *Blogging*
  - *Wikies*
- 

**Total Dimension scale: 1-45**

***Items for Messing Around***

***Scale:1-5***

- *Searching for interesting information in the Internet*
- *Downloading and listening to music*
- *Downloading and watching films and videos*
- *Playing games*

- *Online shopping*
  - *Listening to podcasts for pleasure*
- 

**Total Dimension scale: 1-30**

***Items for Geeking Out***

***scale:1-5***

- *Taking online courses*
  - *Programming*
  - *Creating websites*
  - *Creating animations*
  - *Creating podcasts*
  - *Listening to podcasts for learning*
  - *Creating games*
  - *Watching video tutorials*
  - *Creating video tutorials*
  - *Creating video/audio*
  - *Reading professional literature online*
  - *Online groups and forums*
- 

**Total Dimension Scale: 1-60**

***Items for Motivation***

***scale: 1-5***

- *Need English for communicating in social sites*
- *Need English for creating something using a computer*
- *Use English to communicate in social sites*
- *Use English to search for interesting information*
- *Use English to communicate with friends offline*
- *Use English for self-studying*
- *watch English movies*

- *listening to English songs*
- *reading in English for pleasure*
- *taking online English courses*
- *taking private English courses*
- *English for programming*
- *English for entrance exams*
- *Learning English because parents want*
- *Need English for future job*

---

**Total Dimension Scale: 1-75**

It should be noted that motivation is a multifaceted dimension and no single research has been able to investigate it in its entire complexity (Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei 2003). Therefore, given its complex nature, I decided to consider it as a whole in the process of statistical analysis of the data.

Next, Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was run to determine the internal consistency of the items within each dimension (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Alreck & Settle, 1985). Cronbach's alpha for Motivation (15 items), Hanging Out (9 items), Messing Around (6 items), and Geeking out (12 items) was found to be .836, .563, .574 and .827 respectively.

### **3.4: Procedure**

After having been designed, the questionnaire was piloted on a sample group of 5 people similar to the target population. The analysis of the sample data helped to eliminate the ambiguous items and make some necessary corrections.

Next, the questionnaire was administered among pupils from two private schools and two public schools. Further, the questionnaire was completed by *group administration* as part of their lesson.

The purpose of the research study was explained to the respondents before proceeding to the completion of the questionnaire. It is also important to note that in order to avoid bias and to encourage honest responses, the questionnaire was anonymous (Dörnyei, 2003).

During the completion procedure of the questionnaire the researcher was present physically to monitor and clarify certain parts.

### **3.5: Data analysis**

The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed by using SPSS16. The analysis of the data underwent several stages: Descriptive Statistics analysis, Spearman Rank-Order Correlation analysis, and Multiple Regression analysis.



## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The statistics used for this research falls into two main categories: those describing the individual variables and distributions and those that measure the relationships between the variables.

Firstly, descriptive statistics was run in order to describe the individual variables and distributions by gender (see Table 2 below).

**Table 2**

***Means (and Standard Deviations) by Gender***

	Boys (n=174)	Girls (n=193)	Dimension scale
Hanging out	23.4 (5.9)	23 (5.3)	1-45
Messing Around	21.6 (4.5)	21.2 (3.6)	1-30
Geeking Out	26.3 (9.9)	24.8 (6.9)	1-55
Motivation	46 (1.1)	48(1.1)	1-75

As can be seen from Table 2, there is not much difference between the mean scores for males and females. Thus, it can be implied that there is a relatively similar degree of engagement with digital media, with the scores for the boys being a little higher than those for the girls. Similarly, the level of motivation for both genders is approximately the same, with that of the girls being a little higher.

Further, frequency analysis was run to determine the frequencies of responses for certain items related to the respondents' motivation to learn English and use of digital media (see Table 3 below).

**Table 3**

*Frequency Table of Responses Related to the respondents' Need for using English and the Internet in Percent.*

	<b>Always</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
Does English help you to pursue your interests?	31.3	30.5	21.5	11.4	5.2
Does the Internet help you to pursue your interests?	22.6	41.7	29.4	3.8	2.5
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
I need English to create something using a computer	43.9	15.8	20.7	8.4	11.2
I need English to communicate with my friends	9.8	14.7	34.9	16.9	23.7
I need English to communicate with my friends in social sites.	18.5	17.2	39.0	12.0	13.4
I need English to search for interesting information on the internet.	39.8	22.1	27.5	5.2	5.4

In the next stage of our statistical analysis, we tried to determine whether there is a relationship between the dimensions, and how the 3 pairs of variables formed (Hanging Out and Motivation; Messing Around and Motivation; Geeking Out and Motivation)

correlate with each other. Given the fact that the data is measured on ordinal scale, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation was run for this purpose.

As can be seen from Table 4 below, the significance value (p) for all the correlated variables is very high;  $p=.000 < 0.05$ . This means that the model has an explanatory value. In other words, there is a strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis, stating that there is no relationship between the 3 pairs of variables.

Further, judging by the correlation coefficients (r value) for each of the correlated dimensions, it can be noted that the highest correlation is observed in case of Geeking Out and Motivation, where  $r=0.519$ . On the other hand, in case of Hanging Out and Motivation, the correlation coefficient is low ( $r=.233$ ), which implies that there is little relationship between the items correlated.

**Table 4**

Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation

*N=367*

Correlated dimensions	r
Hanging out– motivation	0.233***
Messing around-motivation	0.350***
Geeking out-motivation	0.519***

\* $p \leq 0.05$       \*\* $p \leq 0.01$       \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

In the final stage of our data analysis, multiple regression analysis was run to test if the three types of digital media involvement predicted the learners' motivation to learn English (see Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Multiple Linear Regression*  
*Dependent Variable: Motivation*

	$\beta$	t	p
Hanging Out	-.052	-.519	.604
Messing Around	.427	3.007	.003
Geeking Out	.613	8.898	.000

The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that the three predictors, namely Hanging out, Messing around and Geeking out, explained 30 % of the variance ( $R^2=.301$ ,  $F(3)=52.078$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It was found out that Geeking out significantly predicted the learners' motivation to learn English ( $\beta=.613$ ,  $p<.001$ ), as did Messing around ( $\beta=.427$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Hanging out was found out to have no significant impact on motivation.

Also, we tried to see whether some other independent variables, such as type of device used to access the Internet, school, gender, and grade level, have an impact on the learner's motivation to learn English. For this purpose, a separate multiple regression analysis was run, which included the above mentioned variables, as well as the three types of digital media engagement (see Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Multiple Linear Regression for Types of Device, Digital Media Engagement, Grade, Gender, Type of School, and Motivation*

*Dependant Variable: Motivation*

	$\beta$	t	p
Notebook	.076	.071	.944
personal computer	.736	.659	.511
Ipad	-.871	-.738	.461
Smartphone	-3.943	-3.451	.001
Hanging out	-.061	-.623	.534
Messing around	.361	2.557	.011
Geeking out	.626	9.234	.000
Grade	-1.178	-1.869	.062
School	-1.85	-.183	.855
Gender	3.707	3.792	.000

As can be seen from table 6, other independent variables such as gender and smartphone significantly predicted the learners' motivation to learn English. The girls were found to be more motivated to learn English than the boys. The other eight variables were found to have no significant impact on the learners' motivation. The ten predictors together explained 36% of the variance ( $R^2=.356$ ,  $F(10)=19.637$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Thus, as a result of the statistical analysis of the data, I can reject the null hypothesis by stating that a positive relationship have been found between the types of involvement with digital media and the Armenian High schoolers' motivation to learn

English. This implies that as the degree of intensity of digital media involvement increases motivation increases as well. Also, this confirms the results obtained by running the descriptive statistics, where the frequency of responses about the learners' own perception of the need for learning English was analyzed.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1: Findings

As a result of the statistical analysis of the data, the three levels of engagement (hanging out, messing around and geeking out), identified by Ito (2010), have been found to be present among the Armenian high schoolers.

One of the major findings in this statistical analysis is that a positive relationship has been found between the types of digital media involvement and the participants' motivation to learn English. Moreover, in case of geeking out and motivation, the correlation is stronger than in case of other pairs of variables. It can be assumed that people that engage with digital media more intensively and at a more professional level, are more likely to be motivated to learn English.

In case of hanging out, which is the least intense use of digital media, people use digital media mostly for friendship driven practices. Facebook and Google+ have been found to be the most popular social sites among the Armenian high schoolers; the frequency of usage was ranked 4 and 5 on a Likert scale of 5 by 73 % of the participants for Facebook and 64% for Google+. The results of the statistical analysis showed that here the Armenian high schoolers merely hang out with their friends; they do not feel the need to use English as a communicative tool.

On the other hand, in case of messing around and geeking out, the participants use different types of digital media for interest-driven practices. In other words, the Armenian high schoolers use various digital media environments to pursue their interests. For instance, they use the Internet to read professional literature, to create and edit audio and video, they join interest groups where they can talk about their experience. As they

become more and more engaged with these interest-driven practices, their intrinsic motivation to learn English increases. This might be explained by the fact that English is the dominant language of the Internet and they need it as a tool to perform successfully in the area of their interest.

On the other hand, compared to interest-driven practices, smaller numbers for friendship-driven practices, such as communicating with friends online or offline, indicate that for these type of activities they do not need English very often.

Thus, it becomes obvious that interest plays the key role in motivating young people to learn English. The fact confirms the existing research studies focusing on motivation as an interest-driven phenomenon. As this research study showed, digital media is in the centre of today's Armenian high schoolers' attention. Most of the respondents find digital media helpful in pursuing their hobbies. Moreover, for most of them English is a necessary tool to pursue their hobbies. Further, as the numbers show, the participants need English when involved in interest-driven practices, such as creating something using a computer or searching for interesting information on the Internet.

Also, it was interesting to find out that both genders' involvement in the three types of digital media was almost equal. However, as to motivation, girls were found to be more motivated to learn English than boys.



## **5.2: Implications**

This study is also in line with Wagner's theory of play, passion and purpose, and suggests that educational institutions should foster autonomous learning and creativity among young people so as to make them more interested and motivated in the learning process.

The results of this study may help parents and educators of Armenia to better understand the present youth cultures. Knowing how children are engaged with digital media, and how the different levels of engagement impact their motivation, cognitive development and learning process, educators can develop effective strategies to make learners more interested, more creative and more engaged during the learning process.

It is implied that in order to strengthen the new literacy skills that the Armenian learners need to function successfully in the modern world, various digital media platforms need to be integrated into the Armenian educational institutions. This research supports the view held by Hobbs (2010), according to whom digital literacy should be developed both in informal setting and formal educational setting, especially in K-12 and higher education. The integration of digital media will help to motivate learners and make connections across subject areas.

## **5.3: Limitations and delimitations**

A limitation of the study is that at all the schools selected, English was taught as a foreign language. Thus, the majority of the samples involved in this research learned English. Including samples that do not learn English in a formal setting, might help to

reveal whether they are still motivated to learn English due to various digital media they are engaged with in informal settings.

This study was delimited to high school learners in Yerevan.

#### **5.4: Suggestions for further research**

This study showed that digital media has a significant impact on motivation to learn English. However, as it is known, motivation is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon and can be influenced by numerous factors. Thus, further research might shed a light on what other factors influence motivation, and how those factors impact different types of motivation.

Although initially this study did not aim at identifying what types of digital tools and devices might influence learners' motivation, it was found out that Smartphone can have a significant impact in increasing learners' motivation. Thus, it might be interesting to research and compare the impact of various types of media devices on motivation.

Also, it would be interesting to carry out a similar research study outside Yerevan, where exposure to digital media is not very large. This might help to ensure diversity in samples, as well as to come up with new interesting findings.

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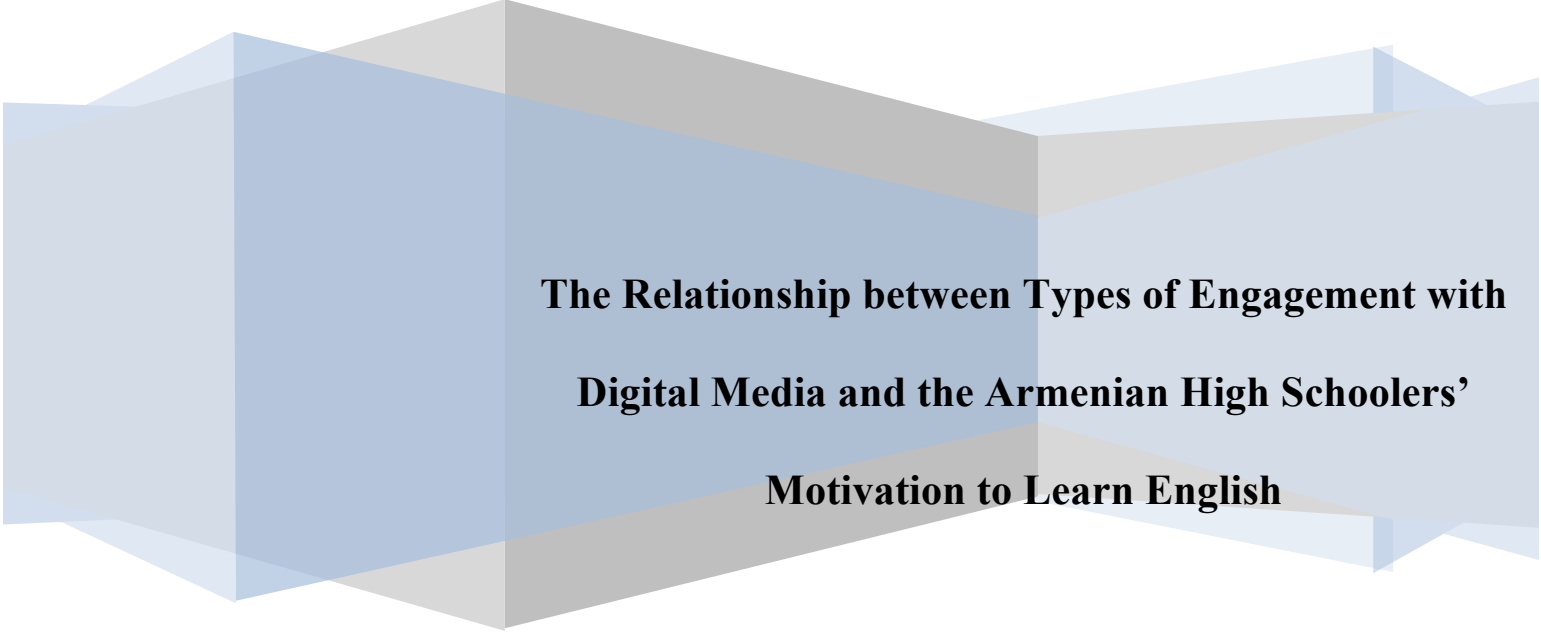
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# **American University of Armenia**

## **Questionnaire**



**The Relationship between Types of Engagement with  
Digital Media and the Armenian High Schoolers’  
Motivation to Learn English**

Dear student  
Please, complete the questionnaire to contribute to this research study. You are asked  
NOT to put your name in this form because this questionnaire is anonymous.

Thank you for your honest opinion.

**1. Your gender**

male ☐

female ☐

**2. Your age**

**3. Your school**

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. I have a personal**

a) computer   b)laptop   c) ipad )/ Android tablet   d) Smartphone

**5. Do you ghave an Internet access at home?**

yes ☐

no ☐

**6. Do you have an Internet access at school?**

yes ☐

no ☐

**7. What language/languages do you learn at school?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. What foreign language would you like to learn?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**9. What hobbies/interests do you have? Please, specify**

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Does the Internet help you to pursue your hobbies/interests?**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**11. Does English help you to pursue your interests?**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**12 How often do you use the following social sites?**

**a) Facebook**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**b) Odnoklassniki**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**c) MySpace**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**d) Twitter**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**e) Vkontakte**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**f) Google+**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**g) LinkedIn**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**h) Other, please specify**

**13 Do you use English when communicating with your friends in social sites?**

always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never ☐

**14. I need English**

a) For future job/career	Strongly agree 5	4	neutral 3	2	strongly disagree 1
b) because my parents want me to	Strongly agree 5	4	neutral 3	2	strongly disagree 1
c) to create something using a computer	Strongly agree 5	4	neutral 3	2	strongly disagree 1
d) For my entrance exams	Strongly agree 5	4	neutral 3	2	strongly disagree 1
Other (please, specify)	Strongly agree 5	4	neutral 3	2	strongly disagree 1
	Strongly agree 5	4	neutral 3	2	strongly disagree 1
	Strongly agree 5	4	neutral 3	2	strongly disagree 1
	Strongly agree 5	4	neutral 3	2	strongly disagree 1

**15. Please, fill in the table by ticking all the activities that you engage in using the Internet, as well as the proficiency level.**

<b>Use of digital media</b>	<b>Proficiency level</b>
1) Staying in touch with friends and acquaintances using sms and online communication.	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
2) Using online groups or forums to learn something	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
3) surfing the Internet to find interesting information	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
4) Searching and reading professional literature in the Internet	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
5) Downloading/listening to music for fun	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
6) Downloading/watching films/videos for fun	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
7) Creating/editing video or audio	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
8) using video tutorials to learn something	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
9) playing computer games	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
10) creating/programming computer games	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
11) online shopping	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
12) Listening to Podcasts for pleasure	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
13) Listening to Podcasts to learn something	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
14) Creating Podcasts	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1
15) Creating graphics and animations (for example, Photoshop, Flash...)	Expert 5      4      3      2      no expertise 1

16) Creating websites	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1
17) Blogging	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1
18) Wikis	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1
19) programming	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1
20) Taking online courses to learn something	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1
If you have other ways you use internet frequently, please specify in the space provided below					
	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1
	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1
	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1
	Expert 5	4	3	2	no expertise 1

**16. How often do you use English ? Please, tick any that are applicable**

English in Social sites	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
2)using English to search for interesting information	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
3)using English to socialize with my friends offline	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
4) Self-studying by using English books	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
5) Taking private English classes	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
6) Taking online English courses	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1



7)Watching English movies/videos	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
8) Listening to songs in English	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
9) Reading for fun in English	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
10) Using English to program /create something	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
Other (please, specify in the rows below)	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1
	Always 5	4	sometimes 3	2	never 1

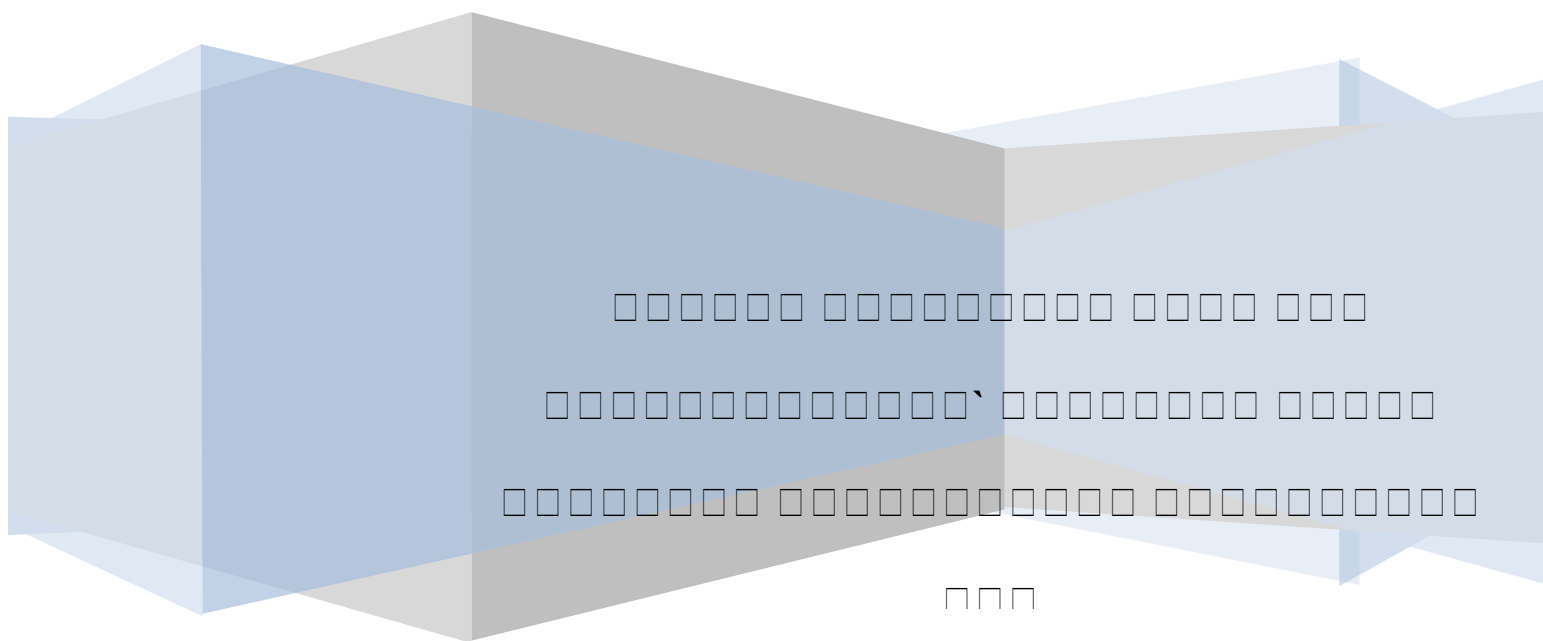
*If you do not mind to be interviewed on the phone later on, please write your telephone number.*

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**Thank you for participation**

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