AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Exploring the Contribution of Blogging and Podcasts

to Language Learners' Autonomous Abilities and Learning Outcome

A thesis submitted in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

By

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ABSTRACT

The age of Read/Write Web has brought new concepts and approaches into language development. It has given rise to technology-based approaches to learner autonomy which offer vast access to educational resources. All these technological opportunities provide learners with the freedom to control and direct their own learning thus fostering their independent language learning skills and making them more effective learners. This assumption led to the design of this study whose purpose was to find out whether and to what extent the two technological tools, blogging and podcasts, could contribute to the development of learners' autonomous abilities and their language performance if integrated into the traditional classroom, and to reveal the relationship between these two variables. Because the study pursued experimental research, it was conducted with a control group and a treatment group which received a two-month treatment with technological tools. The data collected through pre- and post-tests, class observation, and the Learner-Autonomy-Profile (LAP) Form was analyzed by means of SPSS and presented according to certain themes. The findings of the study highlighted statistically significant difference in performance between the two groups, development of action-oriented independent learning skills, and a positive correlation between learner autonomy and learning outcome. The study suggested that the implementation of technological tools into traditional language classrooms can ensure the development of autonomous learning abilities and the improvement of language learner performance.

Keywords: English language learning, educational technology, traditional classroom, blogging, podcasts, learner autonomy, learning outcome, independent language learning skills, correlation.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the age of the Read/Write Web, the definition of what it means to be literate has been transformed due to the explosion of information and online technologies. We used to define being literate as being able to read and write. However, in the era of technology it is not enough to consider only these abilities for understanding the concept of being literate which demands a more complex definition now (Richardson, 2010).

The rapid development observed in technology has brought new concepts and approaches into language development as in every area of education (Benson, 2001; Raya and Fernandez, 2002; Robbins, 2002; Schwienhorst, 2003). It has given rise to technology-based approaches to learner autonomy which provide vast access to educational resources. These may include electronic writing environments, computer simulations, digital educational tools, e-mail language advising, and computer-enhanced interactive video. All these technological opportunities can ensure effective language learning as they provide learners with the freedom to control and direct their own learning thus developing their autonomous language learning skills.

In studies based on self-reporting, the majority of participants respond that using technological tools makes them more effective learners. This means that using relevancy-based digital tools not just enhances learners' engagement in their learning process but enables them to achieve productive learning (Speak Up, 2009). Evidence suggests that the use of technology can increase learner autonomy and self-regulated learning for certain learners. The opportunity to work independently, to organize the learning process, to complete assignments better suited to their language learning needs help students assume greater responsibility for their own learning and work more effectively (Balanskat, 2006). Where there is no teacher, the good learner is

someone who teaches himself well and becomes a 'learner-teacher' (Sturtridge, 1997). Thus prepared, students will be ready to study the language independently whenever the need arises.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The assumption that the integration of certain technological tools into English language learning of the employees of Armenian Nuclear Power Plant (ANPP) might have a positive impact on the learning outcome, develop their autonomous learning skills and satisfy their language learning needs in terms of professional development and safer operation of the plant, led to the design of the present study. This research aims to conduct comparative evaluation of the contribution of traditional teaching and new educational tools, namely blogging and podcasts, to the learning outcome and learner autonomy, and to investigate the correlation between learner autonomy and learning outcome. The following research questions were formulated:

1. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to language learning outcome?

2. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to learner autonomy?

3. What is the correlation between the learner autonomy, as measured by the constructs and components of the LAP Form, and language learning outcome, as measured by the post-test results?

1.3 Significance of the Study

While there is a lot of literature on the development of learner autonomy, new technological tools for learning English, and strategies for improving learner performance, there is still a gap in the literature on the interrelationship between these three constructs of a triad to which the present study attempts to contribute. Although the study is contextualized in practice and its goal is to establish local understandings, the findings can be generalizable and replicable, as it can provide useful information for language educators as to how they could compensate the

deficiencies of traditional teaching with the help of educational technology, enhance the language learning process, and successfully meet their students' language learning needs. The findings will also show what is necessary to prepare students both psychologically and practically for independence so that they can be armed with confidence, knowledge about their own learning, and understanding of how to make use of their learning styles and strategies.

1.4 Definitions of Terms

The review of the literature in this study serves as the basis for the constructs upon which the exploration is founded. Learner autonomy is defined as the acceptance of responsibility for one's own learning. Learning outcome is described as the learner performance on achievement tests measuring the four language skills. Blogging and podcasts are two technological educational tools that enable learners to develop autonomous abilities in language learning which result in the improvement of language skills.

1.5 Overview of the Study

This chapter introduced the concept of technology in education. The next chapter will cover the relevant literature on learner autonomy and technological tools in education to show there is a need for investigating this concept within the Armenian context thus establishing a research gap. The third chapter will focus on the methodology and introduce the research design, the context and the participants, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis procedures, and limitations of the study. In the fourth chapter the results of the study will be presented and analyzed. The fifth chapter will discuss the findings and pedagogical implications of the study in the context of the conceptual framework and literature review. The final chapter will present the limitations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this action research is to explore the impact of blogging and podcasting on autonomous abilities of ANPP language learners and their language performance, and the relationship between learner autonomy and learning outcome. In this chapter, the literature relevant to this study will be reviewed. The first section will focus on defining traditional teaching. The second and third sections will define educational technology and learner autonomy, respectively. In the subsequent section, the role of blogging in language classrooms will be discussed. The fifth section will focus on podcasts in language classrooms. The final section will provide the summary of the literature review that led to the research questions of the study.

2.1 Defining Traditional Teaching

Traditional teaching refers to face-to-face teaching based in the classroom which is characterized by the interaction between student and teacher, student and student, teacher and content, and student and content (Anderson, 2002). The advantage of traditional learning is that the instructor can observe the learning process in the classroom and gain maximum control of it. However, because in traditional instruction both teachers and learners have to be physically present in the classroom, it cannot provide opportunity for those who have to miss the lesson to participate in the learning process, hence cannot enable the learners to develop their autonomous learning skills.

Earlier instructional technologies grouped students together in a controlled environment at a specific time and location where the knowledge was attained through one-way channel of instructional delivery. This kind of instruction was passive in nature – it did not require students any action beyond listening, watching, and taking notes (Blurton, 1999). The working definition

adopted in this study defines traditional teaching as instruction which incorporates older technologies.

The reasons behind the integration of new educational technologies into classrooms include not only the societal pressure but also the powerful differences between older and new instructional tools. The main differences are in the new dimensions of integration of multiple media, interactivity, flexibility of use, and connectivity, which can improve the effectiveness of language learning and teaching (Aldrich, Rogers, & Scaife, 1998). Thus, to get a clearer picture of the usefulness of new technologies in education, we need to explore these differences.

This section presented what traditional teaching is. To clearly identify the differences between traditional teaching and educational technology, the next section will answer what educational technology is.

2.2 Defining Educational Technology

UNESCO provides the following definition of Information Technology (IT): IT is the term used to describe the items of equipment (hardware) and computer programs (software) that allow us to access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate, and present information by electronic means. The recent addition of 'communication' to IT emphasizes the growing importance placed on the communication aspects of new technologies (Anderson, et al., 2002). This study focuses on educational technology which is defined as any form of technology used as an educational tool for information or communication purposes.

New technologies are characterized by the four dimensions of integration of multiple media, interactivity, flexibility of use, and connectivity (Aldrich, Rogers, & Scaife, 1998). As they can enrich the learning experience, teachers tend to integrate resources such as websites, animations, simulations, video and audio, and links to other software, into their classrooms. The

term "anytime-anyplace" is used to reflect the flexibility which enables learners to control the pace and location of their own learning. Connectivity is another important feature that supports teaching and learning. Learners' develop skills of controlling, manipulating, and contributing to the information environment.

Because of these differences, educators are finding new ways to integrate the new digital educational tools into the curricula, since using them outside the classroom can make learners more autonomous (Blurton, 1999). Teachers consider learner autonomy as one of the main factors in creating an ideal language learning environment. The opportunity of interaction in the target language, creation and presentation for a real audience, exposure to the language anywhere any time, control over one's own pace and strategies of learning, higher awareness of one's own learning process, working in an ideal stress atmosphere, provided by technology, is likely to support learner autonomy (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999).

This section provided the definition of new educational technology, which can develop learners' autonomous abilities. In the following section, the concept of learner autonomy will be introduced.

2.3 Defining Learner Autonomy

The development of learner autonomy in formal educational contexts is based on the acceptance of responsibility for one's own learning. This responsibility means that learners need to reflect on what, why, and how they are learning. Learner autonomy has become a goal of any educational context as it is due to this ability that barriers between formal educational contexts and the wider living environments are eliminated (Benson, 2001).

Learner autonomy is a complex construct, a construct of constructs, whose numerous components can be summarized into four key groups: affective and motivational (learner's

feelings, motivation, willingness, persistence, initiative), action-oriented (skills, decisions,

learning behaviors), cognitive and metacognitive (learners' beliefs, awareness, knowledge), and

social (negotiating learning with partners, teachers, etc) (Tassinari, 2012).

The development of technology has given rise to technology-based approaches to learner

autonomy which provide vast access to educational resources. These may include electronic

writing environments, computer simulations, digital educational tools, e-mail language advising,

and computer-enhanced interactive video. All these technological opportunities can ensure

effective language learning as they provide learners with the freedom to control and direct their

own learning thus developing their autonomous language learning skills (Benson, 2001; Raya

and Fernandez, 2002; Robbins, 2002; Schwienhorst, 2003). Because they can enable teaching

and learning from anywhere at any time, they can develop lifelong learning habits and provide

lifelong learning (Hatton, 1998).

Finding out the need for learner autonomy and the roles of the teacher and the learner in

learner autonomy will complete the comprehension of the concept of learner autonomy. Each

will be discussed in a separate subsection.

2.3.1 The Need for Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy pursues the key idea of constructivism that views learning as

construction of knowledge and effective learning as 'active' learning (Benson, 2001). This

entails that formal learning environments should equip learners not just with "school" knowledge

but "action" knowledge which learners can transfer from the classroom to other areas of their life

(Barnes, 1976, in Benson, 2001, p. 37). In addition, to promote learner autonomy, students

should have the opportunities to develop awareness of their logical and conceptual growth, to

interact with learning tasks, and solve hands-on problems (Benson, 2001).

The need for developing learner autonomy is in the belief that learners become more enthusiastic about learning if they are engaged in making decisions about their own learning (Littlejohn, 1985). Moreover, they understand the nature and purpose of learning if they are actively involved in their own learning. Additionally, the development of autonomous abilities minimizes the barriers between formal learning and actual living, hence making learning part of living, and learners – effective participants and more useful members of society (Little, 1991).

Another belief is that learner autonomy is strongly correlated with academic performance; however, only a few researchers have studied this relation. Thus, Dafei's (2007) study conducted in China found that there was a significant and positive relation between the students' English proficiency and their autonomy. Another study in an Iranian EFL context investigated the correlation between autonomy, motivation, and academic performance, and the results revealed significant correlation (Hashemian & Soureshjani, 2011). The investigations conducted by Lowe (2009) in the Washington University and by Ng et al (2011) in Malaysia also reported a positive, significant correlation between learner autonomy as measured by the Learner Autonomy Profile-Short Form (LAP-SF) and academic performance as measured by the GPA. Multiple linear regression analysis conducted by an Indonesian study (Myartawan, Latief, Suharmanto, 2013) revealed that learner autonomy and English learning outcome had a significant, strong, positive relationship.

2.3.2 The Role of the Teacher in Learner Autonomy

In formal teaching environments, learner autonomy starts with teacher autonomy and freedom which require continuous awareness and personality change on the part of the teacher (Little, 2004). The latter becomes a facilitator who provides support for learning, an adviser who emphasizes one-to-one interaction and a resource who serves as a source of knowledge (Voller,

1997). Learners can manage their own language learning if teachers conduct needs analysis, select appropriate materials, set objectives, and organize interactions (Little, 2004).

Learner autonomy is based on the idea that teachers teach learners how to learn. They can develop this capacity by helping students raise awareness of their language learning strategies, by training them to become more active, reflective, and critical learners, by providing them with lifelong learning habits, and helping to set up reachable learning objectives taking account of the feedback from evaluation and self-assessment (Little, 2004).

2.3.3 The Role of the Learner in Learner Autonomy

The development of leaner autonomy assumes behavioral and psychological changes in learner development which involves three main aspects of control, such as the development of capacity, increase in awareness of oneself as a learner, and willingness and ability to manage and reflect on one's own learning (Benson, 2001).

The development of capacity which takes place gradually helps learners to accept responsibility for their learning. It also allows them to determine their language learning needs and goals, and accordingly define the content and progression of their learning (Little, 1991). Learners need to develop language awareness to become more sensitive and conscious in setting up learning goals, planning and practicing learning activities, selecting and using appropriate language strategies, and actively engaging in the learning process (Little, 2004). Through reflection, learners are able to evaluate and develop understanding of their language learning process, figure out the strengths and weaknesses in this process, explore and criticize the effectiveness of learning strategies, and correspondingly, develop or select the content, the strategies and techniques for their own learning (Benson, 2001).

Technology is no longer a novelty as we have entered a digital era, and it has never advanced as fast as it does nowadays. Although "technology is not a panacea that can replace language teachers and face-to face classrooms, it is something that can be used to enhance language learning" (Sharma & Barett, 2007). To better understand how the development of the components of learner autonomy can be fostered and how the role of the autonomous learner can be enhanced by new educational technological tools, it is worth exploring their role and impact in language learning. This study will focus on blogging as an effective means for improving reading and writing skills, and podcasts as a tool for enhancing listening skills, and helping the learners become more autonomous and effective language learners.

2.4 Blogging in Language Classrooms

The rapid and radical developments of research in computer-mediated communication environments have not left the blog unstudied (Mangelson & Castek, 2008). Blog, short for Weblog, is a shared, interactive journal organized into discussion threads. In contrast to traditional discussions where only one student participates at a time, blogs engage all students in their learning environment where they voice and share their opinions, and make public comments with one click of a "publish" button.

Blogs practice the dimension of interaction of educational technology, as they attract readers with ideas, questions and links and ask them to think and to respond (Richardson, 2010). The intention behind the inclusion of blogging strategies in education is found to be the enrichment of learning experience which can bring the learner from the knowledge based to deeper and higher levels of thinking (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003).

This intention has been hypothesized by a number of studies on blogging. The literacy project entitled "Surviving the Hurricane" conducted by Monica Glewa and Margret Bogan

(2007) concluded that this technology based tool increased the students' awareness of and the impact and quality of their writing skills. Another research project proved that through blogs students can be encouraged to do a lot of pre-class reading and post-class reflections (Al-Fadda & Al-Yahya, 2010). Campbell (2004) states that when students use blogs, they navigate the English websites chat and interact with other bloggers, read more articles online, and all this increases their knowledge of the language and builds their language capabilities. Moreover, blogs foster reflective learning in which learners seek out connections between concepts and contextualized meaning (Rosie, 2000).

Blogs provide greater flexibility in terms of format and intended use. The establishment of an expressivist blog writing style can encourage learners to be more actively reflective if there is a balance between simulating real-life learning context and imposing certain themes (Murray & Hourigan, 2008). Yang (2009) concluded in his study that feedback and risk-taking are important components to reinforce students' confidence and motivation in language learning. Similarly, the blog as a space for reflection helps learners become more aware of their personal growth, and experience a sense of self-discovery. The blog gives them confidence in relation to their status as learners, which in turn renews their sense of commitment to the process (Murray, Hourigan & Jeanneau, 2007).

The project conducted by the University of Florida which aimed at developing Elementary Expository writing skills through collaborative blogging summed up its findings into three categories: students improved their perceptions about writing; they became more motivated as a result of collaboration in blogging; learners improved their writing skills and expressed their willingness to develop their skills and knowledge using this technology tool (Drexler, Dawson, & Ferdig, 2007). Additionally, this authentic cyberspace develops learners' sense of the

importance of English and motivates them to more accurately express their ideas in English, to understand comments, and reflect on them (Wu, 2005). They recycle vocabulary and notice their language use, thus enhancing their writing fluency (Apple, 2006)

Blog-assisted language learning can be beneficial both for teachers and learners. Teachers can implement this in their classrooms as an exciting novel way of communicative language learning, and an incentive to enjoy reading and writing (Ward, 2004). This experience allows them to think beyond the simple notions of composition, error, and correctness and base their perceptions of language learning on more advanced ideas about the ways of thinking, interacting, and negotiating meaning (Smith, 2008).

Blogs represent a perfect medium for literacy, remain equitable for all ages groups and both genders, and provide anytime-anywhere access, an opportunity for learning to continue outside the classroom (Huffakar, 2005). Despite the impact that the use of blogs has demonstrated in a number of studies, in the educational context, weblogs are still a glimpse of future and not a fad. Today, we seem to be stepping into an era in which "to blog or not to blog, that's increasingly the question" (Chengyi Wu, 2006).

This section explored the role of blogging in language learning. The next section will investigate the role of podcasting in foreign language learning.

2.5 Podcasts in Language Classrooms

In the classroom, the most common ways of practicing and improving listening comprehension are activities of listening to authentic records (Kavaliauskiene, 2008). However, this kind of practice cannot benefit all the learners in class. The main reason is that learners have diverse abilities and proficiency levels of the language which means that some students can benefit from the practice while others may not. And very often, students are not willing to accept

these differences in class. Self-access learning approaches provide a wide range of resources which allow students to study independently. Listening, like reading, requires self-access for more success, but unlike reading, listening to authentic texts appears to be more complicated.

Today, one of the learning opportunities provided by the digital era is the emergence of the online audio publishing known as 'podcasting' and fortunately, EFL educators are referring to it to provide an extra chance for their learners to practice their listening skills both inside and outside the classroom. Braun (2007) describes podcast as: "regularly produced audio and video files that are available for subscription and that can be automatically downloaded to a computer and / or portable audio and video device". Among the many theories that advocate the benefit of podcasting in language learning process is the theory of constructivism where active exploration, observation, and interpretation significantly affect the construction of an individual representation of knowledge (Cooper, 1993).

Learners can use podcasts in developing and improving their listening skills for the following reasons. Current language learners expect a language course or school to be equipped with opportunities to use technology which can allow for student self-access (Sharma & Barett, 2007). Using technology outside the language classroom can make learners take more responsibility for their own learning, hence make them more autonomous. An important factor of using technology in learning is the flexibility when students can manage their own learning at their own way and at any location, and get exposure to native speakers without being confined to the classroom environment (Flanagan & Calandra, 2005).

Moreover, new skills learned in the classroom can be transferred into real life. A web-based environment makes students effective learners giving them regular exposure to practice their listening skills (Peterson, 2010). Besides, it adds a dimension of immediacy to listening

practice by exposing learners to up-to-date news web-sites and information. Learners can gain control of their learning by pausing at will, and listening, and reading a transcript. Through time learners develop their skills of selecting and evaluating listening materials, and this makes them more effective and independent learners.

Interest is the best teacher and the most important tool in teaching English (Mehring, 2005). With the help of Internet learners can achieve right learning motive and boost up their memory. Teacher's choice of a variety of listening materials will provide a fresh start thus arousing interest in the learning process. Moreover, the selection of devices which combine listening and reading, listening and speaking, and listening and writing, help learners gradually develop their language learning skills in a motivating environment. With the use of recordings and activities designed for learners, students will not only learn how to improve their comprehension, but they will also learn how to maintain their social interactive relations. It is teachers' responsibility to guide students to sites that provide the opportunity to learn about life and learn to listen.

2.6 Summary

English language learning cannot be realized effectively only within the classroom. It requires greater individual work and responsibility on the part of the learner. Therefore, language learners need to be ready to study the language independently whenever the need arises. In other words, learners need to become autonomous.

Any learner can achieve autonomy in different ways and degrees depending on the learner and learning situation (Benson, 2001). They can develop this capacity if they are given appropriate conditions and preparation which include the possibility to gain control over

learning. Teacher's role is significant in the development of autonomy which depends on how the practice is organized.

New education technologies have the potential to offer language educators more flexible ways of supporting learners (Agudo et al, 2007). Research has described how they can positively affect learning outcome if educators use them in an appropriate way as supplementing approaches to the existing pedagogy. As Spurlin (2006) states:

"… technology interacts with many variables: student preparation and motivation, how the students and instructor use technology, and how well the environments support learning… Instead of asking what impact technology has on student learning, ask how you can incorporate the best-known principles about teaching and learning, using technology as a tool for innovation" (Spurlin, p.23).

According to the results of the studies conducted, besides increasing student success, the teaching web application activities can have an important effect on increasing motivation to learn, gaining independent study skills, increasing and acquiring communication skills and developing cooperation among participants in education (Agudo et al, 2007).

All these skills and insights help learners assume greater responsibility for their own learning, and this can make them effective learners because they learn what they are ready to learn and can transfer their learning strategies to wider contexts (Esch, 1997). These benefits of autonomous learning have led to the development of autonomy as a legitimate and desirable goal of education.

Similarly, the development of autonomous abilities of the language learners became the central goal of this research which is worth doing since there is little empirical support in the literature on learner autonomy, especially on technology-based development of learner

autonomy. Besides, the results of the study can add to the validation of practices aimed at fostering learner autonomy, especially in the Armenian EFL context. The questions that the research hypothesized are:

1. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to language learning outcome?

2. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to learner autonomy?

3. What is the correlation between the learner autonomy, as measured by the constructs and components of the LAP Form, and language learning outcome, as measured by the post-test results?

This research aims at improving the rationality and justice of the practices, the understanding of these practices and situations in which they are carried out.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of eight sections. In the first section, the research questions will be restated. In the second section, the design and context of the study will be described. The third section will present the language learning needs of ANPP employees, as participants. The fourth section will focus on the sampling procedures. The three subsequent sections will provide detailed information on the instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. The final section will present the limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Questions

To address the research questions presented in Chapter Two the present study was set up to investigate whether and to what extent the two technological tools, blogging and podcasts, contribute to learning outcome and learner autonomy, and the correlation of learner autonomy and learning outcome. The research questions are repeated here for ease of reference.

1. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to language learning outcome?

2. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to learner autonomy?

3. What is the correlation between the learner autonomy, as measured by the constructs and components of the LAP Form, and language learning outcome, as measured by the post-test results?

3.2 Research Design and Context

This study pursued experimental design as it aimed to conduct comparative evaluation of the impact of traditional teaching and educational technologies on language performance and learner autonomy. After receiving permission from the ANPP Training Center Manager, the participants were divided into a focus group and an experimental group. The latter received 4 month instruction which integrated traditional teaching and two educational technology tools –

blogging and podcasts which would allow creating an online space for the learners to get more engaged in their learning process outside the classroom. A class blog was created for the learners to post their reflections twice a week and provide comments on each other's posts. The themes were related to those studied in their textbook and each week the learners were given three reading materials and three podcasts to choose from and reflect on. Both the instructor and the students received support on how to use the new educational tools, and the research was conducted at the ANPP Training Center.

3.3 The Needs of ANPP Language Learners

The participants of this action research were 18 selected employees of ANPP who were studying English and had classes twice a week. The level of their English proficiency was pre-intermediate and the textbook they were using was Interchange 2. The needs analysis carried out with the learners revealed that they need to improve their English language skills to be able to read a lot of reference materials that were only available in English, to listen to and take notes during seminars and conferences while on business trips and to have written and oral discussions with their foreign experts supporting ANPP.

However, because of their work schedule, learners could not systematically attend the classes, and therefore, could not fully participate in the learning process. The immediate situation which was deemed problematic aroused the need to respond with practical deliberation, an action to be taken to put things right, and action which was connected both with the process and the product of the enquiry. Thus, the action was prompted by the assumption that the implementation of certain online learning technologies, namely blogging and podcasts, might resolve the problem, promote a more effective teaching and learning, and equip the learners with autonomous language learning abilities.

3.4 Sampling Procedures

The students were informed about the purpose of the research and grouped considering both their consent for participation in the experimental group and the pre-test results. The participants took a pre-test and were grouped into two groups so that the mean scores of the test results for both groups were equal. This was done to ensure identical conditions and reduce variability in the experimental results. Also, both groups were instructed by their teacher.

3.5 Instrumentation

In order to obtain data to answer the research questions, a triangulated investigation was conducted. The data was collected through pre- and post-tests, observation of blogging, and Learner-Autonomy-Profile (LAP) Form.

3.5.1 Pre- and Post-Tests

The pre- and post-tests were based on reading, listening, and the integrated skills of reading and writing, listening and writing. The pre-test (see Appendix A) assessed the learners' current level of language skills before the integration of the technological tools into traditional teaching. The post-test (Appendix B) was to determine the impact of these tools on the learning outcome after the instruction with these tools. This was a product-oriented data and the comparison of the mean scores of the post-tests between the groups would reveal the extent to which the learners improved their language skills and language learning strategies.

3.5.2   Observation

Detailed observations of the class blog were conducted throughout the experiment with the aim of exploring the learners' engagement in the learning process, the change in their attitudes towards their own learning, the development of their language learning skills, and the ways of demonstrating autonomous abilities in blogging and podcasting. This data helped to

answer the research question as to what extent blogging and podcasts can promote learners' independent learning skills.

3.5.3   Learner-Autonomy-Profile (LAP) Form.

To assess learner autonomy, the LAP Form was used at the end of the investigation (see Appendix C). Taking into account the components of learner autonomy and how they are fostered through blogging and podcasts, a form in English was developed which profiled the four key constructs of learner autonomy: affective and motivational, action-oriented, cognitive and metacognitive, and social components. The form was adapted from Tassinari's (2012) study 'Evaluating learner autonomy: a dynamic model with descriptors'. It provides an accurate evaluation of an individual's relative capacity to take on a self-directed approach to language learning (Tassinari, 2012). The form measured the scores on the scale from 1 to 5 each score meaning how often the learner performed the behavior. This instrument helped to answer whether and to what extent the learners developed their autonomous skills.

To measure the strength and the direction of the linear relationship between the two variables: learning outcome and learner autonomy, the r-test was used, which provided the answer to the third research question.

3.6   Data Collection Procedure

The pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the research, and the post-test was administered after the two-month treatment. The observation of the class blog was done throughout the new pedagogical instruction, when first, the errors in the blog reflections were identified, then corrective feedback was provided, and learners' comments on their new learning experiences were considered. At the end of the research, the LAP Form with the confidentiality report was distributed.

3.7 Data Analysis

The research data was both quantitative, from the pre- and post-tests, the LAP Form, and qualitative, from the blog observation. For the analysis of the quantitative data, the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) were used. Descriptive statistical procedures were used to assess the difference between the post-test results of the control group and those of the treatment group. Independent t-test was used to measure the statistical significance of the difference. Also, the significance of difference between the pre- and post-test results was calculated for both groups through paired-t tests. For the analysis of the class blog observations and the LAP Form, the mean values for the error occurrences and for the learner autonomy components were computed, respectively. Finally, the r-test was conducted to find out whether learner autonomy was a correlate of learning outcome.

3.8 Limitations

Limitations in this study made up those aspects upon which there was no control. Given the time constraints, the study could not be longitudinal and had to conduct only 2- month treatment. This prevented from increasing the amount of data obtained. Also, if the number of the participants were higher, the information gathered could be more enlightening.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which the application of blogging and podcasts in an EFL classroom could contribute to the development of learners' autonomous skills and learning outcome, as well as the correlation between learner autonomy and learning outcome. The investigation provided rich data to answer the research questions:

1. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to language learning outcome?

2. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to learner autonomy?

3. What is the correlation between learner autonomy, as measured by the constructs and components of the LAP Form, and language learning outcome, as measured by the post-test results?

The results of the data collected through pre- and post-tests, class blog observations, and the LAP form are analyzed in this chapter divided into four sections. The first section presents the results of the tests to show the contribution of the two technological tools to learning outcome. The second section reveals the process and outcome of the learners' participation in the class blog. In the third section, the findings obtained from the LAP form are highlighted and the correlation between learner autonomy and learning outcome is calculated.

4.1 Pre-test and Post-test (Quantitative Data)

The pre- and post-tests (see Appendix A and Appendix B), which measured both the productive and receptive skills, as well as the integrated skills of the language, were conducted to reveal the extent to which the learners had improved their language learning skills as a result of the integration of blogging and podcasts in their learning.

The first step in the study was to find the averages and variances of variables of the pre- and post-tests for which descriptive statistics were used. The output, presented in Table 1,

contained several pieces of information that was useful in understanding the descriptive quality

of the data. The calculations revealed that the minimum scores on the post-test received by the

control group and the treatment group were 22 and 32, respectively, whereas the maximum

scores for both groups were 44 and 48, respectively. Although the range of scores for the control

group showed more homogeneity (22) than the range of scores for the treatment group (26), the

results illustrated a big difference between the medians of both groups (control group 29 and

treatment group 44). This implies that the treatment group performed better on the post-test than

the control group.

Table 1
Mean Values on Post-test Results (N=16)

	Central Tendency		Dispersion			
	Mean	**Median**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Range**	**SD**
Treatment Group	41.25	44	22	48	26	8.89
Control Group	31.13	29	22	44	22	7.30

Variability was assessed by examining the values in the Standard Deviation column. The

standard amount that the scores differed from the mean was big in both cases (treatment group

$SD = 8.89$ and control group $SD = 7.30$). This means that the students' performance on the post-

test was not homogenous for both groups, because the amount of variability in the distribution of

the scores was not small. This was likely due to the small number of participants. However, the

mean score for the control group ($M = 31.125$) was much lower than the mean value for the

treatment group ($M = 41.25$). This suggests that the test-takers' performance on the post-test was

not the same; the students who participated in the implementation of blogging and podcasts into

their language learning showed better performance after the treatment than the control group.

Examining the averages and variances of the scores was useful for anticipating further analysis of the statistical significance of the difference between the mean scores for which an independent t-test was conducted whose output is provided in Table 2. The analysis indicated that the difference in the mean scores between the treatment group and the control group was statistically significant (t (14) = 2.48, p < 0.05 level). This finding suggests that the difference is due to the treatment which promoted the learners' language learning skills. Thus, having got engaged in blogging and exposed to podcasts at a regular basis, the experimental group outperformed the control group significantly.

Table 2
Independent t-test on Post-test Results (N=16)

	Mean	SD	t obs.	df	t critical	Sig. (2-tailed)
Treatment Group	41.25	8.89	2.48	14	2.145	.02
Control Group	31.13	7.30				

To gain a more determined answer as to whether or not the difference in the mean scores between the two groups is likely to be due to treatment and not due to chance, I conducted statistical analysis of the pre- and post-test results of each group. First, the results for the control group are presented in Table 3. The analysis showed that the range of the minimum and maximum scores of the pre-test (21) is almost the same as those of the post-test (22) for the control group. Also, the standard deviation values (pre-test SD = 7.42 and post-test SD = 7.30) indicated that the students' performance on both tests was homogenous. However, there was very little difference in the mean scores (pre-test M = 28.38 and post-test M = 31.13) and, similarly, in the medians between the pre- and post-test results. Moreover, due to the paired t-test, it became evident that there was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and

post-test results of the control group (t (7) = 0.91, $p < 0.05$), implying that the traditional instruction could not contribute significantly to the learning outcome.

Table 3
Control Group's Mean Values on Pre- and Post-tests and Paired t-test (N =16)

	Central Tendency				Dispersion		Paired t-test		
	Mean	**Median**	**Min.**	**Max.**	**Range**	**SD**	**t value**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Pre-test	28.38	30	15	36	21	7.42	0.9046	7	0.39
Post-test	31.13	29	22	44	22	7.30			

The same analysis was conducted with the treatment group's results on pre- and post-tests to find out the contribution of the technological tools to the learning outcome. Table 4 presents the output of this analysis. Although the range of the experimental learner's performance on both tests was more dispersed (pre-test 29 and post-test 26) and the average difference from the means (pre-test $SD = 9.5$ and post-test $SD = 8.85$) is greater than the range and standard deviation for the control group, the mean and medium columns show almost 80% increase in the learner performance. This finding was supported by the paired t-test which showed t (7) = 4.81, $p < 0.05$ meaning that there is extremely statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test results of the treatment group.

Table 4
Treatment Group's Mean Values on Pre- and Post-tests and Paired t-test (N = 16)

	Central Tendency				Dispersion		Paired t-test		
	Mean	**Median**	**Min.**	**Max.**	**Range**	**SD**	**t value**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Pre-test	28	28	13	42	29	9.5	4.8068	7	0.002
Post-test	41.25	44	22	48	26	8.89			

All these cross-analysis added to the credibility of the finding that the improved learner performance was not due to chance but due to the new pedagogical treatment that the experimental group experienced.
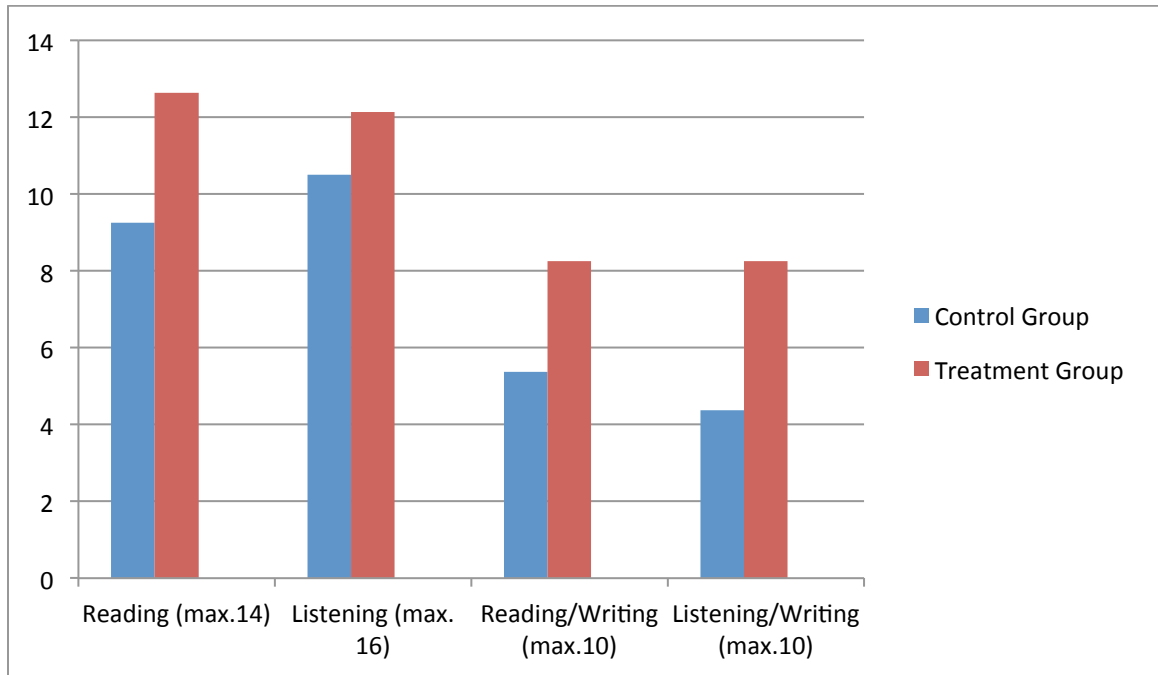
Figure 1 *Mean Values on Each Section of Post-test*

Given that the statistical analysis of the pre- and post-test results indicated statistically significant difference in the performance between the groups, it was beneficial to more specifically investigate those areas in which the possible differences could be observed. For this purpose, the mean value for each test section was calculated for each group of learners. The computations are presented in Figure 1. This bar chart shows that the treatment group outperformed the control group in all the four sections. However, the significant difference between the results was observed in the Listening/Writing section (control group $M = 4.32$ and treatment group $M = 8.25$). This means that due to the treatment the learners were able to achieve the highest increase in their performance in the Listening/Writing section. This finding once again goes in line with the implication of the above presented statistical analysis that the new

pedagogical tools, namely blogging and podcasts, operated in favor of the enhancement of language learning skills, specifically listening and writing, and overall language learning outcome.

4.2 Class Blog Observation (Qualitative and Quantitative data)

Becoming contributors of the class blog the treatment group posted their reflections and comments twice a week. Each time they received either reading materials or podcasts to choose from among and reflect on them in the class blog which was regularly observed throughout the two-month treatment. The observations aimed to reveal the participants' errors, provide corrective feedback on them, and observe the development of accuracy and understanding of the podcasts and reading materials.
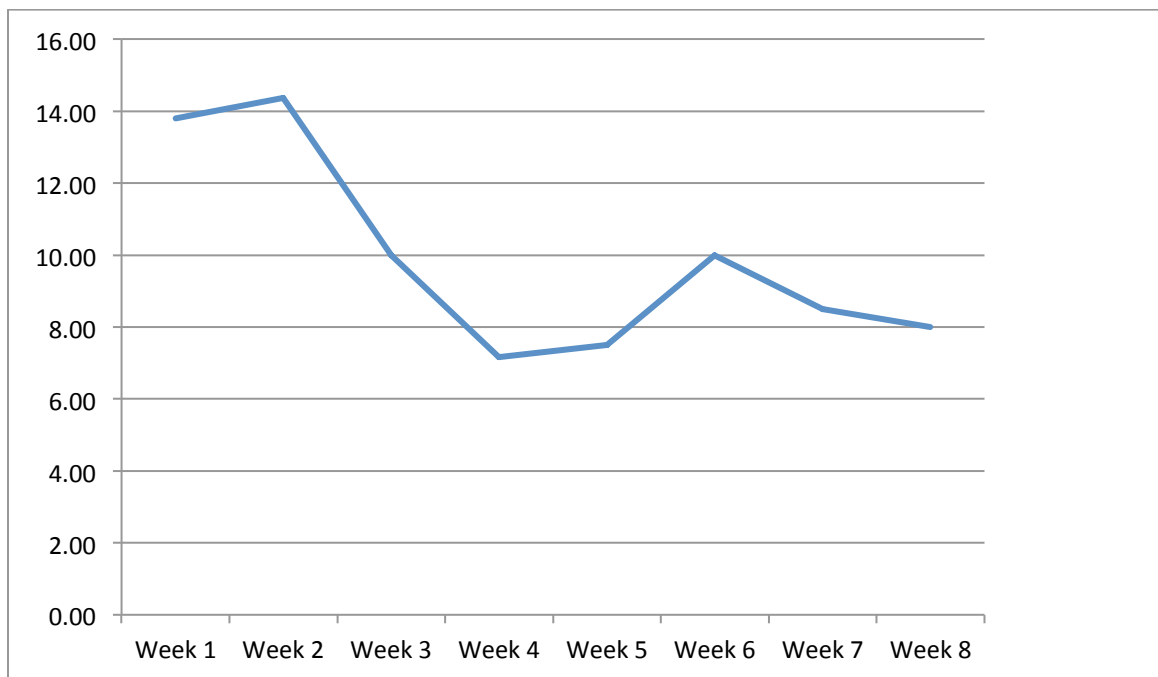

Figure 2 *Means on Each Participant's Error Occurrences Each Week*

Due to this short-term practice and provision of corrective feedback on the errors, the students gradually increased their comprehension skills and minimized the number of errors in

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their writing. The errors made by the learners were of various categories, such as formal, grammatical, lexical, punctuation, lexico-grammatical, and style errors. However, for this study it was appropriate to compute the raw number of all types of errors for each week. Figure 2 illustrates the means for the error occurrences per week. As can be interpreted by the line graph, although there was a not steady decrease in the number of errors, during the two-month treatment the average number of errors made each week by each participant decreased from nearly 14 in Week 1 to 8 in Week 8. It can be suggested that the online platform benefited the attainment of better receptive skills and more accuracy.

Another aim that the class blog observation pursued was to observe the participants' attitudes towards using the new technological learning tools. The students were motivated to become contributors of the class blog and they posted their reflections on most of the assignments. According to their comments, the online learning platform allowed them to use the Internet more, to even start typing, using mail, and other Internet services, to read and listen to more materials, to freely express their opinions and read others' opinions on various issues, to write for a larger audience which made their task more purposeful. Moreover, they expressed their willingness to continue blogging and podcasts as they provide opportunity to work more independently. The participants' responses about their independent language learning skills will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

4.3 Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP) Form (Quantitative Data) and r-test

The data on the development of independent learning skills was collected through the LAP Form (see Appendix C), which aimed at investigating to what extent the use of blogging and podcasts contributed to the acquisition of autonomous learning abilities. The items were designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5: 1=never, 2=seldom, 3=sometimes,

4=often, 5=always. The interpretations of the five points were: the entries between 1 and 2 were considered as resistance to autonomous skills, those between 2 and 3 were interpreted as neutral attitude to these skills, and the values from 3 to 4 and from 4 to 5 were considered as expressions of neutral to positive and supportive attitudes, respectively, to the attainment of independent learning skills.

Control Group | **Treatment Group**
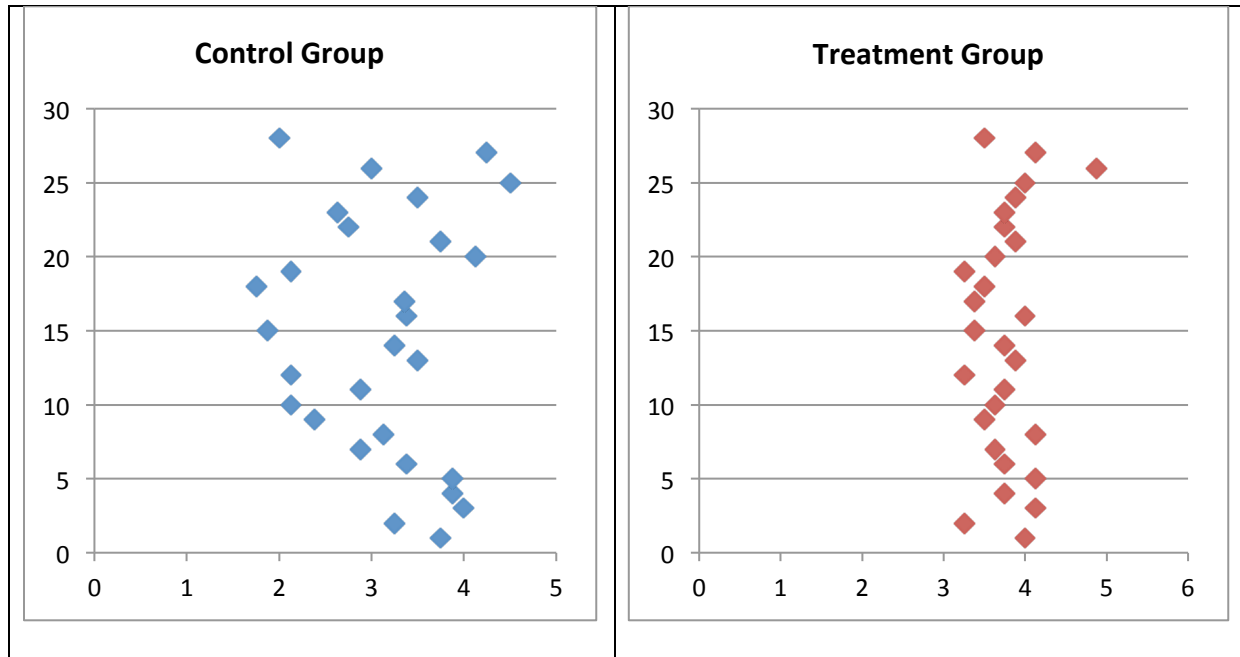
Figure 3 *The Distribution of Mean Values for LAP Form Responses*

To compare the students' attitudes towards their autonomous language learning skills, the mean values for the overall responses of both the control group and the experimental group were calculated. The result was that there was difference in the mean scores between the two groups in favor of the treatment group, which suggests that this group expressed supportive attitude ($M =$ 3.77) to the development and application of their autonomous abilities in language learning; whereas the control group's attitude fell into the range of neutral to positive ($M = 3.16$), meaning that this group had less developed independent skills. Figure 3 above depicts the distribution of the mean scores of the responses indicating that the responses of the control group were

dispersed, while those of the treatment group tended to be much assembled and showed more

supportive tendency on the continuum of the learner autonomy scale.

The subsequent step was to see where the possible differences could lie in the groups'

attitudes and to find out whether these differences could be attributed to the contribution of

blogging and podcasts. For this purpose, the mean values of the responses were computed for

each component of learner autonomy. The findings are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5
Mean Values and Interpretations on Components of Learner Autonomy (N = 16)

Component	Control Group	Treatment Group
Affective and motivational component	M = 3.8 Supportive	M = 3.85 Supportive
Action-oriented component	M = 2.79 Neutral	M = 3.63 Supportive
Cognitive and metacognitive component	M = 3.47 Neutral to Positive	M = 3.97 Supportive
Social component	M = 3.13 Neutral to Positive	M = 3.81 Supportive

Both groups' responses to the affective and motivation component were nearly the same,

which can be explained by the big role of their intrinsic motivation - their desire to improve their

independent language learning skills to achieve better job-related performance. The biggest

difference was observed in the action-oriented component where the control group expressed

neutral attitude and the treatment group indicated supportive attitude. This suggests that the new

pedagogical treatment through blogging and podcasts had the most influence on the development

of action-oriented, probably the most important, independent learning skills, which in its turn,

resulted in the statistically significant difference in the post-test results between the control group

and the treatment group in favor of the latter.

In order to reveal the correlation between the learner autonomy and the post-test outcome for the treatment group, it was appropriate to conduct r-test for statistical analysis. The latter indicated that although there was not a significant and strong relationship between the variables of learner autonomy and learning outcome, there was a positive correlation, r (14)=0.28, p<0.05. It can be suggested that learner autonomy is a predictor of learning outcome; as autonomous language learning skills are improved, so do learner performance results.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

What prompted this study was the assumption that the integration of blogging and podcasts into traditional classroom would foster learners' autonomous abilities and enhance their language learning performance. To investigate this hypothesis, the following research questions were formed:

1. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to language learning outcome?

2. To what extent do blogging and podcasts contribute to learner autonomy?

3. What is the correlation between learner autonomy, as measured by the constructs and components of the LAP Form, and language learning outcome, as measured by the post-test results?

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first section, the results of the investigation will be discussed. The second section will suggest pedagogical implications for language educators.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The study seems to have confirmed the beneficial effects of blogging and podcasting on learners' autonomous learning abilities and learning outcome. The results obtained from the pre- and post-tests indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group, and there was a statistically significant difference in performance on the post-test between the groups. This finding appears to provide support to Aldrich et. al.'s (1998) claim that the new educational technologies, characterized by the new dimensions of flexibility of use, interactivity, and connectivity, can enhance language learning and teaching. It also provides evidence that traditional teaching should go along with new technological tools, thus supporting Sharma and

Barett's (2007) argument that new technology cannot replace the traditional face-to-face interaction, but the combination of both can be used to increase language learning.

The results regarding the possible differences between the language skills indicated that the Listening/Writing section scored the highest among the other sections, implying that the technological treatment benefited the improvement of the listening and writing skills the most. This finding is likely to be consistent with the finding of the study conducted by Monica Glewa and Margret Bogan (2007) who concluded that blogging could increase learners' awareness and quality of their own writing. Regarding the listening skills, they were improved due to the systematic exposure to podcasts, which proved that a web-based environment makes students effective learners giving them regular exposure to practice their listening skills (Peterson, 2010).

Due to class blog observations, it became obvious that the number of error occurrences decreased throughout the treatment period, which supports the significant role of the new technology stated by Apple (2006), which is to enable learners to recycle vocabulary, to notice their language growth, and improve their writing fluency. The exploration of the participants' affective/motivational component revealed that they are willing to continue their learning in combination with the new technological tools. Besides increasing student success, the teaching web application activities can have an important effect on increasing motivation to learn, gaining independent study skills, increasing and acquiring communication skills and developing cooperation among participants in education (Agudo et al, 2007).

To find out whether the increased performance on the post-test was the result of the development of autonomous abilities of learners through the new technological treatment, both groups' responses to the LAP Form were analyzed. The finding was that the control group's responses fell into the range of neutral to positive, meaning that these students expressed less

autonomous approach towards their own learning; while the responses provided by the treatment group were distributed towards supportive approach to learner autonomy. This finding was interpreted in favor of the technological tools which played an important role in developing learners' independent learning skills which resulted in learners' increased performance.

Although the results showed significant difference in the action-oriented component only and slight difference in other components, this finding can be consistent with a number of studies that have demonstrated the contribution of blogging and podcasts to the various components of learner autonomy: affective and motivational, action-oriented, cognitive and metacognitive, and social. As the literature reviewed in this study suggests, blogging enriches learning experience bringing the learner from the knowledge based to deeper and higher levels of thinking (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003). When students use blogs, they navigate the English websites, read more articles online, and all this increases their knowledge of the language and builds their language capabilities (Campbell, 2004). Moreover, the selection of devices which combine listening and reading, listening and speaking, and listening and writing, help learners gradually develop their language learning skills in a motivating environment. (Mehring, 2005). The dimension of flexibility, offered by technology, allows language learners to gain more control over their own learning, thus becoming more independent learners (Flanagan & Calandra, 2005).

The hypothesis whether learner autonomy can be a predictor of learner performance has been researched by a few studies (Dafei's, 2007; Hashemian & Soureshjani, 2011; Lowe, 2009; Ng et al, 2011; Myartawan, Latief, Suharmanto, 2013), which reported significant positive relationship. Similarly, this study attempted to find out the relationship between these two constructs. The analysis of the r-test revealed a positive, but statistically not significant correlation, suggesting the more developed autonomous abilities, the better performance results.

Although this finding appears to support the findings of the above mentioned studies, it is far from being conclusive because of the small sample size and awaits further research replications.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

It is to be hoped that the findings of this study have offered language educators some insights and pedagogical implications concerning the role of new educational technology in language learning and some guidance on how to incorporate these tools in language instruction. Teachers should not downplay the role of these tools, but use them as an additional means of developing learners' autonomy and language skills, as a means of bridging the classroom knowledge with the outside real world. First, teachers should raise their awareness of the benefits of the new technology whose key elements to language learning are awareness raising, reflection, and learner empowerment. Teachers should also help their students develop strategies of employing the new technological tools. They should create opportunity for learners to use the internet-based resources, especially blogs and podcasts, to make learning more active, more motivating, and more learner-centered, and should encourage them to adopt autonomous learning skills which will guarantee lifelong learning.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section will highlight the main findings of the study. The section sections will report the limitations of the study and the third section will give suggestions for further studies.

6.1 Concluding Remarks

The age of technology has placed a premium on the role of the language learner who is assumed to take greater responsibility for his or her own learning. Therefore, the development of autonomous learning skills, which is related to effective language learning, has become the goal of today's education. This study showed that traditional face-to-face teaching alone cannot provide the opportunity for the learner to take on this role, but being supplemented with the new instructional tools offered by technology, it can achieve the above mentioned goal. Because technology-based approaches to language learning are characterized by the new dimensions of integration of multiple media, interactivity, flexibility of use, and connectivity, they create a fruitful platform for learners to experience and gain the qualities inherent in learner autonomy. The exploration of the effects of these new dimensions by the current study revealed that the students who supplemented their in-class learning with the technology-based language learning tools demonstrated better performance on post-tests, improved their both productive and receptive skills, particularly listening and writing abilities. Moreover, these tools enabled the learners to take more control over their own learning thus empowering them with action-oriented independent learning skills, as measured by the LAP Form. These skills showed positive relationship with the learning outcome giving us more ground to consider learner autonomy as a predictor of learner performance.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations of the study should be noted. First, the study ran a small-scaled investigation which restricted the amount of the data for the analysis; therefore drawing too general conclusions might not be appropriate. A bigger sample size of the participants would add more validity to the research results. Also, given the time constraints, the investigation only lasted two months, which prevented me from increasing the amount of data. The results related to the relationship between learner autonomy and learning outcome could have been more enlightening if the duration of the treatment had been longer. This would allow for more instruction and more observation, hence more generalizability of the findings.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

This study included two groups – one treatment group which was trained to use blogging and podcasts as new instructional tools, and one control group which did not receive this treatment. In further studies, the number of participants should be increased to run a larger-scale investigation and raise the generalizability of the findings. Also, more longitudinal research could be conducted to obtain more data and add more validation to the research outcome. Teacher-interviews and student-interviews can serve as two other valuable sources for receiving more detailed information about the advantages and challenges of implementing technological tools in teaching and learning. This way, it will be possible to identify the areas which need special attention in technology-based learning.

Another suggestion can be to explore the contribution of other technological tools to the learner autonomy and learning outcome and draw comparisons between their levels of effectiveness in light of the components of learner autonomy. This would provide more insight into where and how each tool could be applied in specific contexts more appropriately. It could

also be suggested that future research conduct class observations which would clarify what methods and techniques are necessary in a specific context for a specific group of learners to enable them to become effective learners.

This project is promising in the sense that it gives insights into the importance of new technological tools suggesting that exposure to them both in the classroom and outside it should be a worthy objective of language instruction if we pursue the development of independent learning skills. The study can also be useful in conducting such future research and add to the validation of the literature on both learner autonomy and educational technology.

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Achievement Test

Name:_____

Date: _____

Part 1: READING

1. **Read the title of the newspaper article. What do you think it means? Check (√) one.**

_____ 1. He is going to change his name.

_____ 2. He is going to move to another country.

_____ 3. He is going to become a professional soccer player.

_____ 4. He is going to go to college.

2. **Read the article.**

Ready Freddy?

In a few days he will be a professional soccer player. Freddy Adu will earn about $500,000 per year. And Nike will pay him about $1 million to wear their shoes and clothes. That is more than most other U.S. professional soccer players earn today. But right now, Adu needs to finish high school.

Freddy Adu is 14 years old, and he attends Edison Academic Center. Edison is a school for students with special talents in sports or art. Many of them, like Adu, graduate from high school early. At Edison, Adu learns about Math, English, history, and, of course, soccer. Adu and the other students also learn how live in the spotlight.

There is a whole team of teachers and coaches helping Adu to prepare for the professional world. They gave him a job at a preschool. They say that taking care of three-year-olds will teach Adu to be responsible. He will need to be responsible in the difficult world of professional sports. His coaches talk to him about the difficulties of being famous. For

example, sometimes the media say unkind or untrue things about athletes. "People will say that Adu is not mature, they will talk about his family. They will say he makes too much money," says one of Adu's coaches. The coaches help Adu understand that he cannot get angry about these comments.

At Edison, Adu also gets support from older professional athletes, like Roy Williams from the Dallas Cowboys. Williams told Adu, "Go out and have fun, but take care of yourself."Williams also told him to be careful. He said that people – even your family and friends – can sometimes change when you have a lot of money. "Freddy listens. He asks questions," Williams said.

In a few days, life will change forever for Adu. He will graduate from Edison and enter the world of professional soccer. The teachers at Edison think that 14-year-old Adu is mature enough to play pro soccer. But there is no test for maturity at school. The real test will begin after he graduates.

READ FOR MAIN IDEAS
Check (√) the answer that includes the most important points in the article.

_____ 1. Freddy's teachers and coaches give him advice about the difficulties of being a pro athlete. For example, professional athletes' families sometimes want to take their money.

_____ 2. Freddy Adu will soon become a pro soccer player. He is young, so his teachers and coaches want to prepare him for the professional world. No one thinks he is mature enough.

_____ 3. Freddy Adu is young. But his teachers and coaches are helping him become mature very fast. They are not worried about him going to the professional soccer world.

READ FOR DETAILS
Circle the best answer to complete each statement.

1. Fressy Adu will earn _____ older professional athletes.
   a. less than
   b. the same as
   c. more than

2. Edison is a school for _____.
   a. professional soccer players
   b. soccer and tennis coaches
   c. talented young athletes

3. One difficulty for professional athletes is _____.
   a. taking care of small children
   b. being in the spotlight
   c. taking tests

4. The coaches at Edison are helping Adu learn to _____.
   a. deal with people's comments
   b. earn a lot of money
   c. take care of his family

5. The coaches and teachers at Edison think that Adu is _____.
   a. too young to play professional soccer
   b. strong enough to play for the Dallas Cowboys
   c. ready to become a professional athlete.

MAKE INFERENCES

Choose what is most important for each person (or group of people).

People	What is most important?
_____ 1. Freddy Adu _____ 2. Edison teachers _____ 3. Edison coaches _____ 4. Roy Williams _____ 5. Nike _____ 6. The media	a. to teach Adu about math and other school subjects b. to use Adu to earn money c. to help Adu to understand money d. to play soccer e. to give good advice on playing soccer f. to tell everyone if Freddy is not mature

Part 2: LISTENING ONE

Listen to the beginning of the short radio show called The Sports File.
Today's show is about soccer. What do you think you will hear on the show? Check (√) the item.

_____ voices of people who love soccer
_____ Americans talking about baseball
_____ why soccer is popular
_____ how to become a professional soccer player.

LISTEN FOR MAIN IDEAS

Listen to the radio show. Circle the correct answer.

1. The main question that Jane Tuttle wants to answer is _____.
   a. Do Americans love soccer?
   b. Why are so many people watching soccer at Paolinho's?
   c. Why do people from most countries love soccer?

2. The three people she talked to are all _____.
   a. soccer fans from around the world.
   b. sports fans from the U.S.
   c. soccer players on U.S. teams

LISTEN FOR DETAILS

Check (√) two correct details about each person on The Sports File.

1. Gilberto

_____ a. is Brazilian.

_____ b. doesn't understand Jane's question.

_____ c. thinks soccer is a beautiful part of life.

_____ d. thinks soccer matches need music

2. Jose

_____ a. is Mexican.

_____ b. thinks most soccer players speak English.

_____ c. thinks soccer brings people together.

_____ d. thinks there are two countries in the world.

3. Anders

_____ a. is Norwegian.

_____ b. thinks people in the U.S don't understand soccer.

_____ c. thinks American football is hard to understand.

_____ d. says you need to play well to learn soccer.

4. Jane

_____ a. is a reporter for The Sports File.

_____ b. talked to Gilberto, Jose, and Anders by phone.

_____ c. says that she dislikes soccer.

_____ d. wants to help people in the U.S. understand soccer.

MAKE INFERENCES

Listen to the excerpts from Listening One. Choose the best answer to each question.

Excerpt One

1. Why does Jane go to a pizza restaurant to learn about soccer?
   a. She is hungry for pizza.
   b. Soccer fans will be there to watch the World Cup.
   c. Soccer players like to go there after their games.

Excerpt Two

3. Why does Jose say that there are only two countries?
   a. People play soccer in only two countries.
   b. Soccer is big in all countries except the United States.
   c. Only one country loves soccer.

Part 2: LISTENING TWO

Listen to the beginning of a radio call-in show. Check (√) the best prediction of what the listening is about.

_____ a. how many people play soccer in the world

_____ b. what countries have a national sport

_____ c. why people around the world watch sports

_____ d. what the national sports around the world are

Now listen to the entire radio show. Check (√) the correct answer.

1. People around the world like

   _____ a. basketball

   _____ b. soccer

   _____ c. baseball

   _____ d. rugby

2. The man from England

   _____ a. likes baseball

   _____ b. likes rugby

   _____ c. plays soccer

   _____ d. plays rugby

3. The host most likely thinks

   _____ a. rugby should not be the national sport of England

   _____ b. James should go to more rugby matches

   _____ c. national sports are important

   _____ d. watching sports id very expensive

4. The French man says that

   _____ a. all French children can play soccer

   _____ b. all French people understand baseball

   _____ c. soccer is the perfect sport

   _____ d. soccer is the universal sport

5. The woman from Spain most likely

   _____ a. thinks the French have the perfect soccer team

   _____ b. thinks bullfighting is cruel

   _____ c. does not like bullfighting very much

   _____ d. does not usually agree with the French

6. The woman from Spain thinks

   _____ a. soccer is a good sport for children

   _____ b. people should understand the beauty of soccer

   _____ c. baseball is an exciting sport

   _____ d. soccer is the national sport of Spain

Part 3: READING AND WRITING

1. **Read the interview with Bram Tarek.**

Bram Tarek: Young Basketball Star Says "No" to the Pros

Interview by Nicola Quinn

You probably don't know Bram Tarek – not yet. But basketball coaches know him, and they think he has a lot of talent. He is a college basketball star. At 18 years old and after graduating from high school, Bram Tarek is now old enough to join a professional basketball team, but the NBA will have to wait. Tarek wants to graduate from college first.

NQ: Bram, everyone expected you to join the NBA this year. Why did you decide to finish college first?

BT: Well, I planned to join the NBA as soon as I was old enough. But then I met older basketball players. They said I should stay in college.

NQ: Who did you talk to?

BT: Several basketball players. But Kareem Abdul-Jabbar probably helped me the most. He is my biggest basketball hero. He's the greatest. But in his day, all players had to go to college before joining the NBA.

Today it's different. He said college helped the players to become more mature – intellectually and physically.

NQ: But what about the money? How can you say "no" to all that money?

BT: Oh, that was really hard! On the wall in my bedroom, I had photos of all the beautiful cars I wanted to buy!

NQ: So, what happened?

BT: Kareem helped a lot. He really taught me that money is not #1. The important things in life are family, education, and health. And I still have a lot to learn.

NQ: What exactly do you need to learn?

BT: I need to learn more about working with other people – especially with people I don't agree with. I want to be a leader like Kareem. Thirty years from now, I want people to say "Bram Tarek was – or is – a great athlete, a great leader, and a good person," not "Bram Tarek was a great athlete with a lot of expensive cars when he was 18."

2. **Write your reflection about the challenges and benefits of being a pro athlete.**

Part 4: LISTENING AND WRITING

    Listen to the conversation about sport. Take notes. Then use your notes to write what the conversation is about.

Achievement Test

Name:_____

Date: _____

Part 1: READING

1. **Read the letter to the editor of a magazine.**

The Farming Life for Me

1. In the September 2007 issue of your magazine, you wrote that many kids wanted to live in the city. In fact, I want to explain exactly why I think it's better to grow up on a farm than to grow up in the city.

2. First, farm kinds are too busy with farm work to get into trouble with drugs and alcohol like a lot of city kinds do. We usually go home right after school to work on the farm and help our parents. We have to milk the cows, feed all the animals, drive the tractor in the fields, fix fences, help with watering the crops or any other kind of farm work. All these things keep us busy and out of trouble.

3. Second, farm kinds understand at an early age what's really important in life. We help our parents when animals are born, and we take care of these animals until they die. I remember getting to pull my first lamb when I was six. Watching the birth of an animal always makes me feel warm and happy. At the same time, I know why we raise these animals. They are going to be hamburgers and fried chicken. Like me, most farm kids learn a lot about life and death on the farm. That gives us an understanding of human life and death that city kids don't have.

4. In addition, farm kids have a much better understanding of nature then many city kids do. We work outside all year. We almost always get to watch the sunrise. We understand how heat or wind or snow can change our crops. We also understand how much water different crops need at different times of year. We can out our hands in the soil and know how much water it needs. We know how to choose the best trees in our woods to cut down. Those are just a few of the many outdoor skills that farm kids learn young.

5. Finally, farm kids have a greater sense of responsibility than most city kids. We know that crops and animals are totally dependent on us. We know that they can die if we don't do our work. O learner at an early age to feed and water the animals on time and to water the crops regularly. Sometimes I'm tired or sick, or it's freezing cold or blowing snow. Even then, I know that I have to do these things because the animals, the crops, and my family depend on me.

6. For all these reasons, I think it is better to grow up on a farm than in the city. I am responsible, hardworking, and thoughtful young person my parents and community can be proud of.

READ FOR MAIN IDEAS

1. Check (√) the sentence that best describes Zachary's main idea in Reading one.

_____ 1. Zachary believes that growing on farm is great for children.

_____ 2. Zachary explains why he thinks all children should grow up on farms.

_____ 3. Zachary explains why he thinks it's great to grow up on a farm instead of in the city.

2. Zachary Gives four main reasons to support his idea. Choose the sentences that best express these four reasons. Label them 1-4 as they appear in the reading.

_____ a. Farm children understand more about life and death than city kids.

_____ b. Watching the births of animals is good for farm children.

_____ c. Farm children understand soil better than city kids.

_____ d. Farm children are too busy doing farm work to get into trouble.

_____ e. Farm children learn to fix fences and drive tractors.

_____ f. Farm children understand more about nature than city kids.

_____ g. Farm children have a greater sense of responsibility than city kids.

_____ h. farm children are more comfortable being outside than city children.

READ FOR DETAILS

Read each statement. Part of the statement is incorrect; correct it. Then write the number of the paragraph in the reading where you found the information.

		Paragraph
a.	Farm kids have to do a lot of work on the farm such as milking the cows, watering the crops, and selling vegetables.	_____
b.	I feed and water the animals every day, and I water the crops every once in a while.	_____
c.	We know how to choose the worst trees in our woods to cut down.	_____
d.	At my house there is never enough work to do after school.	_____
e.	I remember the first time I saw a lamb born on the farm.	_____
f.	I'm comfortable seeing life and death on the farm.	_____

Part 2: LISTENING ONE

Listen to a radio interview about new-urbanism communities. Write T (true) or F (false).

_____ 1. In Kentville, the housing and businesses are far from each other.

_____ 2. Kentville is not a friendly place.

_____ 3. People in Kentville want to walk home.

_____ 4. The sidewalks are wide.

_____ 5. There are special parking lots for cars.

_____ 6. The garages are in front of the houses.

_____ 7. The houses are built close together.

_____ 8. The houses are close to the street and have front porches.

_____ 9. Elizabeth Jones thinks people will stay in their houses or in their backyards.

_____ 10. Elizabeth Jones wanted to build a community where different kinds of people would live together and get to know each other.

Part 2: LISTENING TWO

Listen to the radio show host taking calls from the listening audience. The callers are discussing their opinions about Kentville. Listen and circle the best answer to complete each statement.

1. The first caller _____. a. doesn't live in Kentville. b. doesn't like living in Kentville. c. thinks Kentville is a great place to live.	4. The second caller thinks a sense of community _____. a. is not important b. is easy to create in Kentville c. takes time to build
2. The first caller thinks there isn't enough public transportation _____. a. in Kentville. b. doesn't like living in Kentville. c. thinks Kentville is a great place to live.	5. The third caller lives _____. a. in a city b. in Kentville. c. in a suburb
3. The second caller grew up _____ a. in Kentvil b. between Kentville and other places c. in other suburbs	6. The third caller thinks Kentville is_____. a. crowded b. boring c. exciting

Part 3: READING AND WRITING

1. **Read the article about a farm family in North Dakota who recently moved to the city.**

Leaving the Farm

Scott Halley was a farmer … until a year ago. But the farm kept losing money. "You look at the numbers at the end of the pencil," said Mr. Halley, 44, "and you realize it's time to try something different."

With a heavy heart but a clear head, Mr. Halley became one of the thousands of American farmers who sell their land each year. What surprised Mr. Halley and others is that the move to the city was so easy. The farmers are finding jobs and their families are enjoying the city way of life.

Mr. Halley found a good job working as a scientist at North Dakota State University. His salary is now twice what it was when he was a farmer.

But even for those farmers who find good jobs, there is a price to pay in leaving farming.

"It's not just about making money but about the other rewards that farming can bring…working land your parent's parents worked, spending your days in nature, caring for animals," said Dr. Michael Rosmann, a farmer and psychologist who helps farmers. "For most of them, that grieving lasts for the rest of their lives. To make the decision to quit farming, to do what's best for the family, takes an awful lot of courage."

Mr. Halley feels the pull of the land every day. Once a week, he drives eight hours to work a small piece of his old farm, just to keep his connection to the land.

It was hard to leave, but Mr. Halley knows he did the right thing. For most families that leave the land, salary goes up and the stress from having little money goes down. Both parents and children are happier.

Halley's children love living in the city. "The kids don't want to go back now," said Mr. Halley. "The telephone never stops ringing."

Megan Halle, 13, spoke with excitement about her new school. She especially likes art and computer technology. "Back on the farm," she said, "the old phone system took five minutes or more just to dial up the Internet."

"It's cool here," said Megan. She loves going to the nearby mall to shop for new clothes and get the latest CDs of her favorite group. The closest store to the Halley's farm was a 10-mile drive.

Before moving to the city, Megan worried about getting along with city kids. "The boys here aren't any different than back in the country," she said. "There's just a lot more of them."

2. **Now answer the questions.**
   1. Why does Mr. Halley drive back to his old farm once a week?

   2. Is it easy for farmers to decide to leave farming and move to the city?

   3. Are the Halleys happy they decided to sell the farm?

3. **Which would you prefer for your family – the city life of the country life? Write your reflection about this.**

Part 4: LISTENING AND WRITING

    Listen to a news report about urban communities. Take notes. Then use your notes to write what the material is about.

APPENDIX C

LEARNER AUTONOMY PROFILE (LAP) FORM

Instructions: Please read each question and check (√) the boxes that apply to you. Your score can be any number on the scale from 1 to 5. A score of 1 means you will never perform the behavior. A score of 5 means you will always perform the behavior.

Questions	Never 1	Seldom 2	Some times 3	Often 4	Always 5
Affective and motivational component					
1. I want to do more individual work to achieve better results					
2. I want to participate in learning more difficult things					
3. I want to improve independent language learning skills					
4. I can motivate myself in a way that works for me					
5. I can control my feeling when I am learning					
Action-oriented component					
6. I can use a variety of materials and resources					
7. I can choose different methods and strategies					
8. I can choose to learn something when I am out of class					
9. I can study independently to improve my listening comprehension					
10. I can practice my listening skills outside the classroom through podcasts					
11. I can select and evaluate listening materials					
12. I can get exposed to native speakers regularly through podcasts					
13. I can control my learning by listening and pausing at will					
14. I can study independently to improve my reading comprehension					
15. I can practice my reading skills outside the classroom through blogging					
16. I can select and evaluate reading materials					

17. I can read more articles online					
18. I can participate in blogs independently to improve my reading and writing skills					
19. I can manage my learning independently					
Cognitive and metacognitive component					
20. I can analyze my own needs					
21. I can evaluate my own language competencies					
22. I can evaluate materials and resources for language learning					
23. I can make decisions about selecting materials for my learning					
24. I can reflect on materials and resources which I have used					
25. I am aware of my personal growth as a language learner					
26. I value learning that I do on my own					
Social component					
27. I can learn with and from others					
28. I can participate in out-of-class interactions, like blogging, to make my learning better					