

Language Learning in Light of Technology-based Extramural English: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

This qualitative study is intended to track the trajectory of two highly proficient EFL learners' experiences with language learning through technology-based extramural English (EE). In so doing, it sought to gain insights into technology roles in mediating learners' ability to achieve high proficiency levels in the English language. To this end, the study used narrative inquiry as the main approach, drawing upon different sources, including interviews, diaries, and WhatsApp texting to collect the desired data. In this study, the participants revealed how technology could provide EFL learners with an excellent opportunity to develop their oral language abilities, particularly speaking and listening. Additionally, they demonstrated that technology has great potential and advantages for enhancing EFL learners' vocabulary and grammar. An analysis of the narratives also revealed that technology could positively affect their affection and psychological state, e. g. boosting their self-confidence and inspiring them to pursue language learning with greater motivation.

Keywords: extramural English (EE), language learning, narrative inquiry, EFL, technology.

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Introduction

Technology has advanced over the past three decades, presenting new possibilities for theory, research, practice integration, language learning, and instruction (White et al., 2020). Research concerning the use of technology for language learning has taken many different directions, from how students and instructors engage with digital tools to how these technologies may affect language acquisition, literacy development, and cultural learning both within and beyond the classroom (Hellmich, 2019). Significantly, the characteristics of many technologically mediated language learning contexts allow for investigating elements of second language learning that are not easily available to researchers in face-to-face settings (White et al., 2020).

Young EFL learners are using English for digital communication outside of the classroom more and more as a result of technology advancements and their improved L2 learning opportunities (Reinders & Benson, 2017). Extramural English is a term that Sundqvist (2009) employed to refer to any kind of English-related activity that exposes pupils to the language outside of the classroom. Outside-of-class learning is crucial for keeping students interested in learning a language because it provides opportunities for real-world engagement with and usage of the language (Benson, 2011; Richards, 2015). Researchers have started examining whether these extramural English activities (or learner-initiated English-mediated activities in out-of-class situations) are connected with improving EFL learners' language acquisition skills in response to this changing environment. Extramural English activities have been positively linked to language learning gains and positive affective outcomes. This is similar to the construction, exploration, and achievement of different identities via creative modes of self-expression in various online communities. (Botero et al., 2019; Cole & Vanderplank, 2016; Lai et al., 2015; Thorne et al., 2015). Additionally, foreign language learners consider independent outside-of-class study supplementary to in-class learning while performing a fundamentally distinct function (Lai, 2015; Lai et al., 2017; Richards, 2015). Recent studies have revealed that disparities in the English language learners may be revealed in non-English-speaking European nations through extramural English exposure (Leona et al., 2021). Many studies (De Wilde et al., 2019; De Wolf et al., 2017; Peters, 2018) have found that YELLS may function well in

English even before receiving formal English teaching in school. There is not enough research delving into highly successful EFL learners' path to proficiency in light of technology drawing on narrative research in general and learners' stories in particular. Utilizing narrative inquiry methodology in the form of life history stories (Murray, 2014) of English as foreign language (EFL) learners has the potential to provide insights into the role technology might have in mediating them throughout the processes of developing and enhancing their EFL proficiency.

Given the current research gap, this study aims to present the findings of a narrative inquiry study that entails language learning stories of adult Iranian (EFL) learners who have learned English and reached high proficiency levels without living or studying abroad. Learners describe their extramural activities to learn the language in these anecdotes to gain important insights into the technology's role in their language development. The researchers use these insights to demonstrate the type of information that narrative inquiry research may give language educators and how that information can be utilized to direct pedagogical practice on an effective road (Murray, 2014).

Review of Literature

Extramural English Learning

Extramural learning encompasses naturalistic learning, self-instruction, and self-directed naturalistic learning in any English learning that takes place outside of the classroom (Benson, 2011). Playing video games, watching blogs or vlogs, listening to music, watching TV shows or movies, reading newspapers and magazines, and books, browsing English-language websites, conversing, writing, listening, and interacting with others in person or online are some of the extramural activities listed by Sundqvist and Sylvé (2016).

More research is needed to ascertain the impacts of extramural English activities on English proficiency. It is crucial to comprehend the implications of extramural English learning (Svensson, 2018). This is because extramural English activities may have a higher influence on English proficiency than English education in schools due to the number of hours students spend engaging in these activities (Svensson, 2018).

Researchers believe that extramural language learning is similar to the concept of outside-of-class language learning (Benson, 2011), which refers to language learning activities that learners engage in on their initiative out of interest and that do not relate directly to educational institutions (Sundqvist & Sylve'n, 2019). Second language learners participate in various out-of-classroom learning activities, which is a component of the extramural English learning idea. Several studies have demonstrated that language learners actively use the language outside the classroom (Lai & Gu, 2011). Moreover, language learners in K–12 and higher education actively engage in independent learning outside the classroom (Cole & Vanderplank, 2016; Sockett, 2014; Sundqvist & Sylve'n, 2016). Green Sefton (2018) advised teachers to actively broaden their horizons in terms of their learning and investigate the wider learning environment. He adds that as we work to improve the educational system more broadly, learners and learning outside of the classroom environment need to be given major improvement and understood properly.

Technology and Extramural English

The study of language learning using technology has gained popularity recently (Tu et al., 2020; Zhang & Zou, 2020; Zou et al., 2018). Recent studies have examined L2 learners' informal English learning through technology outside of institutional settings due to technological improvement and the resulting increase in L2 affordance and possibilities outside the classroom (Lai, 2017; Reinders & Benson, 2017; Richards, 2015). The focus of CALL research has broadened to include a variety of digital tools (such as cell phones and desktop computers) and digital resources (such as online games, fan fiction, video tutorials, Web applications, and social media) to study L2 (Lee, 2019)). Additionally, it is now simpler for students to use other languages daily, thanks to social media and the Internet. Students can also develop their digital competence through using computers, the Internet, and online communication (Chen et al., 2018; Lekka, 2014).

The informal digital learning of English (Sockett, 2014), informal online learning of English (Sundqvist & Sylve'n, 2016), out-of-class English learning (Lai et al., 2015), and extramural English are some of the terms used to describe the phenomenon of L2 learning in the extramural context in the CALL literature, which is still in its early stages (Lee, 2017). According to Richards (2015), several factors,

such as the accessibility of the English language materials, influence how much and what sort of extramural English exposure impacts the English language learners' capacity to communicate in English. As an illustration, viewing television is extremely accessible and motivating, and the input is multimodal (including both oral and visual) (Leona et al., 2021).

A growing body of studies examining the technology tools language learners utilize outside the classroom has produced some significant findings (S; Steel & Levy, 2013; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). First, language learners routinely use various technological resources, with the platforms and programs created especially for language learning being the most well-liked. For instance, 587 Australian university undergraduates learning a range of foreign languages were surveyed by Steel and Levy (2013). Students discovered that they valued discipline-specific technology, such as online dictionaries and conjugation websites, for its benefits in supporting the fundamentals of language learning and utilized these resources most frequently. Over half said they learned languages via YouTube, smartphone apps, social networking websites, and online movies. Comparable results were obtained by Eksî and Aydin (2013) when learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Turkey. They discovered that dictionaries and vocabulary study tools were among the most commonly utilized technical resources after conversing with 177 first-year university EFL learners. Additionally, these students often used YouTube for movies, TV series, music, and videos. Second, language learners utilize receptive technology the most in K-12 and higher education (Celik et al., 2012; Eksî & Aydin, 2013; Olmedo, 2015). Studies looking into the impact of extramural English entertainment media exposure have shown positive relationships with English vocabulary knowledge, reading and listening comprehension, and use of Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (De Wilde et al., 2019; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012). These studies included those that looked at the role of entertainment media, such as listening to music, watching TV shows, or playing (multiplayer) digital games (De Wilde et al., 2019).

Additionally, it has been discovered that technology use outside of the language classroom significantly impacts language learning. For instance, it has been discovered that mobile technologies, especially apps like Duolingo, can make it easier to learn a language (Loewen et al., 2019). Wang and Chen (2019) concluded

that learning English on YouTube is more flexible, entertaining, and engaging than formal learning in the classroom when they studied EFL university students who had experience viewing YouTubers' English-teaching videos. In terms of learning processes, technology has given students the ability to take charge of their education, feel inspired to pursue their educational goals and prepare for their future careers. Technology has encouraged students to become problem solvers, critical thinkers, collaborators, and innovators. Moreover, technology can assist students in pursuing their long-term learning goals (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018).

All these studies suggest that technology holds great potential for second language learning, specifically in out-of-class environments. Moreover, some studies have highlighted technology's significant role in contributing to learners' positive emotions and attitudes while utilizing technological tools for language learning in such environments (e.g., Licorish et al., 2018). However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, there seems to be a shortage of studies delving into the journey EFL learners take to learn the English language in general and the basic language skills in particular, drawing on narrative inquiry. Similarly, none of these studies have identified their participants' path to proficiency in light of extramural English activities in their language learning narratives. As a result, this study employed narrative inquiry to track the trajectory of two highly successful EFL learners' proficiency development and develop insights concerning technology's role in language learning in an Iranian context.

Methodology

Design of the Study

In recent years, there has been an interest in narrative research within the second language (L2) learning and teaching realm, roughly described as research in which tales play a significant role in understanding people's lives (Benson, 2014; Vasquez, 2011). Although case studies and diary studies have been utilized in second language acquisition for a while, the employment of life history research approaches in language learning is a relatively new (Murray, 2014).

Murray (2009) defines narrative inquiry as a qualitative research strategy that employs storytelling to offer a longitudinal account of phenomena. It explores participants' personal experiences and feelings, allowing them to reflect on their

actual experiences. This method is considered the most suitable qualitative technique for obtaining detailed descriptions of individual life experiences (Ary et al., 2019).

As individual performance is more enlightening than collective performance thanks to the unique growth route (Seliger & Shohamy, 2000), the present study utilizes two participants as individual cases through a longitudinal study to investigate how their personal experiences lead to second language development. In so doing, the narrative inquiry approach was deemed appropriate to be used to offer deeper insights into the instances of two Iranian EFL learners. A narrative inquiry was used to gather comprehensive data and fully understand the elements that lead EFL learners to attain high levels of proficiency in English as a foreign language (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

Participants

According to Creswell's (2007) recommendation, researchers adopting a narrative inquiry approach should “focus on a single individual (or two or three individuals)”(p. 214). Building on this, two proficient English language users, selected based on purposive sampling procedures, were invited to participate in this study. Both participants (one male and one female) were from Eslam Abad Gharb, Kermanshah, Iran. They had been involved in learning English for seven years and were BA undergraduate students. The male participant was 21 years old, and the female participant was 20 years old. Based on their declaration, the male and female individuals had about ten years of experience in extramural English activities afforded through technology. They were recruited since they both possessed a high level of proficiency in the English language. As an indication of their being highly proficient language learners, they both had already completed the C1 course with a high grade (Based on CEFR). They started learning English when they were 12 and were considered highly successful language learners. The rationale behind using two participants for the current study was to provide rich and detailed data (Dörnyei, 2007) regarding the role of technology in developing the learners' EFL proficiency. In line with the ethical issues in research (Ary et al., 2019), from the very beginning, the study's purpose and procedures were explained to the participants, and their consent to participate in the study was sought and obtained. Moreover, two pseudonyms (Arash and Zahra) were used throughout the study to guarantee the

participants' anonymity.

Data Collection Procedure

Interviews are the primary method for collecting narrative data, providing researchers with participants' subjective experiences through dialogue (Isbell et al., 2017). However, adopts a variety of data sources, including diaries, journals, open-ended questionnaires, and e-mail exchanges (Vasquez, 2011). This study gathered data from various sources, including semi-structured exploratory interviews (Oppenheim, 1992), WhatsApp exchanges, and diaries. An initial list of interview questions was created based on existing literature to encourage participants to share their stories about achieving high English language proficiency. The second researcher evaluated the content and face validity of these semi-structured items.

At the study's outset, a session was held to create a comfortable atmosphere for participants and explain the study's purpose and procedures, accentuating voluntary participation and anonymity. The semi-structured interviews, conducted face-to-face after obtaining informed consent, allowed for flexibility in questioning (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Questions focused on participants' English learning experiences and the role of technology. The researcher occasionally used participants' mother tongues to prevent communication issues and maintained regular contact through WhatsApp for clarification on interview topics. Participants were also asked to keep diaries reflecting on their experiences with technology to enhance understanding of their language learning processes over time (Dörnyei, 2007).

After transcribing the narratives, the researcher sent the final stories to participants for their feedback and communicated frequently via WhatsApp to address any questions about the data. The semi-structured interview questions guided the development of diaries and follow-up exchanges to ensure data collection validity and reliability. Participants were informed that the interview questions were merely a guide, encouraging them to note their extramural experiences as they saw fit. The WhatsApp discussions also aligned with the semi-structured questions, with follow-up inquiries based on initial responses. To ensure the reliability of the interview questions, they were developed from a thorough literature review on extramural English learning, with additional expert validation from the second researcher regarding their alignment with relevant theoretical and empirical

literature.

Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was conducted to analyze the data for narrative construction. Thematic analysis lends order and meaning to the data by categorizing participants' descriptions (Dörnyei, 2007). As a result of this process, dominant and generative patterns contained in the participants' descriptions were labeled and conceptualized. The first researcher transcribed interviews verbatim and reviewed them multiple times for a comprehensive understanding, engaging in an iterative analysis process (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). This led to the identification of major themes regarding the affordances and challenges of technology in developing EFL proficiency. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the second researcher reviewed the identified themes and highlighted the codes. In cases of disagreement about the final themes, discussions were held to reach a consensus. Finally, the participants' feedback and approval were sought for the final quotes reported throughout the manuscript to remove sensitive data. Additionally, the extracted themes were presented to the participants to ensure the appropriate data interpretation (Dörnyei, 2007).

Results and Discussion

Two overarching themes emerged from the participant's narratives about the relationship between technology and language learning: technology and the development of EFL proficiency and technology, benefits, and challenges in developing the English language learning. Each of these themes had related sub-themes covered in the following sections.

Technology and Second Language (L2) Proficiency Development

L2 learning often happens in a classroom, but when L2 is a global language like English, it occurs mostly outside the classroom (Olsson, 2011; Sylve'n & Sundqvist 2012). Since school children in Iran begin receiving the English language instruction when they join secondary school at the age of 13, Arash started learning English through technology when he was just eight years old before he ever learned the ABCs of learning the language. He maintained that early exposure to technology laid the foundation for his language learning.

The column of my language knowledge has been provided by technology.

(Interview, henceforth, I)

On the other hand, Zahra started to learn English via technology at the age of 14. Even though she initially watched the “Arrow” series primarily for enjoyment and not for other purposes, such as learning the English language, it captured her interest at the time. It gave her the inspiration to use technology for language learning. But later on, she found watching a movie useful and helpful for language learning.

Honestly, I didn't watch this movie because I wanted to learn English at first. Still, when I watched the movie, I found it interesting to learn some cool phrases, collocations, and idioms in the movie. (I)

The findings from earlier studies found that watching movies and drama series was a common activity among university EFL learners in Hong Kong, France, and even Japan (Lai et al., 2017; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010), could be used to explain Zhara's motivation to use technology, in this case, movies, to improve her English proficiency (Barbee, 2013).

It is interesting to note that, like Zahra, Arash watched "Arrows" as his first television program to improve and broaden his command of the English language, underscoring the value of particular television programs, films, and video games in aiding EFL learners in their L2 proficiency (Ebadi & Ahmadi, 2022).

This issue lends itself to a sub-theme concerned with using different technological tools to enhance their English language learning. According to Kukulska-Hulme et al. (2017), how people study and learn a second language has altered due to the growing use of mobile devices like smartphones and tablets (L2). In many situations, mobile technology extends learning outside the classroom, enabling students to make independent decisions about where, when, and how they study a second language (Reinders & Benson, 2017, as cited in Loewen et al., 2019). In this regard, Arash assigned a crucial role to smartphones and computers as tools that can significantly improve the English language proficiency. Moreover, he also referred to the affordances provided by these tools, such as gaining access to the internet, which are conducive to promoting language learning.

Smartphones and computers, and the most important one, the internet, are the most significant technology tools to improve our language skills. I have watched movies and listened to English music for over a decade. I also surf

the net sometimes to improve my language skills. (I)

He also maintained that thanks to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, Arash has been even more pushed and inclined towards technology, especially during quarantine, as it allowed for more time to occupy himself with different forms of technology, particularly his mobile device.

But my engagement with technology has increased since this damn virus came to the coronavirus. During quarantine time, my best friend was on my phone. Almost most of the stuff that I know about English in quarantine time owes to technology, my phone, and my proficiency in English, which is completely dependent on technology. (I)

Like Arash, Zahra considers her mobile device the major technology tool she frequently draws on to enrich and deepen her repertoire of the English language knowledge. Like Arash's description, the mobile device affords her other technological tools and platforms, which she can access via various channels, apps, etc., which is useful in developing her English proficiency. Moreover, she highlights the role of the Internet in enabling her to come up with and download beneficial materials, including Instagram pages related to the English language.

I use many technological tools on my cell phone to learn English. I use the internet to watch movies and music on Google. I use Telegram and have joined many channels to learn English phrases and expressions. I also have some PDFs and books for specific grammar. I also follow some Instagram pages which effectively teach English... I also have an application for irregular verbs the new irregular verbs we frequently hear. I also have an app to learn some important idioms and vocabulary. (Diary, henceforth D)

The comments made by Arash and Zahra as to the affordances provided by technology, especially smartphones, corroborate the findings of the study carried out by Ko (2019), who observed that learners were pleased with their smartphone experiences since it encouraged active learning and made them satisfied and engaged in utilizing their mobile devices for language learning.

More specifically, Arash referred to how technology has assisted him in developing and promoting his language skills, including listening, speaking, and writing. However, he maintained that technology does not seem to have been as effective in writing as speaking and listening skills. Therefore, for him, technology-

related affordances, particularly movies and music, have contributed significantly to the enhancement of these two oral skills.

Well... based on how I use technology, it couldn't help me much with writing. But it has been a helpful source in terms of listening and speaking. When you watch a movie, you can learn how to speak efficiently and effectively because speaking is not only about gathering a bunch of words together. It is about facial mimicry, gestures, and body language. In terms of listening, you can say that by listening to English music and movies and watching movies, your ears get used to English, and you become familiar with words and sentences even if you don't know the exact meaning of those words. (D)

Moreover, Arash talked about the advantages of affordances provided by technology in improving his practical knowledge of sub-skills, including grammar and pronunciation, and suggests deriving benefits from these resources through developing working grammatical knowledge on the part of EFL learners. Additionally, he highlighted the role played by the Internet in expanding the range of vocabulary.

Well... grammar is a little bit difficult. Still, nowadays, students need examples to know how the grammar exactly works and let me tell you, movies and music are full of examples, and about pronunciation. if you want to talk like a native speaker, you must learn the pronunciation and accent from the native speaker. You can find the native speaker on your phone because there is no native speaker in our region, so we have to ask our phone to find a native speaker, and there is no need to say no book or no other source is as rich as the internet about vocabulary. (D)

Interestingly enough, Arash revealed some strategies he considers useful and helpful in learning and practicing different aspects of vocabulary knowledge. In addition, he maintains that using technology in general, and mobile devices in particular, can improve access to the knowledge you have studied and learned by enabling one to transcend the limitations of place and time.

When I first start learning vocabulary, I jot down new words, collocations, and idioms I have heard in songs and movies on my phone. This is a double use of technology because if I wrote it down in a notebook, I might forget

the notebook on the street, but I always have my phone with me, so I can read it whenever I want. I also order podcasts on YouTube from the easiest to the hardest, and I watch one of them per day. (WhatsApp, henceforth W)

This provides evidence in support of the findings of the study conducted by Ebadi and Bashiri (2018), revealing positive attitudes toward utilizing smartphone applications which show a desirable effect on vocabulary learning on the part of EFL learners. Moreover, as mentioned by Arash, the educational benefits of smartphones are consistent with those of Wang et al. (2015) who demonstrated that utilizing an iPad App to learn English vocabulary is more effective than traditional approaches. Additionally, it was discovered in the research by Kukulska-Hulme et al. (2017) and Loewen et al. (2019) that technology, particularly smartphones and tablets, improved the process of learning a second or foreign language, owing to their ubiquitousness.

Similarly, Zahra maintained that technology had aided her in promoting her language skills, especially listening and speaking. Of course, initially, she found it hard to comprehend the language spoken by native speakers through movies. Nevertheless, over time, she could increase her ability to better understand it through more and more practice.

Technology was and is useful, especially for speaking and listening. At first, when I watched the movie, it was hard for me to understand what they said....but as time passed and as I watched more and more movies. I was able to understand what they said.. I became familiar with their accent.... and by that time, their accent became easier and easier for me. So I believe technology helped with my listening. (W)

According to what Zahra narrated, technology can provide learners with fruitful sources of input to boosting their language skills, especially listening and speaking. This reflects the advantageous role played by technology in Golonka et al.'s study (2014), in which it was revealed that learners' language knowledge and skills (e.g., speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar), as well as metacognitive and metalinguistic understanding, were improved thanks to technology.

Moreover, she specifically referred to the significant role YouTube has had to play in this regard because not only could she watch some movies via YouTube but also she exposed herself to useful instructions on learning and improving sub-

skills, including pronunciation and vocabulary, more effectively and appropriately. Zahra has found YouTube to be a good resource for learning new materials, and she has even become more accustomed to the cultural nuances of the language she has been studying.

All technological tools were good enough...but YouTube is a little different...I can watch movies on it and have online teachers from different countries with different accents.....So in this way, I can say I could kill two birds with one stone. I can also learn what they say and get used to their accents. I watch some videos Lucy has recorded...and when she teaches something, she uses the new words and anything she taught in a personal example. She expresses her experience, so it's a good chance to become familiar with the culture and how they use that word. (D)

Furthermore, quite interestingly, in line with the attempts made by Golonka et al. (2014) to elaborate on the popularity of technology for language learning by conducting their reviews on technology-enhanced language learning approving the enhanced language learning motivation, efficiency, and communication frequency on the part of the learners, Zahra also went on to expand on her experiences with YouTube about the affective and cognitive influences it has had on her which has been positive and encouraging.

I had different feelings while using YouTube, but generally, I feel good about YouTube because technology makes everything easier for me. And I think when you can communicate with different parts of the world, you feel motivated and confident, and it can affect your future, and you can be a person who can communicate easily with people.(D)

These learning narratives are consistent with other research by Wang and Chen (2019). They examined the independent language learning on YouTube of EFL university students and found that it was perceived as more flexible, enjoyable, and participatory than conventional classroom instruction.

Technology, Feelings, and Challenges

Another major theme that emerged from the participants' narratives was related to the feelings and challenges experienced through technology about learning the English language. Arash touched on his feelings while engaging in learning activities provided through technology.

I feel powerful when I use technology to learn a foreign language. Like I can learn anything through technology. There is a great amount of information on the Internet; it's fabulous, you know; it does not matter if you have a grammatical problem or a missed word in your mind. You can solve your language problems via technology anytime and anywhere, which relieves me. (I)

Similarly, Zahra also expressed her feelings toward using technology, which is encouraging.

I had different feelings while using technology, but generally, I feel good about technology because technology makes everything easier for me. (I)

Arash enumerated and complained about the limitations imposed upon the use of technology in his own country, including filtering issues and bad internet connection.

One challenge is about our country. First, most rich sources for learning English, like YouTube or Telegram, are filtered, and it costs us much time and energy to find suitable sources for learning English. Also, the internet connection in our country is very slow, if you want to download something, you have to do it one week before, and it's very annoying. (W)

Arash also mentioned that financial issues have adversely affected EFL learners using available technological tools.

Financial issues are another challenge. For instance, since most technology items are imported, we must pay for them in dollars, which is quite expensive in our country. Additionally, the cost of internet access is also very high and steadily rising here. (W)

Likewise, Zahra mentioned some of the challenges EFL learners face when using technology. For example, she referred to how technology posed difficulties for her while watching one of the instructional videos on YouTube.

In one of the online classes held by an English teacher on YouTube, my battery died, and I couldn't participate in the rest of the class. (W)

Moreover, she discussed the disruptions caused by her mobile phone not working properly when learning the English language and her bad Internet connection. This was also the case with Arash and how they adversely affected her feelings.

In one of the other sessions, my phone went blank, and I had to turn off my cellphone and turn it on again, and it took a little time, and I wasn't able to hear what the English teacher said, which caused me to feel anxious and even emotionally disturbed...And sometimes, I felt stressed, and it was because of the internet connection because I was worried about losing some valuable parts in my process of learning.(W)

Overall, the findings of this study about the extramural use of technology in the development of EFL proficiency substantiate the results of previous investigations (e.g., Ebadi & Ahmadi, 2022; Ebadi & Bashiri, 2018; Lee, 2019; Olsson, 2011; Svensson, 2018; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010) concerning the positive effectiveness of technology in improving EFL proficiency. Moreover, the results concerning the affective dimension of technology and the associated challenges corroborate the findings of previous studies (e.g., Botero, 2019; Cole & Vanderplank, 2016; Golonka et al., 2014; Lai et al., 2015; Thorne et al., 2015) concerning the importance of the psychological facet of language learning via technology and the inherent challenges in this regard. However, since narrative inquiries are case-dependent, such results can only be interpreted from the viewpoints of the study participants nested in their narratives.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature targeting technology for language learning purposes, particularly learning the English language outside of the classroom context using a narrative inquiry. The findings provide insights into how EFL learners could self-regulate their language learning experiences through technological tools, not being curbed by the restrictions of the classroom context. According to the findings, technology can provide golden opportunities for EFL learners to develop and improve oral language skills, especially listening and speaking. Moreover, technology holds good potential and benefits for expanding learners' range of vocabulary and grammar. In addition, based on Arash and Zahra's stories, technology could have a desirable effect on their affection and psychological state, including their increased self-confidence and motivation to pursue language learning with more enthusiasm. Finally, the findings revealed that technology is not subject to most constraints imposed by the realities of the classroom context except

for the challenges technological tools might present about the issues they raised in the stories. Based on the findings, EFL teachers can encourage EFL learners to participate in extramural English activities afforded by technology to improve their English. In so doing, the results of this study can raise EFL teachers' and learners' awareness regarding the associated challenges with using such affordances to reap the best benefits for developing learners' language proficiency.

The study's findings have several pedagogical implications for educators seeking to encourage EFL learners to enhance their language proficiency through technology. Technology can help students overcome limitations of traditional classroom learning, such as time constraints, limited resources, and teacher proficiency. By engaging in extracurricular English activities using technology, students can supplement their classroom learning and improve their language skills. Moreover, educators should help learners identify and utilize the various resources and affordances provided by technology. This includes tools that allow learners to extend learning beyond the classroom, personalize their learning, and engage in social interaction. Educators should also be aware of the challenges that EFL learners may face when using technology, such as filtering issues, slow internet connections, and financial constraints. By addressing these challenges, educators can help ensure that all learners have equitable access to technology and can benefit from its educational potential. Finally, technology allows learners to personalize their learning by choosing materials and activities that align with their interests and learning styles. Educators can encourage learners to explore different technological tools and resources to find those that best suit their individual needs. Future research could investigate the potential of technology to enhance social interaction skills among EFL learners. By fostering social interaction, technology can create opportunities for learners to practice their language skills and improve their overall language proficiency.

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