Effect of Telegram Application on Iranian Advanced EFL Learners' Vocabulary Knowledge and Attitude

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Abstract
The study intended to examine the effects of Telegram on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge and the attitude of them towards vocabulary learning. To this end, a group of 100 Iranian advanced EFL learners participated in an experimental design project. The participants were selected after they took the Oxford Quick Placement Test and they were divided into experimental and control groups. The participants of both groups had a three-week vocabulary instruction. The treatment was similar for both groups except for exercises done after the class. The participants in the experimental group were asked to fill out an attitudinal questionnaire after the treatment. Then, a vocabulary test was administered among the participants of both groups. Results of the independent-samples *t*-test run on the collected data indicated that participants of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group. The findings of the attitudinal questionnaire showed that the participants had positive attitude toward using Telegram. The conclusion drawn is that those in the experimental group were free in using the online group to interact with each other. Within this framework, learners in the experimental group indicated that they enjoyed this instruction as it was fun to embark on new technological learning methods.

Keywords: Attitude; EFL learners; Social Networking; Telegram; vocabulary learning

Introduction

Today we face a new generation of students, called 'the Net Generation', who have different characteristics from that of the previous ones (Worley, 2014). One of the differences is that the 'Net Generation' or 'Digital Natives' develop cognitively in a manner different from previous generations as a result of their living in the digital age (Rovai, Ponton, & Baker, 2008). Therefore, one of the challenges for this new generation will be in the area of using technology in education. As technologies are changing very fast, education faculty must be technologically prepared to meet students' needs. But unfortunately, many educational environments are not ready to accept new technologies and hence, meet students' needs (Wilson, 2004). The possible reason for that may lie on the fact that some teachers and administrators yet doubt about the advantages of using such technologies in their classrooms.

However, the growth in number and variety of information and communication technologies (ICT) as well as social media has made a major transformation in teaching and training process (Duggan, 2009). Much of such technologies and social media are publicly available and can be used by everyone. Thus, some researchers believe that integrating such technologies into language courses in combination with traditional teaching methods can increase

learners' motivation and thereby enhance the overall learning progress (Kromer & Kuntner, 2010). In other words, new technologies and social media may offer new opportunities to promote the quality and effectiveness of foreign language teaching (Isisag, 2012).

Using smartphones to learn language, called Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), has received especial attention from language learners and teachers. MALL for the first time was raised by Callan (1994) and from that time numerous works have focused on this issue, i.e. using mobile phones in EFL/ESL contexts (e.g., Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2006 for communicative activities; McCarty, 2005 to support learners' English studies; Belanger, 2005 for listening and speaking; Hsu, 2013 for learners' perception of mobile phones; O'Bryan, & Hegellieimer, 2007 for listening strategies; Stanley, 2006 for classroom-based learning; Zhang, et al., 2011, for vocabulary).

However, this issue is still the subject of controversy. On the one hand, some studies have supported MALL and have numerated positive outcomes for it (e.g., Stockwell, 2010; Zhang, Song, & Burston, 2011), and on the other hand, some other studies have suggested that it is not an effective technique, or at least it is not more effective than traditional classroom learning methods (e.g., Lu, 2008). Concerning this controversy, this study was an attempt to explore the effectiveness of Telegram application as a mobile-assisted language learning tool in vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners and to probe the attitude of these learners towards Telegram.

Literature Review

Amemiya et al., (2007) used vodcasts to check L1/L2 word lists among Japanese second language learners. Participants were given a five-second image, which was included spelling, pronunciation and the translation of the word in the first language as subtitles. Results of the vocabulary test two months after the experiment revealed that participants benefitted from the system, a PC application named MultiPod.

In another study, Cavus and Ibrahim (2009) exploited SMS to instruct 45 Northern Cyprus EFL learners. Every 30 minutes, different researchers sent messages by MOLT (an internet-based application) during a period of nine days that summed a total of 48 word pairs. In addition to learning the words, as the results of the tests indicated, participants showed positive attitudes towards the experiment and using mobile phones to learn technical words.

Obari et al. (2008) also investigated the application of mobile phones to present English words to Japanese EFL learners. Using their L1 equivalents in most of the three types of materials they presented, they showed that participants had the possibility to study target words and learn them on their mobile phone. Results of their posttest revealed significant improvement in participants' vocabulary scores.

Similarly, Basoglu and Akdemir (2010) studied 60 Turkish EFL learners' acquisition of vocabulary in an experimental group, whose participants used ECTACO (a mobile flashcard application), and a control group, whose participants used the printed flashcards. Using a pretest-posttest design, they showed that the mobile application produced better results than the printed flashcards. In another study, Azabdaftari and Mozaheb (2012) studied a group of 80 EFL learners' acquisition of vocabulary during a seven-week treatment. Participants used a mobile application and SMS exchanges. Results showed that participants of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group who used flashcards to learn the target vocabulary.

Demouy and Kukulska-Hulme (2010) explored effects of using mobile devices in a French language program with a special focus on listening and speaking. In their study, a group of 100 participants taking an undergraduate distance program (out of the original 1012 students who had registered) took part in a mobile language learning project. Online questionnaires were used, every week, as well as oral feedback, and communication through email. Results revealed

that participants had a positive attitude towards the experiences and recognized "the specific value of this type of practice as a stepping stone towards authentic communication" (p. 217).

Along similar lines, the result of the study by Tafazoli (2012) showed that, playing video games has positive effect on Iranian EFL vocabulary retention. Moreover, the positive attitudes of participants in this study is a proof that we can encourage students to attend more in language learning classes by providing them more computer tools and devices. The same study by Rezai and Pakbaz (2013) indicated that the EFL learners have a positive attitude towards learning via video games, which will help them utilize these games as a motivating agent in language learning schedule. The results of the research by Zamani and Mohammadzadeh (2013) suggested that most of students like online social networks and online social networks can be used to facilitate English language learning.

In addition to the above-mentioned studies, there are a number of studies which suggested effectiveness or non-effectiveness of using CALL or MALL. Some of the studies which found no significant effect are: Kang, 1995; Groot, 2000; Bowles, 2004; among others, while most studies on the topic gained positive results for learners instructed through MALL and CALL (e.g., Amemiya, Hasegawa, Kaneko, Miyakoda, & Tsukahara, 2007; Basoglu & Akdemir, 2010; Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009; Azabdaftari & Mozaheb, 2012; Chen, Hsieh, & Kinshuk, 2008; Clarke, Keing, Lam, & McNaught, 2008; Obari, et al., 2008; Tozcu & Coady, 2004).

The Study

The results of this study were concerned with the question of vocabulary practicing, which is one of the most concerns for both language learners and teachers. This study was intended to encourage students to join an online social network (Telegram) accessed through mobile phones and tablet PCs to form a social group and practice new vocabulary. Therefore, the study aimed at finding out to what extent social networking can be effective and what the differences between practicing vocabulary with and without social networking are. Furthermore, it was aimed to investigate participants' attitude toward using Telegram. Thus, the following research questions are posed.

1.Does the application of Telegram as a social networking application positively affect Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge?

2.What is the attitude of Iranian EFL learners towards the application of Telegram in EFL classes?

Method

This research was an experimental study using a treatment-posttest method carried out over a period of 3 weeks with homogenous participants who were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups.

Participants

Participants of this study were 100 advanced Persian-speaking Iranian EFL learners who were taking classes in a language institute in Isfahan. They were selected from a 150-learner sample whose age ranged between 18 and 35. Indeed, convenience sampling procedure was used to select the sample population of the study. All these 150 EFL learners were supposed to be advanced learners as they all had passed just one course of the advanced level courses held in the language institute. Thus, as the researchers already knew of the contents of the courses, they made sure that they had not been familiar with the selected vocabulary. In order to ascertain that the learners were truly homogenous in terms of their level of proficiency, a Quick Placement Test

(UCLES, 2001), was administered among these 150 EFL learners at the language institute. Those who got over 80% of the whole score were chosen as the advanced EFL learners. According to Perry (2005), those students scoring over 80% correct might be considered high ability (advanced), those between 50% and 80% average ability (intermediate), and those below 50% below average (beginner).

The advanced EFL learners were assigned to two groups: the experimental group and the control group. To see whether the two groups (of 50 participants each) were homogeneous in terms of their level of proficiency, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. Results indicated there was no significant difference, t(98) = -.36, $p = 0.71$, between the control group ($M = 46.98$, $SD = 1.00$) and experimental group ($M = 46.60$, $SD = 6.39$). This shows that participants were quite homogeneous in their proficiency level. Participants' gender and age were not considered as independent variables of the study. However, attempts were made to have an equal number of male (n = 50) and female (n = 50) participants.

Instruments

In order to collect the data, the following instruments were used.

Placement Test: A Quick Placement Test (UCLES, 2001) was administered to guarantee the participants' homogeneity in terms of their proficiency level. This placement test contained 60 multiple-choice questions on grammar and vocabulary and the participants' responses were scored on a scale of 60 points.

Vocabulary Test: After the participants were grouped into the experimental and control groups, a researcher-made vocabulary test was designed to examine participants' knowledge of vocabulary items. The test items were selected from Richards and Sandy's (2008) "*Passages*". To achieve this goal, 50 vocabulary items were selected from the textbook: *Passages* (Units1 to 6). The researchers then prepared a fifty multiple-choice test and did a pilot study on a sample of L2 learners (n = 30) who were similar to those participating in the study in terms of age, sex, and the level of proficiency.

Based on the results of the pilot study, 10 items were discarded and some changes were made on the certain items because they were not appropriate. Therefore, the revised test contained 40 multiple-choice items and was used for both the experimental and control groups. The results of Cronbach's alpha analysis showed that the test was reliable (r = 0.84). The content validity of the test was evaluated by four experts in the field with more than six years of teaching and testing experience. It should be noted that these experts were completely familiar and had the experience of teaching the textbook. After the treatment was conducted, the participants took the vocabulary test.

Attitudinal Questionnaire: The first instrument used in the present study was a 27-item attitudinal questionnaire, developed by the researchers. A pilot study was run on it and the results of Cronbach's alpha analysis showed that the questionnaire was reliable (r = 0.81). The content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts in the field with more than eight years of teaching experience. The purpose of using this questionnaire was to determine the attitude of the participants towards using Telegram, as a mobile application, in foreign language learning. This questionnaire was ranked on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (uncertain), 4 (agree), to 5 (strongly agree). After the treatment in which

Telegram mobile application was used, the questionnaires were distributed among learners to measure L2 learners' attitude towards language learning.

Telegram application: Telegram is a social network through which many online users chat and have social interactions. It was launched in 2013 by two Russian brothers, Pavel and Nikolai Durov, an entrepreneur and a computer programmer, and is based in Berlin. It describes itself as a messaging application with a focus on speed and security, usable across multiple platforms simultaneously. It also allows users to broadcast messages to large audiences publicly with its Channel function. The Telegram logo and the main page of this application are shown in Figure 1.

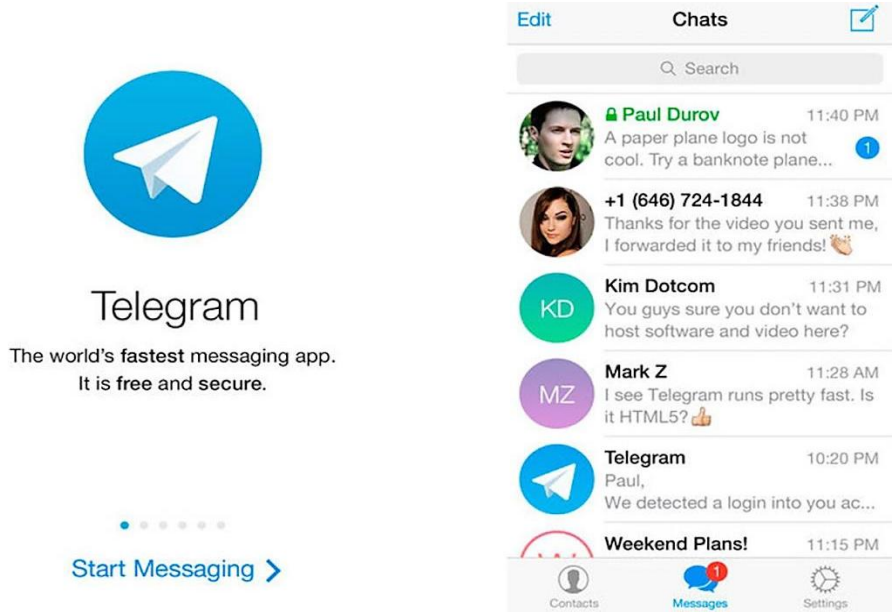

Figure 1. *The Telegram logo and the main page of this application*

In addition, the application is mostly used via cellphones providing the ability to make groups and invite other users to join. All the participants of the Experimental group were asked to give their mobile phone number to the office of the institute. Then, they were trained to run the application on mobile phones and tablet PCs and join online groups. This was done to make participants familiar with the online group and the things they needed to learn and do in that particular environment.

Procedure for the Experimental Group

The study started at the beginning of the course. After the researchers assured that the participants were homogeneous in their level of proficiency, the learners were divided into the experimental and control groups. One of the major goals of the study was to achieve a more concrete operationalization of online practicing through social networks and to measure the degree of effectiveness of using Telegram in shaping L2 learners' attitude.

Before starting the study, an introductory session was held, and the researchers provided the participants of the Experimental group with a brief introduction of the study. Then, they instructed the learners to install the software on their mobile devices, namely cellphones and tablet PCs (personal communications service). Afterwards, the researchers explained all the features of the program and answered participants' questions regarding the application. Then, the

participants of the Experimental group practiced with the application so as to get completely familiarized with the application. In this introductory session, their book was not taught, and the goal was merely to familiarize participants with the application. Moreover, the problems related to the learners' access and using the application were solved. Then, the data collection procedure began. This procedure was conducted during a period of three weeks. The participants attended the classes and followed the normal activities of the class. The method of teaching, recommended in the course book (Passages) seemed to be a perfect method, placing more emphasis on communicative activities. The class started with a fifteen-minute warm-up, followed by the new lesson which consisted of vocabulary, writing, a reading passage, and a functional grammar proceeded with a few written and oral tasks. These tasks required students to use the same already taught language points (grammatical functions, notions, and different speech acts) in their own examples.

The treatment lasted for 21 sessions including an introductory session and 20 sessions of practicing the new vocabularies through online networking. Indeed, each session consisted of an ordinary class in addition to online practice. In each online session which was after the class, three nouns, two adjectives, five verbs, a piece of writing, and four exercises based on new grammatical points were chosen randomly, and were posted to the group. In addition, the posts contained some information which they could use to review what they had been taught. Thus, the experimental group participated in one and a half hour ordinary classes at the institute, three sessions a week on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, then they practiced online for one hour while they had learner-learner and teacher-learner interaction. In addition, the online interaction was not restricted to that one hour. Whenever the learners had problems, they could pose their questions and the teacher answered them when she got a chance to answer them.

After presenting each lesson which contained the new words, learners were supposed to answer the questions sent by the instructor. Learners had enough time to practice the new words by chatting online. This provided learner-learner and teacher-learner interaction in which instruction and feedback were provided. An example of the questions and answers sent by the instructor and students is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Examples of the answers sent through Telegram*

After three weeks of instruction and working with the Telegram application, participants took the vocabulary test and the attitudinal questionnaire was given to the experimental group to measure the degree of effectiveness of using Telegram in shaping L2 learners' attitude.

Procedure for the Control Group

Participants in the control group received ordinary classroom instruction in each session, in order to practice the new words in a different manner, namely, paper group (those that write their assignments in their notebooks at home by themselves). This procedure was conducted during a period of three weeks.

The control group participated in one and a half hour ordinary classes at the institute three sessions a week on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. The participants attended the classes and followed the normal activities of the class. The method of teaching, recommended in the course book (*Passages*) placing more emphasis on communicative activities. The class started with a fifteen-minute warm-up, followed by the new lesson which normally consisted of vocabulary, writing, a reading passage, and a functional grammar proceeded with a few written and oral tasks. These tasks required the students to use the same already taught language points (grammatical functions, notions, and different speech acts) in their own examples.

The treatment lasted for 21 sessions including an introductory session and 20 sessions of practicing the new vocabularies through paper. In each session, three nouns, two adjectives, five verbs, a piece of writing, and four practices based on new grammatical points were chosen randomly, and were given to the group by the instructor. Therefore, after presenting each lesson which contained the new words, learners were supposed to answer the questions given by the instructor. Learners should answer these questions in their notebooks by themselves at home.

In summary, the control group received the instruction of new words through the traditional or teacher-led methods and techniques. In fact, the classes were similar to what went on in the experimental group; however, the practice time which was online for the experimental group and non-online for the control group, was the point of differentiation for these two groups.

Data Analysis

In order to answer the first research question, independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to capture any possible differences in the vocabulary scores of the learners in the experimental and control groups. Also, in order to answer the second research question, descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage and mean scores were calculated for each questionnaire item to examine the participants' attitude toward using Telegram in language classrooms.

Results

Based on the QPT results, out of a total number of 150 available learners, 100 homogeneous ones (those whose scores fell between ±1 *SD* of the mean) were selected to serve as the participants of the study. These 100 learners were then assigned to two groups: experimental group (EG) and control group (CG). To double-check the homogeneity of the learners in these two groups, an independent-samples *t*-test was run to compare their QPT scores. Table 1. shows the results of the *t*-test.

Table 1. *Results of the Independent-Samples t-test for Comparing the EG and CG QPT Scores*

	Levene's Test for Equality of	*t* test for Equality of Means

	Variances								
	F.	*Sig.*	*T*	*Df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	*Std.* Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
QPT	4.09	.61	-.36	98	.71	-.38	3.12	-8.88	3.41

Based on the information in Table 1. The *p*-value under the *Sig.* (2-tailed column) was greater than the significance level (i.e., .71 > .05); it could thus be understood that there was not a statistically significant difference in the QPT scores for EG (*M* = 46.60, *SD* = 6.39) and CG (*M* = 46.98, *SD* = 1.00), *t* (98) = -.36.

After the treatment was conducted, the vocabulary test was administered to both the experimental and control groups. To see whether there was any difference between the performances of these two groups, the t-test was run. The results of this test are tabulated as follows.

Table 2. *Independent-Samples t-test Results for Comparing the EG and CG Learners' Vocabulary Scores*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t* test for Equality of Means						
		F	*Sig.*	*T*	*Df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	*Std.* Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	.01	.91	9.30	98	.000	5.02	.53	3.94	6.09
	Equal variances not assumed			9.30	97.30	.000	5.02	.53	3.94	6.09

Table 2 reveals that there was a statistically significant difference between the EG and CG learners' vocabulary scores since the *p*-value was smaller than the specified level of significance (.000 < .05). It could be thus concluded that the treatment (in this case, using Telegram) helped EG learners significantly develop their vocabulary knowledge.

To explore the Iranian EFL learners' attitude towards using Telegram, the frequency, percentage, and the mean scores of the statements in the attitudinal questionnaire were calculated and shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *EG Learners' Attitudes towards Using Telegram with Language Classes*

No.	Statements	Frequency /Percent	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
1	It is important to me that Telegram application provides time for discussing ideas.	Frequency Percent	4 8%	9 18 %	9 18%	12 24%	16 32%	3.54
2	I like learning via Telegram which encourages me to discover some of the ideas for myself.	Frequency Percent	2 4%	8 16 %	7 14%	13 26%	20 40%	3.82
3	I learn well by doing homework assignment in Telegram.	Frequency Percent	4 8%	8 16 %	15 30%	12 24%	11 22%	3.36
4	I learn well by reading and re-reading materials through Telegram.	Frequency Percent	5 10%	7 14 %	16 32%	14 28%	8 16%	3.26
5	I learn well by working with my partner in Tlegram.	Frequency Percent	8 16%	12 24 %	13 26%	9 18%	8 16%	2.94
6	I know I understand when I can work problems out in Telegram.	Frequency Percent	7 14%	10 20 %	13 26%	13 26%	7 14%	3.06
7	I know I understand when I can apply ideas to new situations.	Frequency Percent	6 12%	13 26 %	15 30%	9 18%	7 14%	2.96
8	I don’t like the idea of relying on speaking English just in classroom.	Frequency Percent	0 0%	0 0%	17 34%	18 36%	15 30%	3.96
9	If I didn’t know an answer for sure; I'd ask others in my group.	Frequency Percent	6 12%	9 18 %	5 10%	14 28%	16 26%	3.50
10	I often think out loud, trying out my ideas on other people.	Frequency Percent	11 22%	12 24 %	8 16%	11 22%	8 16%	2.86
11	I could have everything worked out in my own head before I answer.	Frequency Percent	5 10%	11 22 %	13 26%	11 22%	10 20%	3.20
12	After completing my drills via Telegram I do little to prepare myself for the exams.	Frequency Percent	4 8%	8 16 %	15 30%	17 34%	6 12%	3.26
13	After studying in this social group I would like to know more about other social groups.	Frequency Percent	2 4%	7 14 %	7 14%	17 34%	17 34%	3.80
14	I learn vocabulary better through Telegram.	Frequency Percent	3 6%	4 8%	12 24%	17 34%	14 28%	3.70

15	After completing my daily assignments, I would like to do more oral communication with my group.	Frequency Percent	6 12%	17 34%	12 24%	11 22%	4 8%	2.80
16	I learn grammar better during the small group work.	Frequency Percent	2 4%	5 10%	10 20%	12 24%	21 42%	3.90
17	I feel exited when I communicate in English with others in group.	Frequency Percent	0 0%	7 14%	6 12%	15 30%	22 44%	4.04
18	Studying English through Telegram helps me to have good relationships with friends.	Frequency Percent	3 6%	9 18%	14 28%	11 22%	13 26%	3.44
19	Telegram helps me share different opinions	Frequency Percent	1 2%	3 6%	6 12%	15 30%	25 50%	4.20
20	I have more knowledge and more understanding when studying English in Telegram.	Frequency Percent	6 12%	6 12%	7 14%	14 28%	17 34%	3.60
21	I look forward to studying more English in the future in this way.	Frequency Percent	5 10%	7 14%	8 16%	13 26%	17 34%	3.60
22	I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question via telegram.	Frequency Percent	1 2%	3 6%	11 22%	14 28%	21 42%	4.02
23	I rarely put off my English homework as much as possible.	Frequency Percent	0 0%	5 10%	13 26%	16 32%	16 32%	3.86
24	This method of studying English subject makes me feel more confident.	Frequency Percent	0 0%	4 8%	10 20%	24 48%	12 24%	3.88
25	Telegram helps me to think and analyze the content in English language.	Frequency Percent	5 10%	9 18%	11 22%	17 34%	8 16%	3.16
26	When I miss the class I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught, but now I have all homework in my cellphone.	Frequency Percent	1 2%	6 12%	3 6%	18 36%	22 44%	4.08
27	I wish I could have more English speaking friends in another social group.	Frequency Percent	0 0%	3 6%	8 16%	12 24%	27 54%	4.26

The mean score for the first questionnaire item was 3.54, indicating that there was a marked tendency among the respondents to agree with the proposition that it was important to them that Telegram provides time for discussing ideas. The fact that the mean score of the second item was greater than the average of the five choices (i.e. 3.82 > 3.00) paved the way for making

a conclusion implying that most of the students agreed with the claim that they liked learning via Telegram, which encouraged them to discover some of the ideas for themselves. Around one-fourth of the learners (24%) agreed, and about the same portion of them (22%) strongly agreed with the third questionnaire item, which stated they learned well by doing homework assignment in Telegram; this agreement is also evident in the mean score obtained for this item (M = 3.36). In much the same way, in response to the statement stating that the learners learned by reading and re-reading materials through Telegram, most students showed their agreement since the mean score for this item turned out to be 3.26.

However, it was found that the learners tended to disagree with Item 5 (M = 2.94), which stated they learners learned by working with their partner in Telegram. Once again, an item mean over 3.00 was obtained (M = 3.06) for Item 6, which said the learners understand when they can work problems out in Telegram. The mean score of the next item, claiming that the learners understand when they can apply ideas to new situations, was shown to be 2.96. This less-than-average mean score reflects the fact that the learners did not concur with the seventh item of the questionnaire.

The learners tended to agree with the claim that they did not like the idea of relying on speaking English just in classroom (Item 8, M = 3.96). Likewise, they seemed to be willing to ask others in their group to find an answer (Item 9, M = 3.50). However, through item 10, the respondents tended to disagree with the proposition that they often think out loud, trying out their ideas on other people (M = 2.86). In response to Item 12, the learners express that they could have everything worked out in their own head before they answer (M = 3.20).

A rewarding result could be the answer to Item 12, in which the learners said they do little to prepare themselves for the exam after they completed their drills via Telegram (M = 3.26). More than one-thirds (34%) of the learners agreed and the same percentage of the learners strongly agreed that after studying in this social group in Telegram they would like to know more about other social groups (M = 3.80).

The respondents contended that they learned vocabulary better through Telegram since the mean score for this item (Item 14) was 3.70. In the next item, the mean score of 2.80 showed that the students did not agree with the proposition that after completing their daily assignments, they would like to do more oral communication with their group.

Good news for those fond of grammar learning is that the learners claimed (Item 16, M = 3.90) that they learn grammar better during the small group work through Telegram. Through Item 17, 30% of the learners agreed and 44% of them strongly agreed that they felt excited when they communicated in English with others in group (M = 4.04). Studying telegram, based on the respondents' answers, helped them develop good relationships with friends (Item 18, M = 3.44). Moreover, they believed Telegram helped them share their opinions (Item 19, M = 4.20). Interesting were Item 20 and the responses to this questionnaire item; based on the responses, the learners had more knowledge and more understanding when studying English in Telegram. Perhaps that is why 26% of them agreed and 34% of them strongly agreed that they were enthusiastic about studying more English in future in this way (Item 21, M = 3.60).

Moreover, the claim that learners did not get anxious when they had to answer a question via Telegram was agreed upon by the respondents since the man score of this item was well above the average value of the choices (M = 4.02 > 3.00). Wish respect to putting off their English homework as much as possible, the learners seemed not to do so in the Telegram environment (Item 23, M = 3.86). Furthermore, they tended to agree that they were more confident when learning English this way (Item 24, M = 3.88). Similarly, they expressed their agreement with the 25th item, which stated that Telegram helped them think and analyze the

content in English language (*M* = 3.16). The learners also believed that they were happy since in case they missed a class session, all the assignments could be found in their cell phones and they did not have to ask the teacher or other classmates for this (*M* = 4.08). Finally, Item 27 also turned out to catch the learners' agreement since it enjoyed a mean score of 4.26, which was well above the average mean of the responses; in this item, the learners wished they could have more English speaking friends in another social group.

Discussion

The results obtained in the current project are in line with a number of similar studies in the field. The findings revealed the effectiveness of using Telegram in vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL learners. The results of the studies conducted by Tozcu and Coady (2004), Amemiya, Hasegawa, Kaneko, Miyakoda, and Tsukahara (2007), Chen, Hsieh, and Kinshuk (2008), Clarke, Keing, Lam, and McNaught (2008), Obari, et al. (2008), Basoglu and Akdemir (2010), and Azabdaftari and Mozaheb (2012) showed the similar findings. However, some of the studies found no significant effect (Kang, 1995; Groot, 2000; Bowles, 2004, among others).

Concerning the attitude of Iranian EFL learners towards Telegram as a mobile-assisted language learning device or a social networking tool, the findings recommended a positive attitude towards such a device among Iranian EFL learners. In conformity with these results, there are several studies (Demouy & Kukulska-Hulme, 2010; Tafazoli, 2012; Rezai & Pakbaz, 2013; Zamani & Mohammadzadeh, 2013; among others) which suggest the positive attitudes of the language learners towards MALL.

Results indicated that although both methods improved vocabulary knowledge of the learners, the experimental group seemed to benefit more than the control group. Indeed, the participants of the experimental group gained significantly better vocabulary scores than those of the control group. Although the teaching methods which were used during the class time were not different, the practice time differed from the experimental group to the control group. The learners in the experimental group had interaction among each other as well as with the teacher. In case, they had a question, they could ask each other or the teacher. While in the control group, the learners were left alone at home to answer the questions and to do the exercises that had been given to them by the teacher. No interaction was possible in the practice time for the control group, and this made a difference between learning of new vocabulary in the control group and the experimental group. During the class time, as the learners encountered lack of time to interact, the online interaction was an asset for the experimental group. A positive point which is worth mentioning is that, during the treatment, students themselves found that they benefited from this method and showed positive attitudes towards learning vocabulary through this method. It seemed that soon after a short period of practice and use, they knew how to use the online environment to enhance their vocabulary achievement as well as other skills.

Unlike learners of the control group, those in the experimental group were free in using the online group to interact with each other. This dynamic interaction among the learners seemed to contribute positively to the classroom atmosphere, too. Within this framework, learners in the experimental group indicated that they enjoyed this instruction as it was fun to embark on new technological learning methods. On the other hand, unlike participants of the experimental group, it was generally difficult to keep the interest among the ones in the control group, especially near the end of the session.

A traditional teaching method in this regard, still popular in schools, language institutes, and universities, makes students memorize elaborate word lists, or it encourages them to utilize L1 equivalents of the words. The problem is that not only does this traditional method have lack of

theoretical support since vocabulary practicing is more than memorization of the target language word lists, but the whole learning experience can change into a boring experience, especially when most people prefer to be online all the time and use the latest trends in technology.

Conclusion

The study was an attempt to shed more light on the point whether online learning could bear any influence on the vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. In addition, the study also tried to determine that using Telegram mobile application can have any effect on L2 learners' attitude in learning process or not. As it was illuminated in the preceding section of the study, findings of the study revealed that first, there was a significant effect of online practicing on vocabulary knowledge of language learners. Second, a positive attitude existed for practicing of target word among language learners through Telegram. Thus, based on the results obtained from the statistical analyses, it can be claimed that there was a significant difference between the vocabulary knowledge of those learners who practiced through social learning and the others.

The findings of this study revealed that advanced L2 learners enjoy using Telegram mobile application in their L2 classrooms. The responses to the questionnaires confirmed that L2 learners had positive attitudes towards using Telegram in practicing vocabulary. Therefore, it can be concluded that Telegram can be an effective mobile application to be used both inside and outside of language classrooms by the teachers and students to learn a second/foreign language.

However, since the data in this study have been taken from a small sample of learners at one language institute in Iran, it is important not to overgeneralize the results of the study. But replicational studies elsewhere can help in building a rich body of knowledge.

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