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Learners' Engagement with Internet Materials:

An Action Research Study into the Use of Internet

Materials with EFL Learners in a Syrian Context

Iman Shamsini

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
English Language Teaching

University of Warwick, Centre for Applied Linguistics

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Abbreviations

AR	Action Research
BNC	British National Corpus
CA	Conversation Analysis
CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
DA	Discourse Analysis
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
IA	Interaction Analysis
IALL	Internet-Assisted Language Learning
IALT	Internet-Assisted Language Teaching
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IRF	Initiation-Response-Feedback
ISDL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
ISDN	Integrated Services Digital Network
IT	Information Technology
L(s)	Learner(s)
SCS	Syrian Computer Society
THLI	Tishreen Higher Language Institute
T	Teacher
TR	Teacher-Researcher
WBLL	Web-Based Language Learning
WWW	Worl Wide Web

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Gratitude is the memory of the heart ...

Jean Massieu

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helped each other understand our context to improve English teaching and learning there.

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Abstract

This thesis reports on two action research cycles conducted in the English Department of the Higher Language Institute at Tishreen University, Syria. With the problem of global coursebooks that are pre-determined for learners, the aim of this action research was to use supplementary internet materials that could better meet learners' personal needs and interests in the context. In the first cycle, the plan was to get learners live access internet materials within the Tishreen Higher Language Institute. However, technical problems were experienced. They necessitated developing appropriate internet methodology for using internet materials in the context. In the second cycle, the internet was accessed via outside computers to bring supplementary materials to the language classroom.

Both the appropriateness and the effectiveness of using supplementary internet materials were investigated. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. The action research process of developing context-appropriate methodology was found to be supportive of learners' engagement. Using internet materials appropriately created the conditions for learners' behavioural, cognitive, affective, and social engagement with internet materials.

Chapter One Introduction

If learners are not engaged in the discourse and participating actively, they have little opportunity to try out (and later learn) new language ...

Walsh (2011: 44)

1.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce my action research study. It starts with the research focus in 1.2, and then presents my motivation for researching within the area of Internet-Assisted Language Learning (IALL) in 1.3. In 1.4, the aims of doing this research are presented and the structure of the whole thesis is mapped out in 1.5.

1.2. The Research Focus

This action research project investigated the *appropriateness* and the *effectiveness* of using supplementary internet materials that could better meet EFL learners' personal needs and interests in the context of the research. The *appropriateness* element was concerned with developing 'appropriate methodology' (Holliday, 1994) for using the internet as a source of materials in the context of the research where the internet conditions were far from ideal. Linder argues that:

Many publications cater to the needs of teachers who work in such ideal environments ... Yet many teachers work in situations where computer availability, and lab access to the internet, are less than ideal (2004: 10).

Choosing action research as a methodological framework was necessary because it works in reflexive way to the development of context-appropriate methodology. The very nature of action research is that it functions as an ongoing process for change and improvement (Burns, 2010a). It enabled me to use, evaluate, change, and

improve my ongoing practitioner methodology for appropriate use of internet materials that eventually facilitated learners' engagement. The *effectiveness* of appropriately using supplementary internet materials was, therefore, found to be supportive of learners' engagement in the context of the research.

1.3. Motivation for the Study

My motivation for doing this research within the area of Internet-Assisted Language Learning (IALL) arose from my two years of teaching and working experience in the context of the research (2005-2006) and also from my MA academic year (2007-2008) in the Centre for Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick. Being a teaching assistant in the Higher Language Institute English Department at Tishreen University in Syria, I had had the opportunity to teach for two years before I pursued my higher degrees in England. My teaching and working experience there helped me identify certain areas of common interest to EFL teachers and learners at the Tishreen Higher Language Institute (THLI). Through ongoing discussions in the Staff Room (between me and other teachers) and in the EFL classroom (between me as a teacher and EFL learners), I identified a substantial gap between learners' needs and interests on the one hand and what the coursebooks seemed to offer on the other. In order to deal with this problem, supplementary internet materials were sometimes used to better meet learners' personal needs and interests. This experience in using the internet developed as I joined the MA course at the Warwick Centre for Applied Linguistics and took the module of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). There, I was introduced to the extensive body of literature on IALL and was trained on using a wide variety of internet applications that could be used to support English learning in EFL contexts. This learning experience inspired me to do my MA

dissertation within the area of IALL so I chose the British National Corpus (BNC) website to investigate its effectiveness in raising collocational awareness. My interest in the internet carried on into my PhD.

1.4. Research Aims

As stated in 1.3, using supplementary internet materials to better meet EFL learners' personal needs and interests in the THLI gave rise to my interest in researching this area. In a scoping visit in December 2008, I learnt about the Language Lab that had been recently made available for teachers and learners at the THLI and thought that would be the 'ideal' place to conduct my research. Instead of asking learners to access the internet via outside computers (at home or internet cafes), learners would get the chance to use the Language Lab computers to live access internet materials within the THLI. So, I asked for permission to use the Language Lab as a physical context for my action research and was welcomed by the Dean and the Head of the Department to investigate and innovate with this resource which had been quite expensive to install. Their view was that such integration of internet materials would act as a catalyst for change in both materials and methodology. They thought that providing the internet free of charge in the THLI Language Lab would be a very important step to attract more learners to register for language courses in the THLI and to help improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Although this was the plan, in the field it turned out to be too idealistic for the context. My view about using internet-connected computers within the THLI came up against a number of contextual constraints that made the original plan impossible

to achieve and meant that I had to develop a more appropriate methodology. Instead of adopting a top-down approach to implement the intervention, I realised that the aim should be to start from where people actually were if using the internet was to be effective.

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters in total: introduction, context and focus, literature review, research methodology, the action research process of developing appropriate methodology, learners' engagement with internet materials, discussion and conclusion. The present chapter provided the background picture of my study. It introduced the focus of the research and presented the research motivation and aims.

Chapter Two (Context and Focus) is concerned with describing the contextual factors that necessitated and affected the intervention. Context and Focus are combined to stress their reflexive relationship, in that the present research focus and methodology arise out of the needs and requirements of the pedagogic context.

Chapter Three (Literature Review) covers the two main areas of research interest: the internet and learners' engagement. The research methodology of collecting and analysing the data is the focus of Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I report on the action research process and foreground my practitioner's voice to provide a narrative account for the process of developing appropriate internet methodology that eventually created the conditions for learners' engagement in the context, whereas in Chapter Six I employ a more analytical voice to report on the findings related to learners' engagement with the internet materials. In Chapter Seven, I discuss the findings. Chapter Eight (Conclusion) provides a summary of the research; its pedagogical implications, limitations and future research directions.

Chapter Two Context and Focus

Classrooms operate within a cultural context which to a large extent determines not only what is to be learned, but also how it is to be learned.

McKay (1992: 47)

2.1. Introduction

As stated earlier in Chapter One, the focus of this research arose from the context. The reciprocal nature of the research's context and focus means that in representational terms it makes sense to have a chapter on their interplay before reviewing the literature. This chapter, therefore, is concerned with describing why the context is influential in this research and how it is integral to the research's focus.

The chapter introduces the physical context in 2.2. It describes the place where this research was conducted and the reasons for conducting it there. Then, it talks about the social context in 2.3. It briefly describes what is meant by social context and why it is important at both the epistemological and pedagogical levels of this research. In 2.4, it presents the contextual rationale and considerations for the research focus to emphasise the reciprocal relationship between focus and context.

2.2. The Physical Context

2.2.1. The Tishreen Higher Language Institute

This research was conducted in the Higher Language Institute at the State University of Tishreen in Latakia, Syria (see figure 2-1). The Syrian Higher Educational System

consists of four State Universities located in Damascus (Damascus University), Aleppo (Halab University), Latakia (Tishreen University) and Homs (Al-Ba'ath University), although other branches to these universities as well as private universities have been recently established in these and other cities. Every state university has a higher language institute that is responsible for allocating language teachers to teach non-language-major students at the different faculties of the university. Higher Language Institutes are also responsible for providing language support and running pre-paid language courses for university staff and students as well as non-university members.



Figure 2-1 The Syrian Map

The Tishreen Higher Language Institute (THLI) consists of three departments: Arabic, English, and French. The English Department, in which this research was

conducted, is responsible for allocating teachers to teach English as a foreign language subject to non-English-language-major students at the different faculties of Tishreen University. It also regularly runs pre-paid English language courses. At the THLI English Department, teachers who are English Language and Literature graduates are first recruited as teaching assistants. They are allowed to teach for up to three years before they are sponsored to enrol in MA and PhD programmes in ELT, ESP and more recently in ELT (ICT and Multimedia) in UK universities. Once they complete the degree, they become academic staff members in the THLI.

2.2.2. Why this Context?

Being a teaching assistant in the THLI, I had had the chance to teach and work with other teachers for two years before I came to England to do my MA and PhD in ELT. The reasons why I chose the THLI to be the context of the research could be summarized in the following points:

- Having two years of teaching experience helped me understand the context and identify problems that needed to be addressed.
- Being a staff member, it was relatively easy to get permission and access.
- Rapport and a good working relationship were already established.
- The small class sizes in the pre-paid English language courses, the low level of stress among their teachers and learners, and the non-exam oriented nature of most of these courses allowed some flexibility to do the intervention which would not have been the case in the large and exam-oriented university classes.

- Teachers including myself could benefit from the research processes and findings which were directly relevant to our English teaching experiences and context.

My familiarity with the context did not only come from my teaching and working experience but also from my learning experience. I had completed my bachelor study and earned my diploma degree at the English Language and Literature Department at Tishreen University in 2004 before I was recruited as a teaching assistant in the same university in 2005. This familiarity with the context was so important in developing my research focus (see 1.3).

2.3. The Social Context

2.3.1. What is Social Context?

'People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 2). But, what is a social context? According to Cilesiz, social context 'is a constellation of factors such as location, relationships, content, pedagogy, assessment, control, supervision, organization, and schedules' (2009: 234). Therefore, in our field, English language education 'by its nature extends over a world-wide canvas through an immense variety of social contexts' (Holliday, 1994: 2).

Holliday (1994) distinguishes between the macro and the micro social contexts. The macro social context 'includes the wider societal and institutional influences on what

happens in the classroom' (*ibid.*13), whereas the micro social context refers to what usually happens between people in a classroom setting (*ibid.* 14). This distinction is important as influences from outside the classroom are 'key in helping us understand what happens between people' (*ibid.*) inside the classroom. Being conducted in a Syrian institution, the wider social context of this research is, therefore, perceived to encompass the Syrian societal, cultural, and educational influences on what happens within the language classroom in the THLI.

The relationship between the micro and the macro social contexts happens at multiple levels. Benson points out that 'language learning always takes place within a set of social contexts, ranging from the global linguistic order at one extreme to the classroom' (1995: 3) on the other. Similarly, Holliday argues that 'the classroom is situated in a host institution, which could be anything from a state school, to a private language institute, to a university or college' (1994: 9). The host institution, Holliday continues, 'is in turn situated within a host educational environment' (*ibid.*). As far as this research is concerned, social context is, therefore, perceived at these interrelated levels; i.e., the EFL classroom in the THLI as part of Tishreen University which is in turn part of the Syrian Educational System.

2.3.2. Why Social Context Matters?

A sociocultural view of learning perceives knowledge as socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1978). Burns and Richards make the point that 'sociocultural perspectives on learning emphasize that learning is situated, that is, takes place in specific settings or contexts' (2009: 4). Also, Pinter argues that in Vygotskian terms

‘learning and intellectual development are embedded in contextual factors’ (2011: 17). When this view is applied to English language educational settings, knowledge is perceived to be ‘largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms’ (Johnson and Golombok, 2002: 1) in particular contexts. For more than a hundred years, however, Johnson and Golombok argue that educational research ‘has been based on the notion that knowledge about teaching and learning can be “transmitted” to teachers by others’ (2002: 1). They claim that:

In the knowledge transmission model, educational researchers, positioned as outsiders to classroom life, seek to quantify generalizable knowledge about what good teaching is and what good teachers do. Teachers have been viewed as objects of study rather than as knowing professionals or agents of change (*ibid.*).

This view of knowledge has been criticized for being paternalistic, decontextualized, and, hence, ineffectual (Goodson and Dowbiggin, 1991; Connnelly and Clandinin, 1988; Woods, 1987; as cited in Johnson and Golombok, 2002). Teachers need to be the ‘knowing professionals’. Their understandings of their own contexts are essential to construct knowledge that would help them ‘achieve appropriate classroom methodologies’ (Holliday, 1994: 9) for the people in their contexts as ‘what is appropriate in an international context may not be appropriate in a local context’ (Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996: 199). Similarly, McKay points out that ‘classrooms operate within a cultural context which to a large extent determines not only what is to be learned, but also how it is to be learned’ (1992: 47). Knowing the context is, therefore, essential to decide on what is appropriate to be learned and how it is to be learned.

Reflecting on my teaching and working experience in the THLI English Department and my years of study at Tishreen University, I was able to develop my understanding of the context, its problems and needs. Johnson and Golombok argue that ‘what teachers know about teaching is largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which teachers have come’ (2002: 1). Based on my knowledge of the context, in the next section I aim to provide the contextual rationale and considerations for the research focus that would emphasise the reciprocal nature between focus and context.

2.4. Contextual Rationale and Considerations for the Research Focus

Although English as an international language is acquiring a very important status in Syria, Arabic is the first language and it is used for communication and education within the country. It is the formal language of the country. In the Syrian Educational System, English is only a foreign language subject and there are very limited chances to communicate in English outside English classes or courses at formal educational settings. Shumin argues that ‘since most EFL learners learn the target language in their own culture, practice is available only in the classroom’ (2002: 208). The classroom, therefore, needs to be the place where opportunities for learning and practising English are maximized.

Reflecting on my teaching and working experience in the THLI, I as well as EFL teachers and learners in the THLI English Department could identify a problem that used to negatively affect the learning process and, therefore, needed to be addressed

and solved. There was a gap between learners' needs and interests on the one hand and what the coursebooks seemed to offer on the other. The next sub-sections explain why this gap existed and how it could be bridged.

2.4.1. We Have Got the Coursebook: Is It All We Need?

In their article entitled 'The textbook, the teacher and the learner: a Middle East perspective', Bacha et al. (2008) report that in Syria global ESL coursebooks are used for teaching English. In the THLI English Department, where this research was conducted, global coursebooks like *New Headway* and *New Interchange* are used. One of the main aims of *New Headway Advanced Teacher's Book*, for example, which is used to teach advanced learners in the Constant Learning Course at the THLI is 'to expose them to a variety of challenging and interesting text-types' (2003: 4). The question, however, is: *can a global coursebook predict what is interesting for EFL learners in a particular context?* Gray 'questions the continued viability of the global coursebook, an artefact which is predicted on the questionable assumption that "one size fits all" – regardless of the social, geographical and educational context of use' (2010: 3). That is why on the same page, the authors of *New Headway Advanced Teacher's Book* suggest that 'teachers can expand activities and supplement areas with topical material of interest to their particular students' (2003: 4). In other words, in order for the materials to be effective, they should 'combine the best elements of the global coursebooks with local needs and expectations' (Bacha et al, 2008: 298).

Willis argues that 'because of the impoverished and restricted language found in some coursebooks, many teachers are aware of the need to use supplementary materials' (1996: 68). Copland and Mann point out that 'an important skill for teachers to develop is the ability to supplement and adapt the coursebook' (2011: 7). Lee cites Bacon and Finnemann (1990) and Allen et al. (1988) to make the point that 'research has shown that the majority of students prefer non-textbook materials to textbook materials' (1995: 325). If the solution is to use supplementary materials, the question remains: *what materials to use?* Dat argues that 'materials should return control to the learner and learners' personal decisions should be respected' (2003: 385). As a source of personalized content (Robinson and Sebba, 2010), the internet has a great potential in this regard and could be exploited to involve learners in the 'materials developing process' (Dat, 2003: 385).

2.4.2. The Internet May Help: Opportunities and Constraints

2.4.2.1. The Internet's Potential as a Supplementary Source of Materials

The internet's potential as a supplementary source of materials had already been recognized by EFL teachers and learners in the THLI. In their interviews, teachers reported that learners sometimes ask for their teachers' permission to discuss supplementary internet materials accessed at home or in internet-cafes outside the university (see 5.2.2.). Learners would discuss interesting materials about their favourite celebrities, the current news, etc. The flexible nature of most English courses at the THLI English Department (as in being non-exam oriented) encourages both teachers and learners to move away from the coursebook materials to meet the

personal needs and interests of particular groups of learners. The current research set out to take these experiences in the context a step further by letting learners access internet materials within the THLI and via the Language Lab computers, which had been recently made available in the Institute, instead of outside computers (see 1.4).

Since the internet was to be used as a supplementary source of materials, it was necessary to consider the internet's conditions in the THLI and the wider Syrian context. The next sub-section will be devoted for that.

2.4.2.2. A Closer Look at the Internet's Conditions in the Context

At the Country's Level

Taki claims that ‘the Internet was introduced to the public in Syria in 2000 when Bashar al- Assad became President, making it the last Arab country to do so’ (2010: 99). The Information Technology (IT) sector in Syria has been mainly state-controlled. The Syrian Computer Society (SCS), founded in 1989, has started its SCS-net service in August 2000. It has been the main provider of internet services in the Syrian market since then. The state-controlled internet service, however, began relinquishing control over the internet service providers and an increasing number of new licenses were granted to the private sector. As more competition and investment are still needed, the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) line penetration remains low throughout the country while the internet service provided is unstable and slow. This limits the access to flash-based web-pages and the downloading of larger packages of information (videos, sound-files, etc.). That is why ‘in Syria,

many have reported hardly watching videos because their connection is slow' (Taki, 2010: 106).

According to Taki, the 'centralised control over Internet operation and the monopolistic structure of the Internet economy have allowed for a slow and expensive Internet' (*ibid.*) especially when having an individual account in one's own home (Wheeler, 2006). In spite of these conditions, the internet users in Syria have sought out alternative and less expensive ways of accessing the internet such as internet cafes. Internet cafes are 'businesses that offer access to computers and the Internet on a drop-in basis for hourly fees' (Cilesiz, 2009: 233). Taki reports that internet cafes in Syria usually charge 'between 40 – 50 SY Liras / hour [£0.68] for using the Internet' (2010: 94) which is relatively cheap for the average Syrian.

In addition to the internet's cost and speed, there are other factors to be considered when using the internet in the Syrian context. Censorship is one of them. Taki points out that in Syria 'the government has control over data communications within the country as well as coming into and leaving the country via its control of the international gateway and the public data network' (2010: 101). When this research was conducted, websites like Facebook and YouTube were banned in Syria. I did not even know they existed before I came to England. Taki refers to that in her research when she says that in Syria,

the authorities blocked access to social networking service Facebook on Syria's Internet servers on 19 November 2007 without giving any explanation. In March 2008 it blocked Maktoob.com, one of the largest email and blog portals in the Arab world (*ibid.*)

Although this was the case when this research was conducted, it is worth mentioning that all these websites are now accessible in Syria and that they are gaining much popularity among Syrians these days.

Another consideration is the conservative nature of most Syrian families in a religion-oriented culture. In internet cafes, for example, it is much more common to find males using the internet than females. It is considered inappropriate for girls to go to internet cafes especially in the evenings. In Taki's research, one of the internet café owners stated that during the day, there usually are males and females but during the night, 'one hardly finds a single female' (2010: 94). That is why the amount of internet work required from learners needs to be reasonable and, preferably, learners need to be 'on board' or instrumental in recommending the use of internet materials. Learners need to be involved and in agreement in order for the internet materials to be effective in this context.

Despite the fact that the internet service in Syria is still far from ideal, the numbers of internet users have been sharply increasing since 2000. Examining the statistics provided in table 2-1, one can see how the popularity of internet use in Syria has been increasing rapidly between 2000 and 2010. In reality these numbers could be even much higher than conventional figures show because of the large numbers of users who use internet cafés or public access points (Wheeler, 2006).

% Pop	Population	Internet Users	Year
0.2 %	17.868.100	30.000	2000
1.2 %	18.586.743	220.000	2002
4.2 %	19.046.520	800.000	2005
16.4 %	21.762.978	3.565.000	2009
17.7 %	22.198.110	3.935.000	2010

Table 2-1 Internet Use in Syria

Source: International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

In response to the sharply increasing numbers of internet users in Syria, the government has been making some efforts to improve the internet service throughout the country. The Syrian Ministry of Communications and Technology, for example, has started to provide new facilities for the Syrians to easily access the internet. Licenses are given to increasing numbers of internet cafes. Home internet access has become easier for the average Syrian through using pay-as-you-go service cards, instead of having individual accounts. The pay-as-you-go cards are considered to be a relatively cheap option for the dial-up internet access users. One would only need to enter the username and the password given in the card. It is worth mentioning here that most internet users in Syria depend on the dial-up service to access the internet although the number of the Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) users has also been increasing rapidly as the registration price is gradually dropping. Since 2000, the government has also made some efforts to train people on how to use computer and internet technologies. In addition to training courses provided by the state-controlled Syrian Computer Society, increasing numbers of licensed private ICT training institutions are established. A new policy adopted in 2009 and requires all Syrian citizens who want to apply for long-term work in the public sector, to have

computer use certificates. As a result, high numbers of Syrians have been registering for computer training courses.

At the Educational Level

In the Syrian educational system, the distinction between computers and internet-connected computers seems to be necessary as there is strict censorship on using the internet at schools. Due to censorship issues, internet access at schools is very limited and only few staff members may have the access depending on the nature of their jobs. Apart from the internet, preparatory and secondary schools are equipped with computers to train students in their practical computer lessons as ‘Computer Technology’ has been introduced as a core subject at school. In addition to training students on using computers, one of the main achievements of the state-controlled Syrian Computer Society's partnership with the Syrian Ministry of Education is delivering computer training courses free of charge to all those working in the education sector. As computer technology has been integrated in the Syrian Educational System, this has raised awareness of its educational potential and generated public acceptance of its importance and usefulness in the Syrian context (Taki, 2010).

At the university level, state universities provide internet-connected computers to staff and students but this provision is very limited. At Tishreen University, for example, where the research was conducted, very few faculties such as the Medical School and Computer Engineering provide internet access to students. Students at

these faculties use the internet in a controlled way. They are not allowed to chat with friends, for example, or to access websites that have culturally inappropriate content. There would be staff members to monitor the students' internet access via control screens unless the tutors are there with them. Other faculties at the University have their labs but unconnected to the internet. Although this situation is changing, this general policy of censorship and control has impacted on my research design and process and therefore is an area of interest in its own right.

At the THLI Level

The THLI as part of Tishreen University and the Syrian educational system has recently been encouraging using computers in language teaching. A new Language Lab, for example, has been made available for teachers and learners. The Lab contains twenty-five computers, which are sufficient for individual use of learners from different courses and classes in the Institute (see figure 2-2). All these computers can be controlled by the teacher who could give instructions and feedback through the computer located in the front to every learner on his/her own computer (see figure 2-3). Learners can also interact with each other via their computers (*intranet* system) to achieve a given task. Some teacher training courses have been provided to train teachers on using the Language Lab programmes in the Institute. An electronic engineer has been recruited to offer assistance when needed.



Figure 2-2 The THLI Language Lab (Learners' Computers in Rows)



Figure 2-3 The THLI Language Lab (The Teacher's Computer in the Front)

In addition to the Language Lab, the THLI English Department provides extra computer facilities. It provides a computer room for English language teachers. This Computer Room contains two internet-connected computers and a printer. The Staff Room in the Department also has internet outlets and cables which teachers could use to access the internet inside the Room from their personal computers. Administrative and support staff members in the Department also have internet-connected computers in their offices.

From what has been described above, it is clear that the way the internet is provided in the THLI English Department does not allow learners' access. Only teachers could access the internet to get some teaching materials or check information online. However, the possibility of learners accessing the internet in the Institute is there. The Language Lab is equipped with an internet connection outlet which can be used to connect all the Lab computers to the internet. But, the permission to access the internet inside the Language Lab has not yet been given by the University Computer Centre (see 5.2.1.).

In summary, for the internet's use to be appropriate and effective all these factors need to be taken into consideration. Teo argues that factors like 'perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, subjective norm, facilitating conditions, and attitude towards use' (2011: 2432) all need to be taken into consideration when teachers consider the integration of computer and internet technologies in their

classrooms. In the following sub-section, I discuss the factors that affected my choice as to which courses to work with at the THLI.

2.4.3. Which Courses to Try with the Internet?

This sub-section focuses on the available English courses within the THLI and the criteria I considered in making the choice as to which courses to work with. I did not consider working with non-English-major students outside the THLI in the different faculties of Tishreen University because of the large numbers of students there, the exam-oriented nature of their English classes, and the time pressure and eagerness to finish the coursebook which would allow very limited space for using supplementary materials. Bacha et al. argue that in large classes in the Middle East, ‘teachers use the textbook rigidly with a view to covering all the material’ (2008: 291). This is typical of the situation in the provision for non-English majors.

2.4.3.1. Available Courses

In the THLI English department, where the research was conducted, there are basically four courses running regularly:

- The Teaching Assistants Course
- The Staff Children Course
- The Conversation Course
- The Constant Learning Course.

The Teaching Assistants Course is a nine-month course that runs for non-English-major teaching assistants recruited in the different faculties of Tishreen University. It

is meant to prepare them to take international English language proficiency tests before they are sent to universities in English-speaking countries. The Staff Children Course is a two-month general English course usually runs in July and August for the University staff's children when they are on their schools' holidays. At the same time of the year, the Conversation Course is provided. The two-month Conversation Course runs three times a year to respond to the increasing need for learning English in the context being the international language of communication. There is also the three-month Constant Learning Course which runs twice a year for non-English-major Tishreen University staff members, academic and administrative, who usually follow it because they are interested in English being the main language of the internet and international communication. My choice, as a teacher-researcher, was to consider which of these courses would be appropriate for the research purposes as will be discussed in the next sub-section.

2.4.3.2. Courses Selection Criteria

The first consideration for choosing which courses to work with was the proficiency level of learners. Internet materials are believed to be difficult for low-level students. Li and Hart make the point that 'beginners ... may find it difficult to use the Web at all' (2002: 374-5). Pre-intermediate staff's children, for example, could work well on computers, but the problem with this group of learners was that it was not computer games or word document tasks to be tackled rather than the internet with which some learners may have problems. Thus, working with intermediate and upper-intermediate learners was believed to be more appropriate and less problematic.

Another thing to consider was whether these courses were exam-oriented or not. In non-exam-oriented courses, anxiety is usually reduced and the possibility to move away from the coursebook is much higher as students would not be worried about what kind of questions and coursebook exercises they are more likely to encounter in an exam. In other words, the absence of the washback effect of an exam makes students as well as teachers less concerned about orientating their teaching to the coursebook and more open for innovative ideas which could positively affect the teaching-learning process. The Teaching Assistants Course is exam-oriented. So, it was believed that it would be difficult or even risky to try and use the internet materials to investigate their effectiveness with this group of learners.

Integrating supplementary internet materials in the language classroom was, therefore, believed to be of high relevance to high-proficiency-level EFL learners in The Conversation Course and The Constant Learning Course who usually take these courses because of their interest in English being the main language of the internet and international communication. So, working with these two groups of learners was believed to be consistent with the research aims of creating opportunities for learners to access internet materials of their own choice that would address their particular needs and interests in the context of research. In the following sub-section, I will discuss in more detail the types of learners who usually apply for these two courses just to give a general idea of what their needs and interests are usually like.

2.4.3.3. Types of Learners in the Two Selected Courses

The main difference between learners who apply for the Conversation Course and those who apply for the Constant Learning Course is that learners in the former can be literally anyone from inside or outside the University whereas in the later learners can only be academic and administrative staff members at Tishreen University. The main thing in common is that learners in both of these courses are usually motivated adults who apply to these courses only because they are interested in learning more about English. They come with certain expectations about what and how to learn the target language. That is why they are usually very critical and analytical of the ways the courses are delivered. They are quite verbal about what they think and do express their ideas about what they think should be done. In her contrast between adult and young learners, Pinter actually points out that ‘adults and older learners are more analytical and give attention to detail’ (2006: 29).

Learners’ commonly reported expectations in these courses that related to their needs for more conversation in the target language. In needs analysis surveys, speaking was reported as the most desirable skill. To me, as someone from that context, these expectations and preferences are understandable and even predictable due to learners’ previous learning experiences of the language in the Syrian context. Before introducing the skill-based curriculum in 2001, the grammar-translation method was being used and that had put too much emphasis on receptive rather than productive skills. Also, with the problem of large classes and exam requirements, learners would rarely get the opportunity to practice English in class. To make up for that, those who are interested in learning English as the language of international

communication would register for conversation courses in public and private language institutions to get the opportunity to communicate in the target language. The THLI has responded to this increasing need by running the two-month Conversation Course three times a year and the Constant Learning Course for Tishreen University staff members twice a year.

However, the problem in these two courses which claim to create opportunities for practising and conversing in English is with the coursebooks (please see 2.4.1.). As stated earlier, the global coursebooks do not address the personal needs and interests of these particular groups of learners and, therefore, cannot meet their expectations. The solution would be to follow the advice of the authors of *New Headway Advanced Teacher's Book* (Emphasis added, 2003: 5) which is used to teach these learners:

Supplement with your own material. Listen to your students' requests.

In this chapter, I described why the context was influential in this research and how it was integral to the research's focus. In the next chapter, I review the literature and provide the conceptual background of the research.

Chapter Three Literature Review

The Internet gives L2 learners immediate access to such a wide range of L2 Web content ... that it would be surprising indeed if they were unable to engage their own real interests and identities via this medium at some level. From a motivational perspective, such engagement needs to be shaped and driven by students themselves if learning is to be autonomous and effective, yet it is clear that teachers must play a significant role in mediating this process.

Ushioda (2011: 207)

3.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the conceptual background of the study. Since this research investigates the appropriateness and the effectiveness of using the internet as a supplementary source of materials (see 1.4), I choose to start this chapter with the literature on Internet-Assisted Language Learning (IALL) in general. Starting with the IALL literature would give the background picture of how and why to use the internet in language learning settings including its use as a source of materials. Then, in 3.3, I focus on the internet as a source of materials and discuss issues related to integrating it into language learning settings. In 3.4, I move to talk about Learners' Engagement, the focus that strongly emerged out of the experiences and perceptions of learners using supplementary internet materials. Learners' Engagement in Internet-Assisted Language Learning environments will be discussed in 3.5.

3.2. Internet-Assisted Language Learning

The 'Internet has been increasingly considered as a pedagogical tool by which one can create innovative language experiences for L2 teachers and learners' (Lee, 1997:

410). The aim of this section is to highlight the internet's great potential for language learning and, therefore, justify using it in this research. I start this section with introducing IALL in 3.2.1. Then, in 3.2.2, I provide a historical overview of IALL. In 3.2.3, I talk about the internet's tools and applications, and discuss their benefits and opportunities for language learning in 3.2.4. In 3.2.5, I review some of the main findings in the IALL literature to emphasise the great potential of the internet as a viable option that can be used in so many different ways and for so many language learning purposes.

3.2.1. Introducing Internet-Assisted Language Learning

To introduce the area of Internet-Assisted Language Learning, one needs first to introduce the internet. The internet is usually defined as a global network of computers (Green, 1997) that 'allows computers to share information, text and graphics, and to be accessed from any part of the world' (Eastment, 1999: 4). It is 'a confederation of thousands of computers' (Singhal, 1997). Sperling claims that 'the history of the Internet dates back to 1969, when the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency decided to create a way for computers to "talk" to one another over standard telephone lines' (1997: 2). Since then, the internet as a worldwide collection of computer networks has started to serve not only as a tool for immediate exchange of and access to information but also as a medium of communication. Given these roles, the internet has increasingly become an essential part of people's lives 'reshaping nearly all aspects of society' (Warschauer et al., 2000: 1) including education.

In the field of language learning, the internet's potential both as a source of content and as a medium of communication has been the focus of the emerging area of Internet-Assisted Language Learning (IALL). IALL is an important extension of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) which refers to 'any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language' (Beatty, 2003: 7). The extension is to the role of computers. Levy (1997) argues that in CALL, computers can carry out different roles, that of a 'tutor' (e.g. providing feedback in a grammar exercise) or that of 'tool' (e.g. providing text, audio and/or visual materials, databases or concordances). The internet 'allows a powerful extension of the computer-as-tool in that it now facilitates access to other people as well as to information and data' (Kern and Warschauer, 2000: 11). A historical overview of the development of CALL sheds more light on how the field has expanded to encompass the area of IALL.

3.2.2. Internet-Assisted Language Learning: A Historical Overview

The history of CALL can be divided into three main stages: Behaviouristic CALL, Communicative CALL, and Integrative CALL (Warschauer and Healey, 1998; Beatty, 2003). Each stage 'corresponds to a certain level of technology as well as a certain pedagogical approach' (Warschauer and Healey, 1998: 57). Implemented in the 1960s and 1970s when the audio-lingual method was very popular, Behaviouristic CALL 'featured repetitive language drills, referred to as drill-and-practice' (*ibid.*). A computer was used as 'tutor' (Levy, 1997) that could provide students with drills and non-judgmental feedback (*ibid.*). Based on the communicative approach to language teaching in the 1970s and 1980s, the focus of Communicative CALL was 'not so much on what students did with the machine, but

rather what they did with each other while working at the computer' (Warschauer and Healey, 1998: 57). The communicative model used the computer as a stimulus that enabled students to use and understand the language assisted by word processors and multiple choices programmes. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were criticisms of CALL being used in a non-internet-connected way. These criticisms 'corresponded to a broader reassessment of communicative language teaching theory and practice' (*ibid*, 58) that started to move away from the cognitive to a more socio-cognitive view of language learning. The change in the view of language learning generated a greater emphasis on language use in authentic social contexts leading to 'to a new perspective on technology and language learning, which has been termed Integrative CALL' (*ibid*.). The focus of Integrative CALL is on using the internet's applications to 'integrate technology more fully into the language learning process' (*ibid*.). In Integrative CALL, the internet provides 'not only the possibilities for much more integrated uses of technology, but also the imperative for such use, as learning to read, write, and communicate via computer has become an essential feature of modern life' (*ibid*.). It is within this phase of CALL that I position this research in which internet reading materials were integrated into the language learning setting.

3.2.3. Internet-Assisted Language Learning: Tools and Applications

Various authors such as Beatty (2003), Dudeney (2007), Sharma and Barrett (2007), and Langer de Ramirez (2010) point to the vast array of potential internet tools and applications that can be exploited in the language classroom. Examples of these are supplementary online materials (authentic and ELT), quizzes, webquests, blogs, wikis and discussion boards (For definitions of internet-related terminology used in

this thesis, see appendix 1). Not only are there a large number of possible online tools and applications, modes of learning also vary, encompassing in-class activities (individual-, teacher- or group-based), work in language labs/ self-access centres, blended learning and distance learning (Beatty, 2003). These various applications and modes need to be related to the different roles the internet can play in language learning settings as a source of content (e.g. the WWW) or as a synchronous or asynchronous communication tool (e.g., chat rooms, video-conferencing and emails). According to Linder, the ‘Internet offers five basic possibilities for the networking English classroom’ (2004: 12):

- Real-time communication with other network users (using the Internet as a telephone or video conferencing device, Internet Relay Chat, and others)
- Deferred-time communication with other network users (email, mailing lists, newsgroups, and others)
- Source of information (text, images, voice, and sound, especially on the World Wide Web)
- Outlet for publication (text, images, voice, sound, especially on the World Wide Web)
- Distance teaching/learning (*ibid.*).

The decisions to be made by language teachers and learners are what internet tools and applications to use, how, and why. Lee claims that the ‘Internet has continued to attract the attention of foreign language professionals with regard to the *best way* to integrate this resource into language courses’ (Emphasis added, 1997: 412). The best way of integration can only be contextually determined by the people involved. Gray defines methodology ‘as a set of culturally determined practices which might require

adjustment in diverse cultural settings if teaching were to be effective' (Emphasis added, 2010: 18). To Gray, methodology is by definition context-specific and therefore determined to be contextually appropriate.

Conacher and Royall (1998) develop what they call 'practical' and 'pedagogical' criteria that need to be considered when using the internet either as a source of content or as a medium of communication:

Access, use and reliability might be termed practical criteria; *stimulus, environment* and *outcome* are rather pedagogical criteria. Combining such criteria may prove particularly useful when considering, firstly, the contribution of the Internet as a resource or as a medium for language learning (Emphasis added, 1998: 39).

Practically speaking, we need to make the argument that although the internet has so many applications and tools, they cannot be exploited in all contexts. Cilesiz argues that 'computer use is so embedded in and constrained by its social and cultural contexts that to construe such behavior as independent would be misleading' (2009: 232-3). Using some internet applications (e.g. videos and audios) requires a very good internet connection but the internet conditions may be very bad in some contexts. Linder (2004) makes the distinction between ideal and less-than-ideal internet conditions in the contexts where language teachers usually work. He argues that:

Many teachers worldwide are already using Internet-connected computer labs in their schools. However, there is a large (perhaps larger) number of teachers who work in less-than-ideal classroom environments. These teachers may not have Internet-connected computer labs in their schools, or the computer labs may be overcrowded, difficult to schedule, and complicated to use (*ibid.* 10).

To Linder, ‘ideal Internet access through computer labs in education is not uniform’ (ibid. 11). It differs in different contexts as ‘internet access tends to be greater in developed nations than in developing nations, and within developed nations accessibility tends to be greater in more affluent urban areas than in less affluent outlying areas’ (ibid.). That is why using the internet needs to be practically possible. Pedagogically speaking, language teachers (also learners) need to choose the appropriate internet tools and applications for their pedagogical aims. Snyder and Alperer-Tath emphasise the importance of ‘aligning the use of technology with task purposes’ (2007: 356). This can only be contextually determined.

3.2.4. Internet-Assisted Language Learning: Benefits and Opportunities

According to Warschauer et al., 'there are five reasons to use the Internet for English teaching. Taken together, these reasons help bring English teaching ALIVE' (2000: 7). These reasons are **A**uthenticity, **L**iteracy, **I**nteraction, **V**itality and **E**mpowerment (ibid.). As for authenticity, Warschauer et al. claim that the internet gives students 'access to vast amounts of authentic material on any topic they are interested in and allows opportunities for authentic communication and publishing' (ibid.). The second reason is literacy which acquires a different meaning in the twenty-first century that refers to 'the ability to read, write, communicate, research, and publish on the Internet' (ibid.). The internet also provides opportunities for meaningful interaction either between students or between students and native and non-native users of the target language around the world (ibid.). The fourth reason is that 'the Internet can inject an element of vitality into teaching and motivate students as they communicate in a medium that is flexible, multimodal, constantly changing, and connected to their

real-life needs' (ibid.). The last reason is concerned with helping both students and teachers to become autonomous. Similarly, Smith and Baber (2005) provide a list of some of the internet's benefits that can empower language teaching and learning. The first and the last are italicised because they are directly relevant to my research:

- *It provides access to up-to-date material on every imaginable topic.*
- It makes transferring straightforward information very simple, potentially allowing you to spend classroom time more meaningfully.
- It renders geographical distance less significant or even insignificant.
- It can be cheaper than face-to-face teaching.
- It allows non-native speakers to interact with native speakers.
- It allows students to study at their own pace, whenever they want.
- It enables people living far apart to come together and form communities.
- *It can be intrinsically motivating and fun* (2005: 11).

For all the benefits listed above, it could be said that the internet has a great potential if used appropriately in language learning settings. Warschauer et al. argue that we as teachers and practitioners need to know that even though the internet can bring in all these benefits to the language classroom, 'it is not the technology itself but the teaching that makes the difference' (2000: 8).

3.2.5. Internet-Assisted Language Learning Research

In this sub-section, I review some of the research findings that report on the effectiveness of using the internet for language learning. I am going to use italics to highlight particularly important points arising in the literature review. The studies that will be reviewed use different internet applications for different pedagogical purposes in different contexts. The aim is to illustrate how the internet is a viable and a flexible option for language teachers and learners as it could be exploited in so many different ways and for so many different purposes.

The volume of IALL research has been growing at a fast rate. The majority of this research investigates the effectiveness of using different internet applications for empowering different aspects of language learning. IALL research shows that the internet both as a source of content and as a medium of communication provides opportunities for foreign language learners to practise specific areas such as the four skills, vocabulary and grammar (e.g. Stepp-Greany, 2002; Lee, 2007; Arnold, 2009; Ho, 2009; Yamada, 2009; Jarvis and Szymczyk, 2010), promote their interaction (e.g. Jeon-Ellis et al., 2005; Schrooten, 2006), empower their sense of autonomy (e.g. Yumuk, 2002; Bhattacharya and Chauhan, 2010), increase their motivation for language learning (e.g., Kramarski and Feldman, 2000; Son, 2008; Chang, 2010; Vinther, 2010), and also raise their awareness and understanding of the target culture (e.g. Lee, 1998). Some studies focus on teachers' and learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of using the internet (e.g., Yang, 2001; Puteh et al., 2002; Yang and Chen, 2006; Shin and Son, 2007).

To start with the skills, reading and writing have been the focus of a number of IALL studies. Ho (2009), for example, in an action research study, examined the usefulness of a blog project in developing students' reading and writing skills in Vietnamese as a foreign language. The positive impact of the project on both reading and writing was evident in 'the students' feedback on the project; and the teacher's reflections on the advantages and challenges of this project' (2009: 268). With a particular focus on reading, Arnold (2009) evaluated an online extensive reading programme in German as a foreign language. The programme which was designed for advanced learners differed from traditional extensive reading programmes in two aspects: students read online instead of printed materials, and there was no teacher pre-selection of the materials. The study reported that learners 'developed into skilled second language readers, making conscious decisions about reading strategy and dictionary use' (2009: 340). In these two studies, *students' had a central role to play*. They were actively involved as they evaluated the project in Ho's study (2009) and learners chose their online reading materials in Arnold's study (2009). Also, the internet tools used *aligned* with the object of learning; i.e., blogs for developing writing and reading as they allow 'easy access to written and audiovisual Web content' (Miceli, 2010: 322); an online extensive reading programme for developing reading skills. The positive results could, therefore, be related to the pedagogical appropriateness of the internet tools.

Listening and speaking have also been researched within IALL. Stepp-Greany (2002), for example, allowed her students to contact electronic pen pals and investigated the impact of this strategy on her students' perceptions of language

learning. She reported that contacting electronic pen pals could enhance students' speaking and listening skills. More recently, with the advance of video-conferencing tools, Lee (2007) investigated fostering second language listening and speaking skills through interaction in desktop videoconferencing. The study was conducted in ideal internet conditions as no practical problems with the internet were reported. A classroom project of one-to-one desktop videoconferencing was used and data were gathered from 'video-recording samples, reflections, and oral interviews to report the participants' experiences' (2007: 635). The results indicated the effective use of videoconferencing in fostering L2 speaking and listening skills.

Promoting interaction is another claim within IALL research. In a study that investigated the oral interaction between learners while working collaboratively to complete web pages, Jeon-Ellis et al. (2005) claimed that this context could 'provide students with opportunities for collaborative dialogues, through which language learning occurs' (2005: 121). However, the social context of these interactions was influenced and 'mediated by personal relationships, preferences, and motivations' (*ibid.*). Similarly, Schrooten (2006) reported that learners' interaction while performing tasks in front of the computer screen depended on the learners' personalities as well as task design. He made the point that when the task design appealed to students' own experiences, more interaction was provoked. Thus, *taking into consideration learners' preferences, personalities and experiences is essential if the internet is to be effective*.

Lexical development has also been investigated in IALL environments. In a study of L2 vocabulary development, Lee (1998) reported that having access to online materials helped participant students acquire *current lexical items* of the target language. As a source of *up-to-date content*, the internet has a great potential for foreign language learners who may not find as up-to-date materials in their coursebooks (Conacher and Royall, 1998).

As for Grammar, Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010) examined students' attitudes to learning grammar with web-based and book-based materials. The data suggested that 'despite the well-documented advantages of the tutorial role of computers ... participants generally preferred working with paper-based materials' (2010: 32). These findings actually highlighted *the need to consider learners' perceptions and attitudes as decisive factors when evaluating the effectiveness of internet applications for language learning*. Learners' perceptions were also taken into consideration in Yamada's study (2009). He used synchronous computer-mediated communication to investigate the effectiveness of both text chat and audio-conferencing tools in promoting learners' confidence in grammatical accuracy. The results indicated that 'a text-mediated system enhances confidence in grammatical accuracy' (2009: 820), whereas 'voice communication has a negative effect on confidence in grammatical accuracy' (*ibid.*). Yamada's study was also conducted in ideal internet conditions as no practical problems with the internet were reported.

The need to consider *learners' and teachers' perceptions* has been widely recognised in IALL research (e.g., Yang, 2001; Puteh et al., 2002; Yang and Chen, 2006; Shin and Son, 2007). With regard to teachers' perceptions, Puteh et al. (2002) investigated the perceptions of fifteen 'Malaysian English language teachers of higher institutions on the use of Internet in language teaching and learning, particularly in English as a Second or Foreign Language' (2002: 40). Results showed that most of the teachers 'used the Internet in their language classes, allowed their students to communicate with them via E-mail, received the students' assignments via the technology and they also believed that the Internet is a valuable teaching tool in their language teaching' (*ibid.*). In a different context, Shin and Son (2007) examined Korean secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions on the use of the Internet for teaching purposes. In their study, 'a total of 101 teachers participated in a survey and responded to the questions of how they think about IALT, how they use the Internet, and what types of resources they use on the Internet' (2007: 1). The findings suggested that 'there are three key factors affecting the use of the Internet in the classroom: teachers' personal interest in Internet use; teachers' abilities to integrate Internet resources into classroom activities; and computer facilities and technical support in schools'. In other words, teachers' attitudes towards and experiences in using the internet are as important as the availability of sources for effective internet integration.

Regarding learners' perceptions, Yang (2001) integrated Web resources and examined 'learners' subjective responses to the use of the World Wide Web within the context of a research project on American states' (2001: 155). Learners 'found the

experience generally positive. Negative responses were found to relate to technical problems and information overload' (*ibid.*). In a further study, Yang and Chen (2006) explored participants' views of the use of some internet tools in language learning activities in Taiwan. The students 'participated in six Internet-based teaching activities; group e-mailing, a Web-based course, an e-mail writing programme, English homepage design, video-conferencing and chat room discussion' (2006: 860). The learners reported that they 'experienced the pleasure of learning' (*ibid.*). Taking teachers' and learners' perceptions into account is an essential factor for effective internet integration.

Target cultural knowledge and intercultural communication have also been researched within IALL. For example, Lee (1998) investigated acquiring cultural knowledge via on-line newspapers and intercultural exchanges via online classrooms. In Lee's study, students were not only able to explore target cultural resources using browsers such as Internet Explorer but also were able to 'interact with native speakers via on-line communication such as E-Mail exchanges, newsgroups, and chatrooms' (1998: 101). The results indicated that these tools, both the non-interactive and the interactive, created opportunities for students to acquire knowledge about the target culture. Knowledge of the target culture is very important in the L2 classrooms especially when dealing with target-culture-specific activities.

In addition to cultural knowledge, *autonomy* has widely been researched within IALL. In a study on the internet's role in promoting a more autonomous view of learning, Yumuk (2002) investigated how an internet information search based programme in a translation course can encourage learners who had a traditional view of learning to take more responsibility for their own learning. The programme was implemented to 'encourage students to use the internet in order to select, analyse, evaluate and apply relevant information to enhance the accuracy of their translations' (2002: 141). The search and application of the internet-based information aimed to encourage students to think and reflect critically on their learning, so that they could question their teacher-dependent learning habits. The results were that the programme promoted a change in their view of learning towards more autonomy. After applying internet-based information searches to their written translation tasks, 'the majority of students accepted that the translation process required more personal responsibility from the learner, and furthermore, they viewed learning more meaningfully' (ibid.). In a more recent study on learners' autonomy within IALL, Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010) investigated the impact of a blogging programme on autonomy. As a part of the curriculum, 'students were asked to create their own blogs' (2010: 376). The results indicated that students became more autonomous 'since they had to create and edit their own blogs to make them attractive enough for others to visit' (ibid.). Whether used as a source of content or as a medium of communication, the internet requires learners to be in control. That is why learners' autonomy is most likely to increase in most IALL environments. The same applies to motivation which is usually reported even in IALL studies that have different focuses.

Many IALL research studies reported *increased learners' motivation* (e.g., Kramarski and Feldman, 2000; Son, 2008; Arnold, 2009; Yamada, 2009; Chang, 2010; Vinther, 2010). In their study, Kramarski and Feldman (2000) investigated the impact of an internet environment on students' reading comprehension, motivation and metacognitive awareness. The results indicated that 'the internet environment contributes significantly to the motivation of the students towards the study of English as a foreign language' (2000: 149). Son (2008), in a study on using Web-based Language Learning (WBLL) activities, also reported that participants in WBLL sessions 'showed positive attitudes toward WBLL and expressed the view that they would like to use more Web activities during and outside class time' (2008: 34). In his study, Arnold (2009) investigated the effectiveness of online extensive reading for advanced foreign language learners. He reported 'learners' growing motivation and self-confidence' (2009: 340). More recent studies also investigated motivation within IALL environments. For example, Chang (2010) designed an e-learning course to provide learners with a non-threatening environment in which 'they are encouraged to collaborate with other students and with the lecturer on content-based online language learning activities' (2010: 54). The aim was to observe what affected individual students' motivations and attitudes toward learning English and how they changed as the course progressed. It was found out that 'learners' motivation improved and their attitude toward learning English became more positive as the course progressed' (*ibid.*). Also, Vinther (2010) investigated whether social connection between students via emails would enhance their motivation in language learning. The results indicated that using email exchanges

allowed students ‘full autonomy in their interaction as a motivational factor to advance language awareness’ (2010: 169). The claim that allowing students full autonomy could work as a motivational factor could be best explained within the area of learners’ engagement. Dörnyei and Ushioda claim that ‘a key argument in linking autonomy and motivation is that both are centrally concerned with the learner’s active engagement with and involvement in the learning process’ (2010: 58). Although learners’ engagement is perceived to be embedded in the motivation literature, few research studies have addressed this area separately within IALL research. Being one of the main areas of interest in this research, learners’ engagement in IALL will be discussed in detail later in this chapter (see 3.5.).

In this sub-section, I reviewed some of the research studies that investigated using the internet in language learning settings. The review aimed at illustrating how the internet is a viable and a flexible option for language teachers and learners as it could be exploited in so many different ways and for so many different purposes. In the next section, I focus on the internet’s role as a source of materials (as was used in this research) and discuss issues related to its integration in language learning contexts.

3.3. The Internet as a Source of Materials

Ushioda points out that ‘the Internet gives L2 learners immediate access to such a wide range of L2 Web content’ (2011: 207). In this section, I start by introducing internet materials in 3.3.1. Then in 3.3.2, I talk about the potential advantages of using internet content materials for learners. In 3.3.3, I argue for a principled use of

materials that draws on language learning theories for effective language learning experiences (Tomlinson, 2010).

3.3.1. Introducing Internet Materials

CALL materials which include internet materials are defined as artefacts that ‘can be taken to include tasks, Web sites, software, courseware, online courses, and virtual learning environments’ (Reinders and White, 2010: 59). An important distinction here is ‘between content materials as sources of information and data and process materials that act as frameworks within which learners can use their communicative abilities’ (*ibid.*). The use of either content materials or process materials should be ‘measured against the requirements of a particular teaching environment’ (McDonough and Shaw, 2003: 77-8). The internet can be used as a source of content materials (e.g. the web). It can also process materials (when used as a medium of communication). Reinders and White argue that the good thing about CALL materials is that they ‘can be offered to learners independent of time and place. This is a frequently cited advantage, especially in relation to Internet-based materials’ (2010: 62). In this research, the internet was used as a source of content materials. Therefore, I will restrict my discussion in the following sub-sections to this area.

3.3.2. Internet Content Materials: Advantages for the Learner

Using internet content materials in language learning settings has many advantages for the language learner (see 3.2.5.). In this sub-section, however, I restrict my discussion to those which are directly related to my research.

3.3.2.1. Addressing Learners' Needs and Interests

McGrath argues that ‘the needs of a specific class of learners can never be perfectly met by a single coursebook, even when the coursebook has been carefully designed to cater for the needs of learners in that context’ (2002: 80). To him,

Supplementation, which means no more than ‘adding something new’, stems primarily from the recognition of a deficit: it is an attempt to bridge the gap between a coursebook and an official syllabus (or statement of aims), or a coursebook and the demands of a public examination, or *a coursebook and students' needs* (Emphasis added, ibid.).

To bridge the gap between a coursebook and students’ needs, students ‘can supplement the material available in their textbook, the school library, or other traditional sources, by gathering information from the Internet’ (Linder, 2004: 12-13). With the internet, ‘students can search through millions of files around the world within minutes to locate and access authentic materials … that correspond to their own personal interests’ (Kern and Warschauer, 2000: 12).

McDonough and Shaw argue that ‘environment may necessitate a number of changes that will lead to greater appropriacy. This is most likely to be expressed in terms of a need to personalize, individualize or localize the content’ (2003: 77). According to McDonough and Shaw, personalizing content refers ‘to increasing the relevance of content in relation to learners’ interests and their academic, educational or professional needs’ (ibid. 77-8). One way to do that would be to give learners the chance to choose their favourite topics. McDonough and Shaw point out that ‘the selection of topics for language practice, whether for discussion, or comprehension, or writing … are the most obvious way in which learners’ needs and interests can be taken into account’ (ibid. 51). Instead of teachers selecting topics to meet their

students' needs and interests, the internet gives students 'access to vast amounts of authentic material on any topic they are interested in' (Warschauer et al., 2000: 7) and, therefore, gives them the chance to select the topics and materials for themselves.

3.3.2.2. Accessing Authentic Materials

The internet provides access to huge amounts of authentic materials which can be exploited to empower learners in different ways. For example, learners can 'conduct research on the Web using outside computers, and bring into the classroom authentic data for specific class projects or specific topics being studied in class' (Linder, 2004: 12). As a source of authentic materials (Warschauer et al., 2000), the internet has a great potential for learner authenticity as 'textually authentic materials tend to have greater potential for being made learner authentic than textually unauthentic materials' (Lee, 1995: 324).

We consider authenticity as not only about material from the "real" world but "a personal process of engagement" for learners, linked to "self-determination and commitment to understanding" (Miceli, 2010: 322).

Taking this position necessitates tracing learner authenticity in the literature to highlight its importance for empowering the learner.

In his state of the art article, Gilmore adopts Morrow's (1977) definition of an authentic text as 'a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort' (2007: 98). In his review of research on authenticity, Gilmore excludes all the arguments of what he calls 'subjective notions such as learner authentication' which he thinks makes the

term meaningless (*ibid.*). However, Widdowson (1979) questions authenticity as a quality embedded in the text. He says; 'I think it is probably better to consider authenticity not as a quality residing in instances of language but as a quality which is bestowed upon them, created by the response of the receiver' (Widdowson, 1979: 165). His argument about the relationship between the author's intention and the receiver's interpretation is actually meant to question the ability of a language learner to interpret authentic materials in accordance with the author's intention:

Authenticity, then, depends on a congruence of the language producer's intentions and language receiver's interpretation, this congruence being effected through a shared knowledge of conventions. It is clear that if this view is accepted it makes no sense simply to expose learners to genuine language use unless they know the conventions which would enable them to realize it as authentic (*ibid.* 166).

To Widdowson, language authenticity in the classroom 'does not depend on the source from which the language as an object is drawn but on the *learners'* engagement with it' (Emphasis added, 1990: 44-5).

Widdowson's approach to authenticity as more related to the response of the receiver towards a text has generated arguments in the literature. Lee, for example, claims that Widdowson's view 'needs to be expanded, since whether the congruence can be attained also depends in part on the learner's affective and cognitive responses to the materials, his or her perception of their inherent interest and usefulness' (1995: 323). To Lee, 'learner authenticity should refer not only to *appropriate responses* to the materials, but also to *positive perceptions* of them' (Emphasis in original, 1995: 323). Similarly, MacDonald et al. make the point that insisting 'on a correspondence between the language learner's interpretation and the autochthonous meaning

actually inhibits the imaginative and creative potential of the learner, which is precisely what should be fostered in language classrooms' (2006: 255). Nunan emphasizes the learner's role in learner-authenticated materials:

For learners to authenticate materials, these need, minimally, to fulfil two conditions. In the first place, they need to be recognized by learners as having a legitimate place in the language classroom. Secondly, they must engage the interests of the learner by relating to his interests, background knowledge, and experience, and through these, stimulate genuine communication (1988: 102).

As quoted above, Nunan made the relationship between engaging learners' interests and learner authenticity very clear. This relationship is very important for this research as the internet content was used to address learners' personal interests. The outcome, according to Nunan, would be genuine communication which is very important in foreign language learning settings.

This view of authenticity as a 'social construct' rather than a characteristic of a text (Widdowson, 1998) needs to be related to the constructivist view of learning which puts the learner at the centre. Pegrum claims that 'constructivism puts learners, rather than a given body of knowledge, at the centre of the learning process, and aims to build on the pre-existing knowledge and perspectives they bring into the classroom' (2009: 27). Senior argues that in constructivism:

Knowledge is now collective and readily available to all: the conditions under which learners learn is no longer the exclusive domain of teachers. If teachers are not to be sidelined they need to redefine the joint processes of teaching and learning in order to accommodate flexible learning in both conventional and digitally-enhanced classrooms. Constructivism is the model of teaching and learning best placed to supersede both transmission and behaviourist models ... *Rather than seeking to cover the curriculum, learning focuses on the learners' experiences, needs, interests, and aspirations* (2010: 138).

This view of learning is consistent with Nunan's view of learner authenticity which is according to Guariento and Morley 'the most crucial type of authenticity, for unless a learner is somehow 'engaged' by the task, unless they are genuinely interested in its topic and its purpose, then the other types of authenticity may count for very little (2001: 350-1). Similarly, Nunan makes the point that an 'important type of authenticity (perhaps the most important of all) is what might be called 'learner authenticity'. By this is meant the realization and acceptance by the learner of the authenticity of a given text, task, set of materials, or learning activity' (1988: 102).

Senior (2010) cites Williams and Burden (1997: 2) who 'propose a social constructivist view of the teaching-learning process in which the learner(s), the teacher, the task and the context interact with and affect each other in dynamic ways' (Senior, 2010: 138). This view is consistent with Shomoossi's and Ketabi's comprehensive view of authenticity that intertwines between the text, the task, the local setting, the teacher and the learners. They claim that 'the notion of authenticity within the global context must be considered in the light of the pragmatic appropriateness of the materials used and the interaction tasks set *in relation to learners' needs and interests*' (Emphasis added, 2007: 149). To them, 'the knowledgeable teacher is the nexus for empowering materials and tasks that are 'authentic' for their specific groups of learners' (*ibid.*).

Although the teacher's role is very important in this regard, the learners' role is as much important as the teacher's. Learners are the ones who can best decide on what is interesting and, therefore, authentic for them. Dat argues that 'materials should return control to the learner and learners' personal decisions should be respected' (2003: 385). The internet as a source of materials has a great potential in this regard as with the internet 'students can search through millions of files around the world within minutes to locate and access authentic materials (...) that correspond to their own personal interests' (Kern and Warschauer, 2000: 12). In order for the materials to be learner-authentic, learners need be actively involved in the selection of materials as well as in the 'materials developing process' (Dat, 2003: 385) as discussed in the following section.

3.3.3. Materials Design

3.3.3.1. Combining Theory and Practice

'Language-learning materials should ideally be driven by learning and teaching principles rather than be developed ad hoc or in imitation of best-selling coursebooks' (Tomlinson, 2010: 81). Following Tomlinson, this section argues for the importance of a 'principled development of ELT materials' (*ibid.*). In the current research, I used Chapelle's (2001) criteria (see Table 3-1). The strong point about these criteria is that they are very context-sensitive. They take into consideration contextual factors such as the role of learners (see rows in colour). Therefore, they are useful for teachers and practitioners who are interested in using computers to support language learning in their own contexts.

Language-learning potential	The degree of opportunity present for beneficial focus on form.
Learner fit	The amount of opportunity for engagement with language under appropriate conditions given learner characteristics.
Meaning focus	The extent to which learners' attention is directed toward the meaning of the language.
Authenticity	The degree of correspondence between the CALL activity and target language activities of interest to learners out of the classroom.
Positive impact	The positive effects of the CALL activity on those who participate in it.
Practicality	The adequacy of resources to support the use of the CALL activity.

Table 3-1 Criteria for CALL task appropriateness (Chapelle, 2001: 55)

These criteria draw on Interactionist SLA Theory to create 'ideal cognitive and social affective conditions for instructed SLA' (Chapelle, 2001: 45). According to Pica et al, Interactionist Theory holds that 'language learning is assisted through the social interaction of learners and their interlocutors, particularly when they negotiate toward mutual comprehension of each other's message meaning' (1993: 10-1). This theoretical perspective has resulted in 'calls for more learner-centred and democratic forms of classroom interaction' (Tudor, 2001: 111) such as tasks and pair and group work activities (Ellis, 2003). Johnson claims that 'student-student interaction in second language classrooms can increase students' opportunities to use language for second language acquisition' (1995: 116-7) as it 'fosters learner responsibility and independence, can improve motivation and contribute to a feeling of cooperation and warmth in the class' (Ur, 1996: 232).

Although I used Chapelle's criteria as a reference, designing internet-assisted activities was not an easy process at all. According to Reinders and White,

The design process is extremely complex, endeavoring to draw on elements of theory, research, **and** practice in an optimal way given the affordances of particular technologies **and** the opportunities **and** constraints of individual contexts, not the least of which are the needs and resources of teachers and learners (Emphasis and bold added, 2010: 60).

In order to design internet-assisted activities, decisions about language learning theories, pedagogical objectives, technological affordances, **and** contextual requirements all need to be made. Sometimes, however, designers may not be fully aware of all these aspects as materials design is 'a form of operationalised tacit knowledge' that involves 'trusting our intuitions and beliefs' (Maley, 1995: 221 cited in Tomlinson, 2010: 82). There are even arguments that CALL materials design in particular need not to be necessarily about all these aspects. According to Reinders and White,

Levy (1997) argues that requiring CALL instructional design to be theory-driven is unnecessarily restrictive, noting too that many of the theories suggested for CALL have been created and applied in non-CALL contexts; **rather** what matters is the fit between the capabilities of technology and the demands of the learning objective ... the design of pedagogical activities may begin at **any** of their three levels: theoretical approach, pedagogical design, **or** teaching procedure (Emphasis and bold added, 2010: 60).

Although Levy's argument is for a more flexible process of CALL materials design, it creates a gap between theory and practice, a gap an action researcher would be trying to bridge. Tomlinson's (2010) universal criteria for materials development are, therefore, more consistent with action research as they draw on elements from both theory **and** practice **and** require 'to be combined with local criteria derived from what is known about the learners, their teachers, and their context of learning' (Tomlinson, 2010: 86-7). Below, I list some of Tomlinson's proposals for principled

materials development and present selected quotations that are perceived to be highly relevant to my research. As they combine elements from both theory and practice, Tomlinson's proposals are well suited to attempting a description of the complexity of the process.

Principle of Language Acquisition

In order for the learners to maximize their exposure to language in use, they need to be engaged both affectively and cognitively in the language experience.

'Prioritize the potential for engagement, for example, basing a unit on a text or a task that is likely to achieve affective and cognitive engagement rather than on a teaching point selected from a syllabus' (ibid. 89)

Principle of Language Teaching

The teacher needs to be able to personalize and localize the materials and to relate them in different ways to the needs, wants, and learning-style preferences of individual learners (ibid. 97).

'There must be a built-in flexibility to the course that helps teachers and learners to make principled decisions about texts, tasks, learning points, approaches, and routes in relation to learner needs and wants' (ibid. 95).

The selected principles of language acquisition and teaching are very important for this research as they highlight the importance of supporting learners' engagement through using personalised texts that relate to learners' needs and wants. The teacher's role is essential in this regard as will be discussed in the following subsection.

3.3.3.2. The Teacher as a Materials Designer

'Most global coursebooks these days seem to be clones of other commercially successful coursebooks' (Tomlinson, 2010: 97). They 'do not always provide the

types of texts and activities that a teacher is seeking for a given class' (Block, 1991: 211).

If we are to be *reflective practitioners* in the field of ELT, we need to consider all aspects of our teaching. I believe that *preparing our own materials* is one of these aspects (Emphasis added, Block, 1991: 216).

Block provides three arguments for teachers-developed materials. The first reason is contextualization as most coursebook materials 'are not immediately relevant to students and which, in many cases, are frankly boring' (*ibid.* 213). The second reason, according to Block, is timeliness as 'all too often, one finds reading texts in commercially-based materials which are so dated as to be practically unusable' (*ibid.* 214). The third reason is the personal touch:

When students realize that the teacher has gone outside the course book and prepared something personally, they make remarks such as 'Oh, you work hard', or even 'We don't deserve so much effort'. Moreover, one complaint about some practising teachers is that they stick to course books too much, only adapting them, but too seldom going outside them to make their own materials (*ibid.* 214-5).

The argument for teacher-developed materials articulated here is consistent with my research aim of supplementing coursebook materials to better meet EFL learners' personal needs and interests in the context (see 1.4.). Teachers can design materials based on rich sources such as the internet and use them to add to coursebook materials.

McDonough and Shaw claim that adding includes expanding and extending (2003: 78). To them, 'adding by extension is to supply more of the same. This means that the techniques are being applied *within* the methodological framework of the original materials: in other words, the model is not itself changed' (*ibid.* 79), whereas

expanding ‘adds to the methodology by moving outside it and developing it in new directions’ (*ibid.* 79-80). For instance, teachers can develop materials that add ‘a different language skill or a new component. This can be thought of as a change in the overall system’ (*ibid.*). In the current research, internet-assisted materials were developed to extend and expand coursebook materials (see 5.2.2.).

Supplementing the coursebook with materials from the internet requires teachers to develop activities that are appropriate for their contexts (see 3.2.3.). Developing appropriate internet methodology is an ongoing process as it all depends on ‘whom the method is for, in what circumstances, for what purpose, and so on’ (Prabhu, 1990: 162). Holliday argues that ‘indeed, it is too simplistic to call it an ‘appropriate’ methodology: it is in effect always a *becoming-appropriate* methodology’ (Emphasis in original, 1994: 164). It is also a temporal process. The temporal nature of appropriate methodology is also emphasized by Holliday as he says ‘whatever further development the methodology takes in its ongoing route to greater appropriacy, this form will always be ephemeral’ (*ibid.* 177). The best image for teachers who involve in this temporal and developmental process is that of the ‘chameleon’:

While we certainly do not wish to suggest that teachers merely change to conform as a reaction to their working environment, this capacity to adapt to new circumstances, particularly over time, is a vital one. (McDonough and Shaw, 2003: 251).

This image is consistent with what an action researcher is usually involved in. Burns claims that ‘the processes experienced by action researchers are best viewed as necessarily *adaptive* to the educational situations and circumstances of the

participants and to the particular social, cultural and political exigencies that motivate and surround them' (Emphasis added, 2005: 59).

As 'learners' expectations change' (McDonough and Shaw, 2003: 251), the ultimate aim of teachers involving in materials development or probably the 'key challenge for classroom language teachers is maintaining high levels of student involvement and engagement' (Senior, 2010: 142). In the following section, I move to talk about learners' engagement, the focus that has strongly emerged as the outcome of using the internet as a source of content materials to develop localized and contextualized activities.

3.4. Learners' Engagement

In this section, I start with introducing learners' engagement in 3.4.1 and move to talk about its theoretical perspectives in 3.4.2. In 3.4.3, I talk about engagement as a researchable construct and review the research findings in 3.4.4.

3.4.1. Introducing Learners' Engagement

Learners' engagement is perceived as a pedagogical goal in educational settings because of its high potential for learning. It is usually portrayed as a 'condition', 'predictor', or a 'prerequisite' of learning (Solis, 2008, Caulfield, 2010). Caulfield claims that 'the educational literature indicates that student engagement is generally recognized as one of the better predictors of learning' (2010: 1). 'Being engaged creates a sense of purpose and accomplishment among students and promotes the development of important "dispositions" toward learning' (Herrenkohl and Guerra,

1998: 433). Perceived this way, learners' engagement is a worth-supporting goal in educational settings as 'creating classroom conditions that enhance student engagement will lead to increased student learning, which is a primary goal for both students and teachers' (Caulfield, 2010: 1). In the field of language learning, Crawford argues that language 'learning needs to engage learners both affectively and cognitively' (2002: 87). It is particularly important in foreign language contexts (as opposed to second language contexts) as the target language is rarely used outside the classroom (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008). Therefore, opportunities for learners to actively engage in the EFL classroom should be maximized.

Learners' engagement is usually defined as a 'multidimensional phenomenon' (Handelsman et al, 2005). According to Handelsman et al, 'most definitions include at least behavioral and affective components' (2005: 185). Skinner and Belmont, for example, define learners' engagement as 'sustained behavioural involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone' (1993: 572). It is 'the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning. Defined in this way, engagement implies both affective and behavioural participation in the learning experience' (Marks, 2000: 155). In addition to being behavioural and affective, learners' engagement is also 'cognitive'. Nystrand and Gamoran point out that 'student engagement is a cognitive phenomenon having to do with the extent to which students are mentally involved with the issues and problems of academic study' (1991: 269). Yang argues that learners' 'engagement involves three interrelated dimensions – behavioural engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement' (2011: 182). Learners' engagement also has 'an interpersonal

component' (Handelsman et al, 2005: 185) that is usually referred to as 'social engagement' (Svalberg, 2009). According to Smagorinsky et al, engagement lies in 'the relational frameworks ... that students establish with their teachers and among themselves' (2007: 77-8). It transcends the individual's behaviour, affect, and cognition to the social interaction between individuals in a social setting such as the language classroom. Nystrand and Gamoran argue that 'student engagement involves more than individual students: more precisely, it involves the interaction of students and teachers' (1991: 269).

In addition to the definitions based on its behavioural, affective, cognitive, and social components, engagement is also defined in terms of processing (Ravindran, 2005). Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) make an important distinction between 'procedural' and 'substantive' engagement based on the processing involved on the part of the learners, whether 'shallow' or 'deep' (Craik and Lockhart, 1972). According to Nystrand and Gamoran, 'procedural engagement is characterized by normal, unproblematic, but otherwise undistinguished behavior; hence, procedurally engaged students are less likely to appear off-task than disengaged students' (1991: 263). Their behaviours are relatively easy to observe compared to 'substantive' engagement that is embedded in the deep processing of content. Nystrand and Gamoran point out that 'substantively engaged students may well ask more questions than other students, especially about the content of study, and not just about how many words they need to write or whether they may use pencil instead of pen' (*ibid*). In this sense, 'engagement can be viewed in terms of discourse practices that extend

beyond the behaviour of individual students and involve both social and cognitive activity' (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 439).

Caulfield points out that 'student engagement is also reported to be highly linked to motivation' (2010: 2). According to Skinner and Belmont, it is 'the target motivational outcome' (1993: 572), or as Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) put it, it is the 'motivated behavior'. According to Singh, 'motivation and academic engagement may have a reciprocal relationship' (2002: 324). Motivation is defined as 'a set of interrelated beliefs and emotions that influence and direct behavior' (Martin and Dowson, 2009: 328). If we think of motivation as '*why* people decide to do something, *how hard* they are going to pursue it and *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity' (Emphasis in original, Dörnyei, 2001a: 7), then, learners' engagement lies in the '*why*' which is 'motivation *for* engagement' (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010: 60-1) and the '*how*' which is 'motivation *during* engagement' (*ibid.* 61). This reciprocal relationship is further highlighted in the next sub-section that provides a brief historical overview positioning learners' engagement within L2 motivation theories.

3.4.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Learners' Engagement

Being defined as 'the target motivational outcome' (Skinner and Belmont, 1993) or 'the motivated behavior' (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008), learners' engagement is conceived as an essential construct of motivation theories. Within the L2 field, motivation has evolved as a largely independent area 'originating in a concern to address the unique social, psychological, behavioural and cultural complexities that

acquiring a new communication code entails' (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010: 39). In order to understand learners' engagement within L2 motivation theories, it is important to review the three distinct phases that L2 motivation has gone through:

- *The social psychological period* (1959-1990) – characterised by the work of Robert Gardner and his associates in Canada.
- *The cognitive-situated period* (during the 1990s) – characterised by work drawing on cognitive theories in educational psychology.
- *The process-oriented period* (the turn of the century) – characterised by an interest in motivational change (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010: 39-40).

Until the 1990s, the field of L2 motivation had been dominated by a social-psychological approach that was influenced by the work of Gardner and Lambert (1972, 1985). Coming from a multicultural context such as Canada, Gardner and Lambert perceived second languages as mediators between the different ethno-linguistic communities, and, therefore, considered the motivation to learn a second language as highly influenced by attitudes towards the L2 community. Based on empirical research, Gardner and his Canadian associates formulated a complex model of L2 motivation (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010). Two components of this model became well-known: integrative and instrumental orientation. The former is associated with a positive attitude towards the L2 community. The latter is related to the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as getting a better job (Guilloteaux, 2007).

The 1990s witnessed a shift in focus towards a cognitive-situated approach to L2 motivation when the social psychological tradition had started to be critiqued by

different authors and researchers (e.g. Brown, 1990; Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994). The L2 motivation work in the 1990s was distinct as it highlighted:

- The need to bring language motivation research in line with the cognitive revolution in mainstream motivational psychology.
- The desire to move from the broad perspective of ethnolinguistic communities and learners' general disposition and attitudes to language learning, and sharpen the focus on a more situated analysis of motivation in specific learning contexts (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010: 46).

One of the main drives behind the 'reform' was to 'direct attention more closely to motivation in the classroom setting and to the concerns and needs of teachers for whom social psychological research on motivation had little practical relevance' (*ibid.*). The social psychological approach had not provided sufficient descriptions of the classroom dimension of L2 motivation that could have been used to explain specific learners' behaviours and to generate practical guidelines to motivate learners in particular classroom settings (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008).

In response to calls for a wider vision of L2 motivation, Tremblay and Gardner (1995) incorporated three concepts from expectancy-value and goal theories; i.e., language attitudes leading to motivational behaviour which in its turn leads to achievement. The theoretical framework of L2 motivation started to expand. To exemplify how, I use Crookes's and Schmidt's (1991) framework to illustrate how views of L2 motivation were expanded beyond the psychological construct. Crookes's and Schmidt's (1991) L2 Motivation Framework had four components: interest, relevance, expectancy, and satisfaction. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2010) provide a summary of what these components refer to:

- Interest is related to intrinsic motivation and is centred around the individual's inherent curiosity and desire to know more about himself or herself and his or her environment.
- Relevance refers to the extent to which the student feels that the instruction is connected to important personal needs, values, or goals. At a macro level, this component coincides with instrumentality; at the level of the learning situation, it refers to the extent to which the classroom instruction and course content are seen to be conducive to achieving the goal, that is, to mastering the L2.
- Expectancy refers to the perceived likelihood of success and is related to the learner's self-confidence and self-efficacy at a general level; at the level of the learning situation, it concerns perceived task difficulty, the amount of effort required, the amount of available assistance and guidance, the teacher's presentation of the task, and familiarity with the task type.
- Satisfaction concerns the outcome of an activity, referring to the combination of extrinsic rewards such as praise or good marks and to intrinsic rewards such as enjoyment and pride (2010: 50).

In this model, elements like instruction, relevance of course content, and assistance illustrate how L2 motivation started to extend beyond the psychological nature of individual traits and attitudes towards a more contextualized and situated view of L2 motivation.

The third phase in L2 motivation theory is the process-oriented period which portrays 'the temporal organisation of motivation, that is, to portray motivational processes as they happen in time' (*ibid.* 60). They argue that:

a basic step for analysing motivation from a temporal perspective is to clarify the conceptual distinction between motivation *for* engagement (choices, reasons, wishes, intentions, decisions), and motivation *during* engagement (how one feels, behaves and responds during the course of learning) (Emphasis in original, ibid., 60-1).

Thus, the theoretical scope of this research is within the third phase of L2 motivation. Engagement is investigated as a motivated behaviour encouraged by motivating classroom instruction and reflected in the feelings, behaviours, and responses of learners' during the course of learning.

3.4.3. Learners' Engagement Research

As discussed in the previous section, L2 motivation has started to extend beyond the psychological nature of individual traits and attitudes towards a more contextualized view of L2 motivation. This view has been recently reflected in L2 motivation research with a greater focus on researching learners' motivation within classroom settings and contexts. The shift to situated research justifies a greater focus on engagement both in terms of interaction and participants' perceptions.

In the following sub-sections, I review the research studies that investigate learners' engagement within L2 motivation research. In 3.4.3.1, I review the studies that investigate facilitators of learners' engagement, or what in motivation terms can be called 'motivational strategies' (Dörnyei, and Ushioda, 2010). In 3.4.3.2, I review the research studies that investigate engagement as 'the target motivational outcome' (Skinner and Belmont, 1993: 572), or as Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) put it, the 'motivated behavior'.

3.4.3.1. Facilitators of Learners' Engagement

Dörnyei and Ushioda claim that 'until the mid-1990s there had been no serious attempts in the L2 literature to design motivational strategies for *classroom application*' (Emphasis added, 2010: 105). Guilloteau and Dörnyei point out that:

Traditionally, motivational psychologists have been more concerned about what motivation is than about how we can use this knowledge to motivate learners. Recently, however, more and more researchers have decided to examine the pedagogical implications of research by conceptualizing *motivational strategies* (Emphasis in original, 2008: 56).

Motivational strategies refer to techniques '*that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect*' (Italics in original, Dörnyei, 2001a: 28). Provision of choice, interest-induction, and making the teaching materials relevant for the learners are some identified motivating strategies in the literature (Skinner and Belmont, 1993; Dörnyei, 2001a). However, 'the crux of the problem is that while there are many effective motivational principles and guidelines that can help practitioners, these principles do not add up to a coherent theory' (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010: 104). Dörnyei and Ushioda point out that:

there is growing recognition across mainstream motivational psychology and the L2 motivation field that *processes of motivation cannot be divorced from complex socio-contextual factors*. In practical terms, this means that any pedagogical recommendations deriving from empirical research are not directly generalisable to all classroom situations and, as with other aspects of instructional methodology, need to be *adapted in ways that are appropriate to the local learning context* (Emphasis added, ibid.).

To this effect, Dörnyei (2003) highlights the need to investigate motivation in concrete classroom contexts. Dörnyei's call for investigating motivation in concrete classroom contexts is particularly important for teacher-researchers who are interested in developing appropriate motivational strategies for their target groups of students to assist their 'active participation and engagement in learning activities' (Turner and Meyer, 2000: 5).

There are arguments that ‘the vast majority of adult learners are voluntary participants in their learning’ (Miller, 2010: 1) and, therefore, their ‘motivation to engage is a cognitive disposition that learners bring with them’ (Beder et al, 2006: 119; cited in Miller, 2010: 1). What needs to be considered, however, is that ‘concerns about family, jobs, money, and transportation; fatigue; and negative past experiences with education are some of the factors that might inhibit an adult learner’s full engagement in class’ (Miller, 2010: 1). Yair argues that ‘although engagement with instruction may seem an easy task, it is indeed an *achievement*, since students are constantly affected and seduced by out-of-classroom contexts’ (Emphasis added, 2000: 248). ‘From this sociocultural perspective (e.g., Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1987), the challenge for a teacher is to create settings and activities that students find engaging and that advance their proficiency in abilities that they find useful’ (Emphasis added, Smagorinsky et al, 2007: 78). The aim would be ‘maintaining high levels of student involvement and engagement’ (Senior, 2010: 142).

To ‘create settings and activities that students find engaging’ (Smagorinsky et al, 2007: 78), learners’ views about what interests them should be respected (Tomlinson, 2010). Brewster and Fager argue that ‘students need schoolwork that actively engages them by building on their interests’ (2000: 7). *The reciprocal relationship between learners’ interests and engagement* is emphasised by a number of educators and researchers. For example, Guthrie and Cox (2001) identify interesting texts as conditions for engagement in reading. Krashen points out that

‘the best input is so interesting and relevant that the acquirer may even ‘forget’ that the message is encoded in a foreign language’ (1982: 66). Egbert claims that ‘many types of tasks can excite learner interest and induce flow. If a task has the appropriate characteristics, including that it is interesting to the learner, even drill and practice activities may support flow experiences’ (2003: 505). What is important, therefore, are not the types of activities and materials but rather the correspondence of these activities and materials to learners’ needs and interests. Egbert recommends ‘keeping with the trend in language teaching to use student-generated topics and ideas as the basis for activities’ (*ibid.*).

‘Student interest and engagement have consistently been found to be associated with or to influence … the design of learning environments’ (Renninger and Wade, 2001: 187). Effective learning requires learners to be interested and engaged and, therefore, it is the teachers’ responsibility to design interesting and engaging learning environments. Handelsman et al. claim that ‘engaged students are good learners’ (2005: 184) and that ‘effective teaching stimulates and sustains student engagement’ (*ibid.*). Also, Schraw et al believe that ‘interest can be increased in a number of ways in the classroom, and that it is important to do so to increase engagement and learning’ (2001: 219). Schraw et al offer ‘six suggestions that focus on increasing students’ autonomy (Point 1), engaging students with better texts (Points 2–4), and helping students to process information at a deeper level (Points 5 and 6)’ (*ibid.*). The current research sees these conditions as key aspects of creating an appropriate learning environment for students.

1. *Offer meaningful choices to students.* Choice is hypothesized to promote a greater sense of self-determination because it satisfies students' need for autonomy (Deci *et al.*, 1991). Empirical studies of choice support this view. Teachers also suggest that choice increases students' interest in a text. Teachers interviewed by Flowerday and Schraw (2000) recommended offering a wide variety of choices to all students on a regular basis.
2. *Use well-organized texts.* Well-organized texts are those that are coherent and informationally complete. These two variables are strongly related to interest and learning in text.
3. *Select texts that are vivid.* Texts are vivid because they contain rich imagery, suspense, provocative information that surprises the reader, and engaging themes. Research suggests that text vividness has a positive impact on interest and learning provided the vivid information is germane to the learning task.
4. *Use texts that students know about.* Prior knowledge is related positively to interest and deeper learning (see 6.2.2.1.).
5. *Encourage students to be active learners.* Students who actively make meaning learn more information at a deeper level (Loxterman *et al.*, 1994). A number of researchers have suggested that interest increases active learning as well as the reverse (Dewey, 1913; Mitchell, 1993).
6. *Provide relevance cues for students.* Understanding what is relevant to the learning task beforehand increases interest and learning (Narvaez *et al.*, 1999).

(Schraw et al, 2001: 220-1)

In addition to learners' interests, researchers have recently 'focused on the importance of connecting instruction to learners' experiences and needs in order to

promote engagement and learning' (Miller, 2010: 2). Similarly, Brewster and Fager refer to a number of research studies (Ames, 1992; Strong et al., 1995; Anderman and Midgley, 1998) to make the claim that 'research tells us that the teachers who are most successful in engaging students develop activities with students' basic psychological and intellectual needs in mind' (2000: 7). For example, 'Condelli, Wrigley, and Yoon (2009) and Schwarzer (2009) express the need for teachers to engage learners by bringing the outside into the classroom' (*ibid.*). The internet which is part of learners' experiences outside the classroom has a great potential in this regard.

The role of the teacher is thus critically important in mediating students' awareness of the L2 learning affordances offered by the everyday technologies they use. Creating this kind of fusion between how students use technology inside and outside the language classroom will help reduce the barriers between L2 learning and life (Ushioda, 2011: 207).

Also, Purcell-Gates et al. (2002) 'found that adults were more likely to engage in literacy activities outside the classroom, such as reading the newspaper, using a bus schedule, and writing a letter to someone, when authentic texts were included in class' (Miller, 2010: 2). These findings are highly relevant to this research as internet materials were used to address learners' interests and needs in the context.

Providing choice is another reported strategy to promote learners' engagement. Flowerday and Schraw (2000) investigate teachers' beliefs about providing choice. In their study, the teachers report that 'increased student choice leads to increased interest, engagement, and learning' (cited in Schraw et al. 2001: 216). In their study, Schraw et al also report that teachers 'consistently emphasize student choices and text quality as decisive factors in classroom interest and engagement' (*ibid.* 214). One of the reasons why choice is reportedly linked to engagement is that 'students

who are allowed to choose find it easier to select topics and activities they are familiar with, and therefore better able to become actively engaged in the activity' (ibid. 216). It is reported in a number of studies that 'prior knowledge increases engagement and understanding' (ibid. 216). In other words, when learners are given the choice to select topics and activities, they would choose what they understand, like, and want to learn about, and that would assist their engagement. 'McQuillan and Conde (1996) claim that 'readers are best at determining their own reading level' and therefore 'should be instrumental in the choice of reading materials in their classrooms' (cited in Egbert, 2003: 505). Another reason for increasing motivation for engagement is that choice enhances learners' autonomy. Flowerday and Schraw (2000) argue that 'choice gives students a greater sense of responsibility which increases their motivation to learn' (cited in Schraw et al, 2001: 216). Also, Schraw et al point out that 'choice increases feelings of self-determination by satisfying the need for autonomy. In turn, increased self-determination leads to increased intrinsic motivation, interest, and engagement' (2001: 215). Giving learners the opportunity to choose familiar and interesting materials, therefore, works as a motivational strategy that can be used to assist learners' engagement.

The discussion of how addressing learners' needs and interests and providing choice can facilitate learners' engagement can expand to include all motivational strategies. Guo argues that:

In fact, *all motivation components boost motivation for engagement*. Choice, engagement, persistence and concept of motivation determined by interest, relevance, expectancy and outcomes lead to satisfactory language learning processes and language methodology ... *Building motivation concepts* such as relevance, completeness, authenticity, satisfaction and immediacy into

materials *would encourage students to persevere* and succeed in language learning (Emphasis added, 2010: 13).

Similarly, Singh claims that ‘researchers have found that motivation leads to engagement’ (2002: 324). Reviewing some motivation research studies that have investigated motivational strategies is important to highlight their role in facilitating learners’ engagement.

In a large-scale study, Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) present ‘ten commandments for motivating language learners’ based on the results of an empirical survey on motivational strategies. Two-hundred Hungarian teachers of English from various language teaching institutions were asked how important they considered a selection of fifty one strategies and how frequently they used them in their teaching practice. The motivational strategies were preselected by the researchers who derived them from the literature. No opportunities were given for the teachers to add strategies that could be derived from their own teaching contexts. Based on the teachers’ responses, a set of ten motivational macrostrategies were compiled and called the ‘ten commandments for motivating language learners’:

- Set a personal example with your own behaviour.
- Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
- Present the tasks properly.
- Develop a good relationship with the learners.
- Increase the learners’ linguistic self-confidence.
- Make the language classes interesting.

- Promote learner autonomy.
- Personalize the learning process.
- Increase the learners' goal-orientedness.
- Familiarize learners with the target language culture (1998: 215).

The same approach was adopted by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) who asked 387 Taiwanese teachers of English to rate a list of motivational strategies in terms of their importance and implementation in their teaching practices. The list of motivational macrostrategies that emerged from Cheng's and Dörnyei's (2007) study was similar to the list generated by Dörnyei's and Csizer's (1998) survey amongst Hungarian English teachers. The findings indicated that some motivational strategies were transferable across contexts. However, there were some dissimilarities between the Taiwanese and the Hungarian findings, indicating that some strategies are culture-sensitive or even culture-dependent. The studies, therefore, highlighted the importance of investigating the types of motivational strategies needed in a particular context.

The link between teachers' motivational teaching practices and learners' motivation and engagement is a strong one. Based on a large-scale investigation of forty ESOL classrooms in South Korea involving twenty-seven teachers and more than 1,300 learners, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) examined the link between the teachers' motivational teaching practices and their students' language learning motivation. The students' motivation was measured by a self-report questionnaire and a classroom

observation. The results indicated that ‘the language teachers’ motivational practice is linked to increased levels of the learners’ motivated learning behavior as well as their motivational state’ (2008: 55). The link between teachers’ motivational practices and students’ engagement was also investigated by Skinner and Belmont (1993). Skinner and Belmont examined ‘the effects of three dimensions of teacher ($n=14$) behaviour (involvement, structure, and autonomy support) on 144 children’s (Grades 3-5) behavioural and emotional engagement across a school year’ (Skinner and Belmont, 1993: 571). The results indicated that teacher involvement was central to children’s experiences in the classroom and that teacher provision of both autonomy support and optimal structure predicted children’s motivation. Reciprocal effects of students’ motivation on teacher behaviours were also reported. Students who ‘show higher initial behavioural engagement receive subsequently more of all three teacher behaviors’ (ibid.). ‘The importance of the student-teacher relationship, especially interpersonal involvement, in optimizing student motivation is highlighted’ (ibid.).

The reported relationship between teachers’ behaviours and learners’ motivation and engagement foregrounds both the teachers’ and the learners’ roles. According to Herrenkohl and Guerra,

The teacher is responsible for providing a stimulating environment, joining the students in the learning process, and monitoring student engagement, whereas the students are responsible for generating, supporting, and building knowledge and understanding through their engagement in classroom activities (1998: 432).

In order for teachers to provide a stimulating environment, to join the students in the learning process; and in order for learners to build their knowledge through engagement, appropriate instructional models need to be used. A transmission model, for example, would not be useful as it believes that knowledge is transmitted from the teacher to the students rather than built or co-constructed (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998). Smith et al. argue that:

An alternative to the “pour it in” model is the “keep it flowing around” model. This is shown in Figure 1(b) and illustrates that the information passes not only from teacher to student, but also from students to teacher and among the students. The model of teaching and learning represented in Figure 1(b) emphasizes that the simultaneous presence of *interdependence* and *accountability* are essential to learning, and their presence is *at the heart of a student-engaged instructional approach* (Smith et al. 2005: 2).

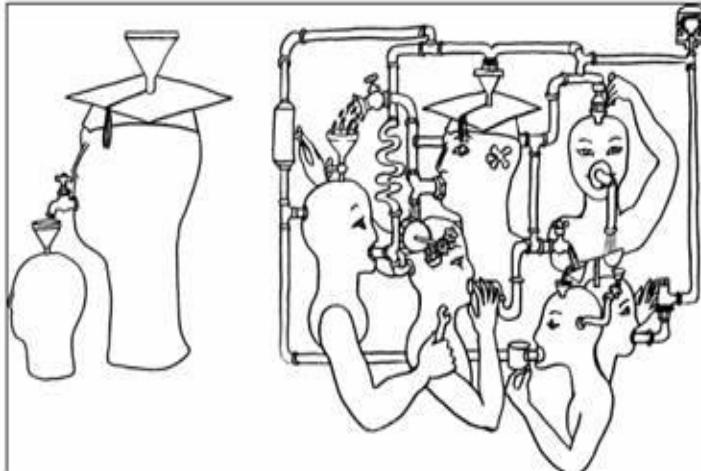


Figure 1. Two models of the classroom-based teaching learning process, as drawn by Lila Smith in about 1975. (a) "Pour it in" model; (b) "Keep it flowing" model.

The ‘keep it flowing around’ model is consistent with the social constructivist view of learning that hypothesizes that language learning is dependent ‘on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups’ (DelliCarpini, 2009). DelliCarpini, 2009). According to Smagorinsky et al,

Such instruction helps learners find the curriculum comprehensible and *stimulating*, is inclusive and *promotes a supportive classroom environment*, and takes into account the possibility that students may have had years of

numbing *educational experiences* that cannot simply or easily be overcome (Emphasis added, 2007: 77).

These reasons make the ‘keep it flowing around’ model an appropriate instructional model for supporting learners’ engagement. Coates argues that ‘research into student engagement assumes that it is possible to identify *activities* and *conditions* linked with effective learning. The identification of such phenomena has come through many years of inquiry into student learning and development’ (Emphasis added, 2007: 122).

In a ‘keep it flowing around’ model, group work has a great potential as an engaging structure of learners’ interaction. It is reported in the literature that ‘substantive student engagement is often high in small-group work and discussion; it is much less likely in lecture’ (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991: 265). Similarly, Ur claims that ‘learners in a class that is divided into five groups get five times as many opportunities to talk as in full-class organization’ (1996: 232). In group work activities, ‘students are most likely to be substantively engaged when the treatment of subject matter allows for extensive interaction’ (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991: 265). The reasons why students’ interaction is important for learners’ engagement are that:

student-student interaction in second language classrooms can create opportunities for students to participate in less structured and more spontaneous language use, negotiate meaning, self-select when to participate, control the topic of discussion, and, most important, draw on their own prior knowledge and interactional competencies to actively communicate with others (Johnson, 1995: 116).

Johnson emphasizes the importance of a social constructivist approach to interaction. She claims that ‘constructive student-student interactions influence students’

educational aspirations and achievement, develop social competencies, and encourage taking on the perspectives of others' (1995: 112) which all facilitate learners' engagement. She makes the distinction between two types of students' talk and stresses the engaging potential of going through exploratory talk where learners engage and learn in interaction, and students' demonstrative talk where learners are only displaying their previously acquired structures and forms but not necessarily learning:

When students work collaboratively in groups they are more likely to engage in exploratory talk and, thus, use language to learn as opposed to merely demonstrate what has been learned. Therefore, exploratory talk fosters more informal language use and student-centered styles and strategies of learning that are generally inhibited during teacher-directed instruction (*ibid.* 113).

Exploratory talk that fosters informal language use has a great potential for learners' engagement as 'the extent to which classroom discourse *resembles conversation* is in fact an excellent criterion for judging both its instructional quality and the extent of substantive student engagement' (Emphasis added, Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991: 265).

In order for classroom discourse to resemble conversation, certain teachers' strategies need to be used. For example, Herrenkohl and Guerra argue that 'as an interlocutor engaged in a conversation, it would normally be bizarre and even insulting to be asked a question if the person posing that question already knows the answer' (1998: 434). That is why it is important for teachers who want to substantively engage their students in a classroom conversation not to ask them test questions. Smagorinsky et al. argue that 'the questions teachers pose to students should be authentic—that is, open ended and amenable to multiple plausible responses—in contrast to the recitation scripts that involve the reproduction, but not

reconstruction, of knowledge' (2007: 77). Similarly, Nystrand and Gamoran suggest that:

Another way that teachers substantively engage their students ... is by not prespecifying the answers to their questions. For example, they ask open-ended questions, or they ask questions to which they really don't know the answers. Like high-level evaluation, these questions, which we call authentic questions to distinguish them from test (or inauthentic) questions, signal to students the teachers' interest in what students think and not just whether they know what someone else thinks or has said (1991: 264).

Another way for teachers to 'substantively engage their students in question-and-answer is by following up on student answers by incorporating these answers into subsequent questions' (*ibid.*). Authentic questions, therefore, can be strategically used to facilitate learners' engagement in teacher-student interactions. In student-student interactions, authentic questions are more natural as students normally make comprehension checks and clarification requests (Ellis, 2003) to which they have no pre-specified answers (see 6.2.4.5.).

Mercer and Littleton (2007) argue for 'dialogic teaching'. 'Dialogic teaching is that in which both teachers and pupils make substantial and significant contributions' (Mercer and Littleton, 2007: 41) and through which students' 'thinking on a given idea or theme is helped to move forward' (*ibid.*). Dialogic teaching 'is intended to highlight ways that teachers can encourage students to participate actively and so enable them to articulate, reflect upon and modify their own understanding' (*ibid.*). In a more recent view of dialogic teaching, Schwab (2011) moves from talking about 'dialogue' to 'multilogue', the participation structure that needs to be supported for active engagement.

'Designing successful interventions to engage students is difficult because it is a very common practice for teachers to talk for much of the time during classes' (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 433). 'Changing typical patterns of interaction in which the teacher asks a student a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates that response is necessary to encourage student involvement' (ibid.) as this IRF-structure deprives learners of opportunities to practise forms of participation such as initiating topics (Appel, 2010). According to Herrenkohl and Guerra,

Although this change is crucial to the facilitation of student engagement, it is not easy or straightforward to instantiate. Reorganizing the "participant structure" (Phillips, 1972) that has traditionally defined educational environments to include a high standard of student participation requires changing the roles and responsibilities given to teachers and students...This model suggests that a *balance between the contributions of the teacher, the curriculum, and the ideas and interests of the students is crucial* (Emphasis added, 1998: 433).

Achieving this balance between the contributions of the teacher, the curriculum, and the ideas and the interests of the students is what this intervention (the action research) was designed for. In seeking to achieve this balance, it would be possible to facilitate learners' engagement. According to Smith et al,

'To teach is to engage students in learning' (2005: 2)

This quote 'captures the essence of the state of the art and practice of pedagogies of engagement' (ibid.) that have been reviewed in this sub-section. This intervention continuously sought to attend to most of these needs and to achieve the 'balance between the contributions of the teacher, the curriculum, and the ideas and the interests of the students' (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 433). Miller claims that:

When instruction is planned with learners' needs and goals in mind, actively involves students in learning from one another, taps into their life experiences, and is challenging at learners' varying levels, learner engagement is likely to be strong, and learning is more apt to occur (2010: 2).

‘The challenge teachers face, then, is to create a learning environment that attends to all or most of these needs’ (Brewster and Fager, 2000: 7). The contribution of this research was in attending to these motivational strategies and pedagogies of engagement by using the internet as a supplementary source of materials:

The Internet gives L2 learners immediate access to such a wide range of L2 Web content ... that it would be surprising indeed if they were unable to engage their own real interests and identities via this medium at some level. From a motivational perspective, such engagement needs to be shaped and driven by students themselves if learning is to be autonomous and effective, yet it is clear that teachers must play a significant role in mediating this process (Ushioda, 2011: 207).

The following sub-section is devoted to review the literature on engagement as ‘the motivational outcome’ that is indicated by positive behavioural, cognitive, affective, and social reactions.

3.4.3.2. Learners’ Engagement as a Researchable Construct

Although learners’ engagement is foregrounded as an important achievement in language classroom settings, few ‘educational *interventions* have been designed to define, encourage, *and* examine engagement processes’ (Emphasis added, Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 432). Learners’ engagement is a ‘multidimensional phenomenon’ (Handelsman et al, 2005) and ‘defining how engagement can be conceptualized and identified within classrooms remains a major concern’ (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 439). Yang claims that learners’ ‘engagement involves three interrelated dimensions – behavioural engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement’ (2011: 182). But, it also has ‘an interpersonal component’ (Handelsman et al, 2005: 185) that is usually referred to as ‘social engagement’ (Svalberg, 2009). In addition to the definitions based on its

behavioural, affective, cognitive, and social components, engagement can also be ‘procedural’ and ‘substantive’ (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991) (see 3.4.1.). It is this complexity that justifies the construct (Svalberg, 2009: 243). Dörnyei and Ushioda account for this complexity when they claim that ‘motivation *during* engagement’ is about ‘how one feels, behaves and responds during the course of learning’ (2010: 61).

Researching engagement requires investigating it as a construct. Very few studies have done so (e.g. Handelsman et al, 2005; Caulfield, 2010); and even fewer have been conducted in L2 learning contexts (e.g. Yang, 2011). This action research, therefore, responds to the scarcity of research in this area by investigating engagement as a construct in an EFL context. Investigating engagement as a construct requires the use of different research methods to capture all the different aspects of this multi-dimensional phenomenon. According to Herrenkohl and Guerra,

Past research has focused on engagement through the use of *self-report questionnaires* with large numbers of students (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988) or through *observations* of a small number of individual students during classroom lessons (Lee & Anderson, 1993). Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) took yet a different approach by suggesting that *instructional discourse* itself should be an important source of data on student engagement (1998: 439).

Viewing engagement in terms of discourse practices extends it ‘beyond the behaviour of individual students’ to ‘involve both social and cognitive activity’ (*ibid.*). It also takes the view that engagement is potentially evident in the interactional discourse. Indeed, Nystrand and Gamoran argue that ‘behavioral manifestations are incomplete ... as measures of student engagement’ (1991: 263).

According to Walsh, we can examine what learners ‘say, how they interact, how they use the L2 and so on; this is where we can really begin to uncover some of the finer nuances of learning as a process’ (2011: 50). This research, therefore, uses audio-recorded interactions, observations, as well as self-reports to investigate engagement, the multi-dimensional construct, not only as observed and perceived but also as practised by the participants.

3.4.3.2.1. Behavioural Engagement

There are learners’ behaviours that indicate learners’ engagement. ‘Behavioral domain attributes consist of observable behaviors’ (Caulfield, 2010: 3). That is, ‘the teacher can easily see if the students are engaged’ (Linnenbrink, 2003: 123). Singh et al (2002) give examples of learners’ engaged behaviours. ‘Doing homework, coming prepared for classes, regular attendance, not skipping classes reflect student engagement’ (Singh et al, 2002: 324). Also, Caulfield identifies some of the engaged behaviours that are reported in the literature:

Active participation in the classroom demonstrated by regularly attending class, participating in online and in-class discussions, asking questions, actively contributing to group work and comprehensively completing assignments are behaviors demonstrated by students who are reportedly engaged (2010: 3).

Behaviours like ‘regularly attending class’ and ‘participating in online and in-class discussions’ indicate learners’ procedural engagement (see 3.4.1.) and they are easy to observe. ‘Procedural engagement is more or less obvious ... from the direct observation of individual students: they do their work and are not disruptive’ (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991: 266). Other behaviours like ‘asking questions’ and ‘actively contributing to group work’ indicate learners’ substantive engagement

which ‘is more complicated and often cannot be ascertained by scrutinizing the behavior of individual students alone’ (*ibid.*). Substantive engagement may require analysing the interactions as it is ‘usually obvious in student-teacher and peer interactions where the conversants clearly work in terms of each other’ (*ibid.*).

It is important therefore to specify what we mean by behavioural engagement. ‘Behavioral engagement is most commonly defined in three ways’ (Fredricks et al, 2004: 62). ‘The first definition entails positive conduct, such as following the rules and adhering to classroom norms, as well as the absence of disruptive behaviors such as skipping school and getting in trouble’ (*ibid.*). The second definition ‘concerns involvement in learning and academic tasks and includes behaviors such as effort, persistence, concentration, attention, asking questions, and contributing to class discussion’ (*ibid.*). ‘A third definition involves participation in school-related activities such as athletics or school governance’ (*ibid.*). The first definition is the closest to how I investigated learners’ behavioural engagement but with a particular focus on internet materials (see 6.2.1.).

Solis (2008) identifies a series of related observable and non-observable engaged behaviours (These are sorts of behaviours I noted in my field notes):

Students show that they know when they are successful in tasks.

Students can make real authentic choices and regulate own learning.

Students seem secure and safe in the classroom.

Students are actively discovering, constructing and creating.

Students are listening, observing, noticing and being mindful.

Students are immersed in tasks.

Students keep busy and active. They are not clock-watching.

Students say they understand task expectations.

Students are saying, doing, writing and responding openly.

Students look satisfied and fulfilled after responding.

Students sit, walk tall, speak up, look self-assured.

In their study, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) also provide a detailed description of behavioural attributes that indicate learners' motivated behaviours and engagement (see Table 3-2).

Attention	Students appear to be paying attention: They are not displaying any inattentive or disruptive behavior; they are looking at the teacher and following his or her movements, looking at visual stimuli, turning to watch another student who is contributing to the task, following the text being read, or making appropriate nonverbal responses.
Participation	Students are actively taking part in classroom interaction or working on assigned activity.
Volunteering For teacher-fronted activity	At least one third of the students are volunteering without the teacher having to coax them in any way.

Table 3-2 Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008: 62)

Observational Variables Measuring Learners' Motivated Behavior

In the current research, behaviours such as active participation have been used in developing the research's analytical framework of learners' engagement as a multi-dimensional phenomenon of behavioural, cognitive, affective, and social elements.

My selection of engagement indicators from the literature was based on whether or not they linked to my data.

3.4.3.2.2. Cognitive Engagement

‘Research on cognitive engagement comes from the literature on school engagement, which stresses investment in learning, and from the literature on learning and instruction, which involves self-regulation, or being strategic’ (Fredricks et al, 2004: 63). The focus in this research is ‘on psychological investment in learning, a desire to go beyond the requirements, and a preference for challenge (*ibid.*). Fredricks et al cite a number of studies to describe cognitively engaged learners:

The learning literature defines cognitive engagement in terms of being strategic or self-regulating. Whether described as cognitively engaged or self-regulated, strategic students use metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their cognition when accomplishing tasks (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Zimmerman, 1990). *They use learning strategies such as rehearsal, summarizing, and elaboration to remember, organize, and understand the material* (Corno & Madinach, 1983; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). *They manage and control their effort on tasks, for example, by persisting or by suppressing distractions, to sustain their cognitive engagement* (Corno, 1993; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). *A qualitative distinction is made between deep and surface-level strategy use. Students who use deep strategies are more cognitively engaged; they exert more mental effort, create more connection among ideas, and achieve greater understanding of ideas* (Emphasis added, 2004: 64).

Therefore, in qualitative research it is possible through descriptions of the strategies used to tell which students are more cognitively engaged.

Investigating learners' cognitive engagement, however, is not easy because it is a mental activity. Asking learners about their cognitive strategies while doing an activity may negatively affect their cognitive engagement. What can be done, however, is to investigate cognitive engagement through post-activity self-reports.

Learners' interaction transcripts can also be analysed for evidence of learners' cognitive engagement. Herrenkohl and Guerra claim that their 'study contributes to a deeper understanding of engagement by redefining it as a set of discourse practices and by examining cognitive tools and classroom participant structures and their relation to student engagement' (1998: 433). 'These practices will define engagement in students' speech and activity in whole class settings. They provide a new way of capturing student involvement and active participation in processes that facilitate learning' (ibid., 441). Zhu (2006) develops an analytical framework for cognitive engagement in discussion (See table 3-3) and Caulfield (2010) identifies learners' efforts and assessments of a task difficulty as indicators of their cognitive engagement. In these two studies, evidence of learners' cognitive engagement is also sought in the interaction. My selection of engagement indicators from the literature was based on whether or not they linked to my data (see the ones in italics).

Category	Type	Characteristics	Example
Question	Type I	<i>Seeking information</i>	Question that has a direct and correct answer
	Type II	<i>Inquiring or starting discussion</i>	Question that has no direct and correct answer
Statement	Type I	<i>Responding</i>	Statement that is made in direct response to a previous message(s), offering feedback, opinion, etc.
	Type II	<i>Informative</i>	Statement that provides information (anecdotal or personal) related to the topic under discussion
	Type III	<i>Explanatory</i>	Statement that presents factual information with limited personal opinions to explain related readings or message
	Type IV	Analytical	Statement that offers analytical opinions about responding messages or related reading materials.
	Type V	<i>Synthesizing</i>	Statement that summarizes or attempts to provide a summary of discussion messages and related readings.
	Type VI	<i>Evaluative</i>	Statement that offers evaluative or judgemental opinions of key points in the discussion/related readings
Reflection	Type I	Reflective of changes	Statement that reflects on changes in personal opinions and behaviors.
	Type II	<i>Reflective of using cognitive strategies</i>	Statement that explains or reflects on one's use of cognitive strategies/skills in accomplishing certain learning tasks.
Mentoring	Type I	Mentoring	Statement that explains or shows how the understanding of a particular concept (idea, etc.) is reached
Scaffolding	Type I	Scaffolding	Statement that guides students in discussing concepts and in learning content materials by offering suggestions.

Table 3-3 Zhu (2006: 458)

Analytical Framework for Cognitive Engagement in Discussion

3.4.3.2.3. Affective Engagement

Affective or emotional engagement ‘refers to students’ affective reactions in the classroom, including interest, boredom, happiness, sadness, and anxiety’ (Fredricks et al, 2004: 63). While there is an agreement that emotional engagement is related to affective reactions, ‘the definitions in the engagement literature tend to be general and not differentiated by domain or activity’ (*ibid.*). The same applies to the research on affective engagement that has not made it ‘clear whether students’ positive emotions are directed toward academic content, their friends, or the teacher’ (Fredricks et al, 2004: 63). This research does as it investigates affective engagement directed toward internet materials.

Self-efficacy and value are believed to be affective attributes of learners’ engagement (Caulfield, 2010). Self-efficacy refer to ‘beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments’ (Bandura, 1997: 3), whereas value ‘represents how useful the students believe the content or task is to them’ (Linnenbrink, 2003: 126). So, when learners believe in their ability to complete a valuable activity, positive emotions, such as pride in one’s work and happiness, often show and indicate students’ affective engagement (Linnenbrink, 2003). Pekrun et al. claim that ‘if the activity is seen as being controllable and valued positively, *enjoyment* is instigated’ (2007: 21).

Enjoyment is likely to change when these conditions of control and value change. Pekrun et al. (2007) claim that ‘if there is controllability, but the activity is negatively valued, *anger* is posited to be experienced’ (*ibid.*). In contrast, ‘if the activity is

valued, but there is no sufficient control and obstacles inherent in the activity cannot be handled successfully, *frustration* will be experienced' (ibid.). Finally, 'if the activity is valued neither positively nor negatively, *boredom* is induced' (ibid.). Affective engagement is, therefore, more of a situated and context-dependent than a state attribute.

3.4.3.2.4. Social Engagement

In addition to behavioural, cognitive and affective aspects, learners' engagement also has 'an interpersonal component' (Handelsman et al, 2005: 185). According to Smagorinsky et al, engagement lies in 'the relational frameworks ... that students establish with their teachers and among themselves' (2007: 77-8). It transcends the individual's behaviour, affect, and cognition to the social interaction between individuals in a social setting such as the language classroom. Nystrand and Gamoran argue that 'student engagement involves more than individual students: more precisely, it involves the interaction of students and teachers' (1991: 269). Social Engagement is 'essentially linked to interaction and to learners' initiation and maintenance (or not) of it' (Svalberg, 2009: 252). Examples of that would be 'where the teacher picks up on the substance of a student's response and where, consequently, the topic is sustained across conversation turns' (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991: 266).

Based on what has preceded, the approach I am taking to investigate engagement is that in addition to its behavioural and ‘cognitive aspects it crucially involves a range of social and affective phenomena and that it is this complexity which justifies the construct’ (Svalberg, 2009: 243). Fredricks et al. ‘**recommend studying engagement as a multifaceted construct**’ (2004: 59) and ‘**call for richer characterizations of how students behave, feel, and think - research that could aid in the development of finely tuned interventions**’ (Bold added, ibid.). The few studies which have investigated engagement as a construct have done so in non-language learning settings (e.g. Handelsman et al, 2005; Caulfield, 2010). The current interventional action research, therefore, responds to the scarcity of research in this area by investigating the behavioural, cognitive, affective, and social components of learners’ engagement in a language learning context.

Although Handelsman et al ‘developed a reliable, valid, and multidimensional measure of college student course engagement’ (2005: 185), they ‘measured engagement at only one point in the semester’ (ibid. 190). They ‘found evidence of four interpretable and internally consistent factors: skills, emotional, participation/interaction, and performance’ (2005: 190) but only in general terms that were not directed toward particular activities and materials (see the table below).

Skills	Emotional	Part/Interaction	Performance
Making sure to study on a regular basis	Finding ways to make the course material relevant to my life	Raising my hand in class	Getting a good grade
Putting forth effort		Asking questions when I don't understand the instructor	Doing well on the tests
Doing all the homework problems	Applying course material to my life	Having fun in class	Being confident that I can learn and do well in the class
Staying up on the readings	Finding ways to make the course interesting to me	Participating actively in small-group discussions	
Looking over class notes between classes to make sure I understand the material	Thinking about the course between class meetings	Going to the professor's office hours to review assignments or tests or to ask questions	
Being organized	Really desiring to learn the material	Helping fellow students	
Taking good notes in class			
Listening carefully in class			
Coming to class every day			

Table 3-4 (Handelsman et al., 2005: 187)

Factor Structure of Student Course Engagement Questionnaire

The other study that investigated engagement as a construct was Caulfield's (2010). 'A model utilizing affective, behavioural and cognitive attributes was developed to measure graduate student engagement in learning tasks (2010: 1). In Caulfield's study, '91 masters' students identified learning tasks that were most and least engaging' (ibid.). Quantitative, rather than qualitative, methods were used to collect the data. 'Student survey data demonstrated a direct relationship between perceived value of the learning task, perceived effort put forth in achieving the learning task and perceived student engagement in learning' (ibid.). 'Results derived from a repeated measures t-test indicated that students performed significantly better, as measured by grades ($p = .003$), on learning tasks identified as most engaging when compared to learning tasks identified as least engaging' (ibid.).

Given that both Handelsman et al.'s (2005) and Caulfield's studies used quantitative measures, they are of little direct relevance to my research. In a recent paper entitled 'Engagement with language: interrogating a construct', Svalberg 'has attempted to provide an essentially dynamic model of Engagement itself, i.e. a model of what 'goes on' when there is Engagement, and in doing so to bring together, in a principled way, a variety of aspects of a highly complex environment (notably the language classroom)' (2009: 256). She has provided a comprehensive definition of Engagement with Language that accounts for its being a construct:

In the context of language learning and use, Engagement with language (Engagement) is a cognitive, and/or affective, and/or social state and a process in which the learner is the agent and language is object (and sometimes vehicle).

- Cognitively, the Engaged individual is alert, pays focused attention and constructs their own knowledge.
- Affectively, the Engaged individual has a positive, purposeful, willing, and autonomous disposition towards the object (language, the language and/or what it represents)
- Socially, the Engaged individual is interactive and initiating (2009: 247).

In her model (see table 3-5), Svalberg (2009) has also identified factors that facilitate or impede learners' engagement. Although different from my developed analytical framework for learners' engagement with internet materials (see table 6-1), her model's comprehensive approach to engagement as a multi-dimensional construct that could be facilitated and impeded has inspired the analysis of my research. Her hope is 'for any researcher wishing to conduct research on Engagement, the model ... might help inform the choice of research design and measurement instruments, *as well as the approach to data analysis, and that it will also stimulate a critical debate on related issues*' (Emphasis added, ibid. 256).

	Cognitive	Affective	Social
Key characteristics of Engagement	State: heightened alertness, focused attention Process: focused reflection and problem solving	State: positive orientation towards the language, the interlocutor, and/or what they represent Process: willingness to interact with the language and/or interlocutor is maintained/heightened	State: behavioural readiness to interact Process: initiating and responding positively to interaction
Facilitators and impediments	Energy levels (time of day, state of health, low adrenaline, etc.) Immediate surroundings (noise, lighting, temperature, movement, colours) Emotional state (stress, worries; serenity) Training (educational background; culture of learning prior knowledge) Task/activity design (task demands within zone of proximal development, match with learning style) Teaching approach; teacher behaviour	Personality type (extrovert/introvert); L self-perception (of own knowledge and ability; self-confidence) Trust (how well do Ls know/like each other?); Topic (interesting, offensive, relevant topic/content) Clarity of procedure and purpose (how and why should the task/activity be done?) Intrinsically motivating quality of task/activity (e.g. relevance of purpose; right level of intellectual challenge; expected success; competitive element; opportunity to engage in identity construction)	Power differentials (equal/different status; gate keeper dependant; equal/different language proficiency; language [variety] status) Gender (same/different socialisation; cultural/religious restrictions) Social/cultural belonging (shared/different values, schemata) Social networks (family, friends, colleagues, neighbours)

Table 3-5 Factors which facilitate or impede engagement (Svalberg, 2009: 255)

This model will be discussed later in Chapter Six after I present my analytical framework for learners' engagement with internet materials which has been inductively and deductively developed (based on the literature and the data).

In the following section, I review the research studies that have investigated learners' engagement in internet-assisted environments. I also identify gaps and highlight the contribution of this research to the area of Internet-Assisted Learners' Engagement.

3.5. Internet-Assisted Learners' Engagement

Although learners' engagement was the focus of a number of studies in internet-assisted learning environments (e.g. Belz, 2002; Ware, 2005; Clayton et al, 2010; Yang, 2011), 'work to date has not examined distinct components of engagement' (Sun and Rueda, 2011: 4). To address this gap, Sun and Rueda conducted their empirical research with engineering students and explored 'how motivational and learning factors were related to student engagement in a distance education setting' (*ibid.*). The relationship between motivational factors and learners' engagement was therefore highlighted. Also, the engaging potential of the internet as a medium of communication (but not as a source of materials) was investigated. 'It was hypothesised that situational interest, computer self-efficacy and self-regulation positively affect three types of engagement (behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement) of students participating in distance education classes' (*ibid.*). The problem, however, was that the measures they used in their study did not specify the reasons for engagement. In other words, they were general measures (see table 3-6).

According to Fredricks et al,

The problem is that most measures do not distinguish a target or source of engagement. In some measures the target is quite general, such as "I like school"; in others, the social and academic aspects of school are combined. This melding makes it impossible to determine the actual source of engagement. In addition, most of the self-report measures of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement do not specify subject areas. Incorporating domain-specific measures can help to determine to what extent engagement represents a general tendency and to what extent it is content specific ... Furthermore, measures are rarely attached to specific tasks and situations, instead yielding information about engagement as a general tendency. Thus it is difficult to ascertain to what extent engagement is a function of individual differences or contextual factors. Finally, current measures do not tap qualitative differences in the level of engagement, making it difficult to distinguish the degree of behavioral, emotional, or cognitive investment or commitment (2004: 69).

The current research, therefore, addresses all these problems identified by Fredricks et al (2004) by investigating engagement not as a general tendency but rather as content-specific; i.e., learners' engagement with internet materials. It also adopts a qualitative approach that allows investigating the differences in learners' engagement with internet materials and the reasons behind that.

Behavioural Engagement	Emotional Engagement	Cognitive Engagement
I follow the rules of the online class.	I like taking the online class.	I check my schoolwork for mistakes.
I have trouble using the online class.	I feel excited by my work at the online class. The online classroom is a fun place to be.	I study at home even when I do not have a test.
When I am in the online class, I just 'act' as if I am learning.	I am interested in the work at the online class.	I try to look for some course-related information on other resources such as television, journal papers, magazines, etc.
I am able to consistently pay attention when I am taking the online class.	I feel happy when taking online class.	When I read the course materials, I ask myself questions to make sure I understand what it is about.
I complete my homework on time.	I feel bored by the online class.	I read extra materials to learn more about things we do in the online class.
		I do not know about a concept when I am learning in the online class, I do something to figure it out.
		If I do not understand what I learn online, I go back to watch the recorded session and learn again.
		I talk with people outside of school about what I am learning in the online class.

Table 3-6 Sun's and Rueda's (2011) survey measures for learners' engagement

Some research studies identified factors that facilitate learners' engagement in IALL environments but they were all conducted in distance learning settings. Computer self-efficacy (e.g. Bates and Khasawneh, 2007), the good quality of technology (e.g. Webster and Hackley, 1997), multimedia (e.g. Sun and Rueda, 2011), novelty (e.g.

Flowerday et al, 2004), and motivational factors such as interest (e.g. Kanuka, 2005; Dembo *et al*, 2006) were all positively linked to learners' engagement in distance learning environments.

Some other IALL studies, whose main focus was not originally on engagement, reported the strong emergence of engagement (e.g. Taylor et al, 2005; Jeong-Bae, 2007). Taylor et al. (2005) examined 'the use of drop-down menus with lexical and grammatical models in frames to support writing in German' (cited in Snyder and Alperer-Tath, 2007: 357). With the drop-down menus, 'learners could decide individually when to consult the models to solve different problems in their writing and to think through something on the screen, working at their own pace, with support' (*ibid.*). The results of this study showed that 'these menus also supported greater student engagement in the writing task, evinced not only in the video recordings of their activity in class, but also by the increased creativity of student output' (cited in Snyder and Alperer-Tath, 2007: 357-8). Although students were intended to be working individually on their writing, they helped each other in a variety of ways that showed their engagement in the task:

Video data revealed how much *verbal interplay* there was between those *sitting near each other*; they checked hypotheses, short-circuited dictionary use through asking those near them and, in one particular case, a student assumed the role of teacher and tutor with his neighbor. He leaned over, operating the partner's mouse, to illustrate where all the past participles were, carefully checking each sentence and gently correcting an error in the formation of one past participle. (Emphasis added, Taylor et al., 2005: 446-7).

Although the main focus of Taylor et al.'s study was on supporting writing, engagement strongly emerged. It was observed on the individual level of 'increased

creativity of student output' and also between learners as evident from the quotation above.

In contrast to Taylor et al.'s findings, a study by Ware and Kramsch (2005) explores 'in some depth the gradual disengagement of a student participant in a German-English telecollaboration project caused by misunderstandings that may have been reinforced in part by the distance of the technology-based communication' (cited in Snyder and Alperer-Tath, 2007: 350). Other studies were conducted to investigate engagement in telecollaborative distance learning environments (e.g., Belz, 2002; Ware, 2005). They indicated similar outcomes for some students. Although it 'can never be guaranteed' (Pritchard, 2006: 180), enhancing engagement 'needs to be taken seriously if effective learning is to take place' (*ibid.*).

These mixed results also confirm the assumption recognised within the field of IALL by authors like Warschauer (1997), Kern and Warschauer (2000), and Egbert (2005) that technology alone does not guarantee engagement and learning, but 'the pedagogy applied in the use of technology can' (Snyder and Alperer-Tath, 2007: 351). Thus, the internet should be used appropriately 'to maximize engagement for the greatest number of learners' (*ibid.*). Taking into consideration learners' perceptions is very important to develop appropriate pedagogy that could engage them. Snyder and Alperer-Tath argue that 'there is a need for approaches to engagement from a student perspective, looking at their views on the experience of participating in CALL activities' (*ibid.*) as looking at 'behaviors alone may mislead

researchers regarding what is happening psychologically for learners' (*ibid.*). The current research responds to Snyder's and Alperer-Tath's call by taking learners' views into consideration when developing appropriate internet methodology.

Although it did not take learners' perceptions into consideration, the only study I could find that intervened with the internet to engage EFL learners and investigated their engagement as a construct was by Yang (2011). According to Yang, 'one of the most significant challenges facing English as a foreign language (EFL) education is how to enhance students' engagement in the target language (L2 or English) for meaningful purposes in and out of the classroom' (2011: 181). He claims that 'in Taiwan, the big class sizes of 50–60 students in college have resulted in an academic disengagement, since students have fewer opportunities in these contexts to communicate with the teacher in the L2' (*ibid.*). In order to engage EFL students in the context of a big class, Yang 'developed a system, which is an online situated language learning environment, to support the students, the teachers, and the teaching assistants (TAs) to communicate synchronously and asynchronously in and after class' (*ibid.*). The internet was used as a medium of communication to support learners' engagement through creating extra opportunities for teacher-learner interactions.

The results of this study indicate that students' engagement is enhanced during student-teacher interactions in situated language learning. In synchronous communication, the students exhibited emotional engagement in expressing their thoughts and opinions regarding the drama in the discussions with the TAs at E-meeting. They also exhibited cognitive engagement in acquiring knowledge of L2 vocabularies and sentences with the help of TAs' scaffolding. In asynchronous communication, the students engaged in predicting the ensuing plots and solving the problems in the drama while

writing an essay for Vote Opinion. They also exhibited deep thinking in their evaluation of the TAs' revisions and engagement in revising their essays (ibid. 195).

Rather than using the internet as an engaging medium of communication to create extra opportunities for teacher-learner interactions, the current research used the internet as an engaging source of materials to address learners' personal needs and interests in the context. The different types of learners' behavioural, cognitive, affective **and** social engagement were facilitated not only through intervening with internet materials but also through a continuous *action research* process of developing appropriate internet methodology that continuously sought to improve the conditions for learners' engagement.

In this chapter, I provided a review of the literature on IALL to highlight how and why to use the internet in language learning settings including its use as a source of materials. I also reviewed the literature on Learners' Engagement, the focus that strongly emerged out of the experiences and perceptions of learners using supplementary internet materials. The literature on Internet-Assisted Learners' Engagement was also reviewed.

Chapter Four Research Methodology

Action research is ‘chameleon-like’. It is difficult to make firm plans in advance about the underlying questions or steps in the approach, because the process must vary according to how the research resonates with changes and improvements in practice.

Burns (2009: 127)

4.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the methodological framework within which this research operates. It comprises four main sections; the research type, tradition, methods, and analysis. The research type is qualitative and will be discussed in 4.2. Section 4.3 justifies action research as the most appropriate research tradition for this study. Methods of data collection will be discussed in 4.4. In 4.5, the focus will be on describing the methods used for analysing the qualitative data in this research.

4.2. Research Type: Qualitative

The ‘reason for adopting a qualitative approach is that it is above all else a person-centred enterprise and therefore particularly appropriate to our work in the field of language teaching’ (Richards, 2003: 9). As language teachers, we work with human beings in a social environment that make the field very difficult to control and therefore a ‘dangerous territory for the experimental researcher’ (*ibid.*). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss in more depth the assumptions and the beliefs behind choosing a qualitative approach to conduct this research.

Qualitative research is usually introduced as a distinctive methodological approach from quantitative research (Richards, 2003). This distinction between qualitative and quantitative research derives ‘from much deeper beliefs about the nature of research

itself and the world it seeks to understand, reflected in different PARADIGMS' (Capitalisation in original, Richards, 2009: 148). According to Richards, 'any paradigmatic position can be represented in terms of these two intimately related aspects, which have to do with the nature of our beliefs about reality (ontology) and about knowledge (epistemology)' (2003: 33). Situated in a positivist paradigm, quantitative researchers 'believe that there is only one, fixed, agreed-upon reality, so research must strive to find a singular, universal 'truth'' (Croker, 2009: 6). Qualitative researchers, however, have critiqued this view for 'its failure to take into account how human situations, experiences and behaviours construct realities which are inherently subjective' (Burns, 1999: 22). Their main argument is that reality is socially constructed. This paradigm shift is captured in Richards (2009) as he says that:

Research was for a long time dominated by (...) (POST-) POSITIVISM, based on the assumption that we can test our hypotheses about the nature of the world through a process of carefully constructed experimentation or measurement. This came to be challenged by CONSTRUCTIVISM, which rejected the objectification of knowledge and sought instead to understand, through locally situated investigation, participants' social construction of reality (Capitalisation in original, 2009: 148).

Unlike the positivist paradigm, the emerging constructivist paradigm accounts for the contextual and human factors as it perceives knowledge to be subjective and reality to be socially-constructed. This belief has influenced the ways in which research has been conducted within this paradigm which, unlike positivist research, adopts 'an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2).

Based on its constructivist paradigmatic position, qualitative research adopts an interpretive approach to investigation. Constructivists believe that 'there are

multiple constructions and multiple interpretations of reality' (Croker, 2009: 6) and that 'these constructions and interpretations change, depending upon time and circumstances' (*ibid.*). That is why qualitative researchers 'seek better ways to understand these person-, context-, and time-bound experiences' (*ibid.* 7) by studying 'things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2). Therefore, their 'research focus is on the **participants** – how participants experience and interact with a **phenomenon** at a given point in time and in a particular context, and the multiple meanings it has for them' (Bold in original, Croker, 2009: 7). As the data obtained 'is usually extensive and detailed, qualitative studies typically involve a small number of research contexts or subjects. They do not attempt to make claims about generalising the findings of the research to large populations' (Burns, 1999: 23).

Qualitative research 'based upon a constructivist view of the world began to emerge as a rigorous and systematic methodology to help researchers explore people's worlds' (Croker, 2009: 7). According to Croker, a 'plethora of **research approaches** has been developed within qualitative research, including narrative inquiry, case study, ethnography, action research, phenomenology, and grounded theory' (2009: 5). These approaches use qualitative research methods 'such as observation, interviews, open-response questionnaire items, verbal reports, diaries, and discourse analysis' (*ibid.*). All these methods allow the investigation of the socially constructed meanings created by the participants' views and experiences in a particular context. Findings 'are therefore created interactively rather than discovered from a privileged perspective' (Edge and Richards, 1998: 341).

As this research seeks to investigate the appropriateness and the effectiveness of using supplementary internet materials as experienced and perceived by the research participants in the context of the research, a qualitative approach to investigation is adopted. Choosing a qualitative approach implies having certain ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological assumptions about the nature of my research. The ontological and the epistemological stances have already been discussed. However, further discussions with a particular reference to this research will be provided. Compared to the quantitative approach, the table below shows what assumptions the qualitative researcher has in mind with regard to the nature of research.

Assumption	Question	Quantitative	Qualitative
Ontological Assumption	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher.	Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study.
Epistemological Assumption	What is the relationship of the researcher to that researched?	Researcher is independent from that being researched.	Researcher interacts with that being researched.
Axiological Assumption	What is the role of values?	Value-free and unbiased	Value-laden and biased
Rhetorical Assumption	What is the language of research?	Formal Based on set definitions Impersonal voice Use of accepted quantitative words	Informal Evolving decisions Personal voice Accepted qualitative words
Methodological Assumption	What is the process of research?	Deductive process Cause and effect Static design-categories isolated before study Context-free Generalizations leading to prediction, explanation, and understanding Accurate and reliable through validity and reliability	Inductive process Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors Emerging design-categories identified during research process Context-bound Patterns, theories developed for understanding Accurate and reliable through verification

Table 4-1 Creswell (1994: 5)

My ontological assumption as a qualitative researcher is that reality is subjective and multiple and that the appropriateness and the effectiveness of using supplementary internet materials are very much dependent on the context and the participants involved. Hesse-Biber and Leavy claim that 'most qualitative paradigms agree on the importance of the subjective meanings individuals bring to the research process' (2006: 79). This subjectivity is not considered as a 'failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding' (Stake, 1995: 45), but still, seeking a

'balance between subjectivity and objectivity in reporting or (rather) seeking *rigorous subjectivity* (...) that can be interpreted with some transparency by others, is important' (Emphasis in original, Duff, 2008: 131) (see 4.3.4).

At the epistemological level, I recognise that there is an interactive relationship between me as a teacher-researcher and the participants and that the different perspectives and individual experiences cater for the complexity and particularity of the situation. At the axiological level, the research is value-laden. Being involved as a teacher-researcher in the context of the research, it is impossible to claim that the research is unbiased. Bias is an inherent attribute in qualitative research 'that involves understanding the research context from the inside, that is, from an *emic* perspective' (Burns, 1999: 22) making distancing the researcher from that being researched impossible in that sense. However, in this research, efforts were made to reduce bias through involving different participants' views and interpretations.

The rhetorical assumption about the language used in this research is that both personal voice and the use of non-numerical language are acceptable when talking about the qualitative data. Dörnyei claims that qualitative research 'involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods' (2007: 24). As for the qualitative methodological assumptions stated in Creswell's table above, these will need to be related to the research tradition and methods of data collection and analysis and therefore will be discussed accordingly.

4.3. Research Tradition: Action Research

In the following sub-sections, I will be talking about action research. I will start with defining it and identifying its main characteristics in 4.3.1. Then, in 4.3.2, I will discuss the different approaches to action research and identify the approach I am adopting in this research study. In 4.3.3, the strengths and the weaknesses of action research will be discussed, and improving the quality of action research will be the focus in 4.3.4. Finally, the ethical considerations in this research will be discussed.

4.3.1. Defining Action Research

A starting point in defining action research would be to say that it is ‘an approach that involves both action and research’ (Burns, 2009: 114). Burns argues that the action component is ‘usually associated with identifying and exploring an issue, question, dilemma, gap, or puzzle in your own context of work’ (*ibid.*), whereas the ‘research in action research involves a systematic approach to collecting information, or data, usually using methods commonly associated with qualitative research’ (*ibid.* 115). Focusing on both action and research, the main stages in action research are usually described ‘as a self-reflective **action research cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection**’ (Bold in original, *ibid.*) where action researchers identify a ‘focus area’, ‘plan strategies to change or improve the situation’, ‘collect information systematically about this focus area’, ‘analyze and reflect’ on the data, and ‘act as necessary again to change or improve the situation’ (*ibid.*).

In addition to ‘the simultaneous focus on action and research’ (Burns, 2005: 58), a very important defining characteristic of action research is that it is conducted by

teachers or practitioners rather than outside researchers. Kemmis and McTaggart point out that action research is ‘undertaken by participants in social situations’ (1988: 1). It is ‘a form of practitioner research’ (Borg, 2010: 394). In the field of education, it can be more specifically identified as a form of teacher research as ‘action research is conducted by or in cooperation with teachers’ (Dörnyei, 2007: 191) and Borg argues that ‘action research (when conducted by teachers) is also teacher research’ (2010: 393). Teacher research is defined as ‘inquiry conducted by teachers in their own professional contexts’ (Borg, 2010: 393). However, ‘not all teacher research follows the procedures which define action research’ (*ibid.*). Teacher research is ‘a broader term than action research’ (*ibid.*) and ‘refers to the agents who conduct the study’ (Bailey, 2001: 491), whereas action research ‘denotes a particular approach’ (*ibid.*). Seeing action research (conducted by teachers) as a form of teacher research emphasizes the role of the teacher as a researcher rather than the one who is being researched (the object of research). Edge and Richards claim that action research brings with it ‘new attempts to make space for the actual voices of those who have previously been merely represented’ (1998: 341) because in action research, ‘a teacher becomes an 'investigator' or 'explorer' of his or her personal teaching context, while at the same time being one of the participants in it’ (Burns, 2010: 2). Giving the ownership of research to the teacher, teacher research including action research ‘aims to close the gap between the researcher and the researched upon’ (McIntosh, 2010: 33).

Another important characteristic of action research is its reflective nature. Kemmis and McTaggart define action research as ‘self-reflective enquiry undertaken by

participants in social situations' (1988: 1). It is 'related to the ideas of 'reflective practice'' (Burns, 2010a: 2). Therefore, reflection is a key word here. Mann argues that:

there is a *continuum* between, at one end, what Wallace (1991: 56) calls 'normal reflective practice of many teachers' or what 'caring teachers have always done' (Bailey 1997: 1) and, at the other end, the more structured and rigorous forms teacher research which include action research. The shorthand for this continuum would be *reflection* and research (Emphasis added, 2005: 108).

Reflection, whether intuitive or structured, requires teachers to have three characteristics: '*Open mindedness* (willingness to listen to more than one side), *Responsibility* (careful consideration of the consequences of our action) [and] *Wholeheartedness* (commitment to seek every opportunity to learn)' (Farrell, 2004: 14). Reflection is a key element in action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) present their action research model and identify reflection as a stage in the on-going cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection (see figure 4-1). Rather than perceiving reflection as only a stage, there are some other authors who view reflection and action research as interrelated. McIntosh, for example, argues that 'there is no doubting the overlapping qualities that are required to engage in effective reflection and action research. They can *coexist* alongside each other and *simultaneously be embedded within each other as they are employed in daily working practices*' (Emphasis added, 2010: 52). Similarly, Burns argues that reflection in action research is 'much more dynamic than simply being the last phase in the cycle' (2010a: 141). It 'happens right from the beginning' (*ibid.*). Reflection for action researchers 'flavours and moulds the whole AR experience' (*ibid.*). In this research, reflection is perceived as dynamic and interrelated with the action research processes as they happen in the daily teaching practices.

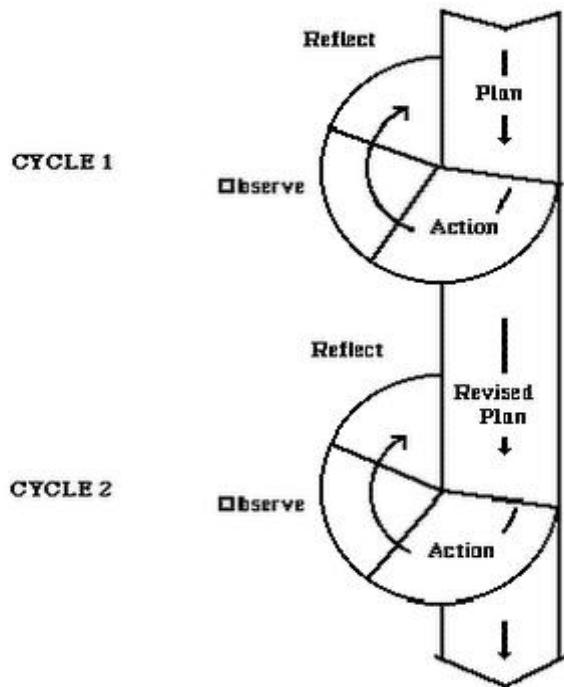


Figure 4-1 (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988)

What distinguishes action research from other types of teacher research that are reflective in nature (e.g. exploratory practice; see Allwright, 2003) is its inherently interventionist nature. Richards argues that action research ‘represents a move from a descriptive/interpretive stance to an interventionist position’ (2003: 24). To Burns, ‘intervention through action occurs in response to a perceived problem, puzzle or question – a gap between the ideal and the reality that people in the social context perceive as in need of change’ (2005: 58). The intervention is, therefore, meant for change and improvement in practice or as Richards put it, it aims to ‘understand better some aspect of professional practice as a means of bringing about improvement’ (2003: 24). According to Noffke and Somekh, ‘action research frequently does not start with a research question. The driving force will be an impetus for change/innovation’ (2005: 91). In order to achieve that, Baumfield et al. argue that action researchers usually adopt a ‘what happens if?’ approach which

indicates that they 'are planning to make a change or series of changes and to measure their impact' (2008: 63-4). In a 'what happens if?' approach, measures can be tests or observations depending on the issues under investigation. Baumfield et al. claim that 'performative data are the observable behaviours which pupils (or indeed anyone else) exhibit in reaction to a change in normal practice' (2008: 39). However, these behaviours may not be a result of the change. That is why 'it is often better to also ask the pupils about the context surrounding these behaviours and why they might have happened (either a questionnaire or an interview)' (*ibid.*). In the case of this research, the intervention was done through integrating supplementary internet materials with the aim of addressing EFL learners' interests in the context. The appropriateness and effectiveness of this change were investigated through collecting performative data with a particular focus on participants' reactions to this change.

Defining action research also necessitates looking at its emergence from both historical and paradigmatic perspectives. From a historical perspective, the social psychologist, Kurt Lewin, 'is widely accredited with being the 'father' of action research' (Burns, 2005: 57) who saw action research as a 'spiral of steps', 'each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action' (Lewin, 1948: 206 as cited in Burns, 2005: 58). Although calls for research to combine theory and practice have been prominent since early twentieth century, action research in the field of English language teaching (ELT) has only '*emerged in the literature predominantly since the late 1980s*' (Italics in original, Burns, 2005: 57). From a paradigmatic perspective,

Action research as an approach to human inquiry has emerged from, and exists as an approach whilst living within, a culture that is heavily weighted towards a technical or positivist paradigm with regard to practice and governance (McIntosh, 2010: 33).

Action research has found itself a place within the emerging constructivist paradigm that has given rise to qualitative research approaches. Action research is perceived as part of the movement towards qualitative research 'that impacted on the social sciences in the latter half of the 20th century and emerged in reaction to scientific, experimental and quantitative paradigms' (Burns, 2005: 57). A very important characteristic of the qualitative approach is its emergent nature. An 'important aspect of this emergent nature is the fact that, ideally, qualitative researchers enter the research process with a completely open mind and without setting out to test preconceived hypotheses' (Dörnyei, 2007: 37). Their understandings will only develop in the field as in being co-constructed with other participants in social settings. This is consistent with the action research evolving processes (Burns, 2010a) that represent an on-going attempt to improve the quality of action based on emerging themes in practice rather than preconceived hypotheses.

In the following sub-section, I talk about the approaches taken to action research and identify the approach I adopted in this research.

4.3.2. Approaches to Action Research

There have been different arguments about what action research should involve and what approach should it take. Burton and Bartlett claim that for 'many of the proponents of the late 1970s and early 1980s' action research 'provided a whole philosophy of the future development and control of education linked to the social

democratic movement in the wider society' (2005: 40). At that time, action research's emancipatory nature was believed to bring about changes in education by 'giving power back to the researched' (Fox et al., 2007: 48). However, in the late eighties and nineties 'as teachers appeared to be losing control over the curriculum, action research seemed increasingly irrelevant' (Burton and Bartlett, 2005: 40). As a result, a more practical view of action research as a problem-solving approach has become prominent while the emancipatory view of it within research has been declining (*ibid.*). To identify which approach an action researcher is taking, a closer look needs to be taken at the assumptions behind conducting an action research project:

	Technical AR	Practical AR	Critical AR
Philosophical Base	Natural sciences	Hermeneutics	Critical theory
Nature of Reality	Measurable	Multiple, holistic, constructed	Inter-related with social and political power structures
Nature of Problem	Predefined (problem-posing)	Defined in context (problem-solving)	Defined in context in relation to emerging values (problematising)
Status of Knowledge	Separate, deductive	Inductive, theory producing	Inductive, theory producing, emancipatory, participatory
Nature of Understanding	Events explained in terms of real causes and simultaneous effects	Events described in terms of interaction between the external context and individual thinking	Events understood in terms of political, social and economic constraints to improved conditions
Purpose of Research	Discover 'laws' of underlying reality	Discover the meanings people make of actions	Understand what impedes more democratic and equal practices
Change Outcomes	Change is value-free and short-lived	Change is value-bounded and dependent on individuals involved	Change is value-relative and leads to ongoing emancipation

Table 4-2 Burns (2005: 58)

Examining the approaches to action research given in the table above (Burns, 2005: 58) helps understanding the nature of this action research project. This action research adopts a practical approach to investigation. Reality is perceived as socially constructed. The problem of the research is defined in context. Knowledge is inductively built and events are interactively described. The purpose of the research is to discover the meanings participants make of actions and the processes associated with the actions. Change outcomes are dependent on the context.

4.3.3. Strengths and Weaknesses of Action Research

One of the strengths of action research is that it is usually carried out by teachers who are more involved in and experienced with their contexts than outside researchers (Burns, 1999). Richards argues that 'as practising teachers, we operate in a professional context ... where we can draw strength from our shared understandings and experiences' (Richards, 2003: 9). Therefore, 'instead of being research on a social setting and the people within it, it is research from inside that setting carried out either by the participants themselves or researchers working in collaboration with them' (Noffke and Somekh, 2005: 89). The collaborative nature of action research allows for better understandings of the phenomenon and leads to 'better' classroom practice. It could also increase the 'validity' and 'reliability' of the research (Burns, 1999). According to Burns,

Arguments for the inclusion of teachers in the enterprise of research range across the democratisation of research, the empowerment of teachers, the need to develop theories of pedagogy from the perspectives of teachers, the expansion of the role of teachers in the production of knowledge about teaching, the professionalisation of teachers, and the relevance of practitioner-based principles for practice (2010b: 528).

Another strength of action research is its applicability in similar contexts. Burton and Bartlett refers to Bassey (1998) to make the point that 'though it is not possible to generalize from the findings of such small-scale research, its strength, according to Bassey (1998), lies in its transferability to similar situations' (2005: 38). That is why Schwalbach 'recommends that action research is reported using thick, rich description, also common in qualitative work' (2003: 9 cited in Burns, 2009: 127). 'In that way, other teachers who read the findings will be able to ascertain whether or not the project is applicable to them or their students' (*ibid.*).

Action research is also constructive, evolutionary, and developmental. Reason and Bradbury claim that 'good action research emerges over time in an evolutionary and developmental process' (2001: 2). These all indicate the dynamic and unpredictable nature of action research. Somekh recommends 'a flexible methodology, not merely in terms of being eclectic in research methods, but more fundamentally in needing to adapt to the social and political situation in which it is employed' (1993: 29). Action researchers play a major role in that as they are the ones who, based on their understandings of their contexts, can choose a flexible and context-appropriate methodology. According to Edge and Richards:

Researchers in this humanistic, or naturalistic, paradigm see themselves as participants in the situations they investigate, and assert that their values and beliefs are multiply involved in choosing what to research, how to research it, and how to represent and to use their findings (1998: 336).

In the current research, methods of data collection were chosen to suit the dual nature of my role as an action researcher. Being both a teacher and a researcher, I

had to think carefully about how and when certain methods can be used so that the data collection would not affect learners' experiences and perceptions.

Although the dual role of a teacher as a researcher is challenging, it can bridge the gap between theory and practice. Proponents of the 'teacher as researcher' movement argue that doing teacher research (including AR) fills in gaps between research and teaching practice (Allwright and Bailey, 1991; Burns, 2005) as teachers research their own teaching practices. Burns cites Hopkins (1993) to make the point that 'academic research conventions have created a separation between theory, research and practice' (1999: 14). However, Burton and Bartlett (2005) think that filling the gap between theory and practice is not merely the task of the practitioner researcher but rather an on-going effort that needs to be made by both academic and practitioner researchers:

The divide between classroom-based research that has a practical purpose and academic research that is theory driven is often overstated. There is a complex interweaving of theory and practice that cannot be ignored. Thus, theoreticians must base their research upon what actually happens for it to have any meaning, where those seeking practical solutions will also need to consider theoretical explanations for their results (Burton and Bartlett, 2005: 44-5).

Although their main focus is on their classroom practices, action researchers need to address this theory/practice dilemma by thinking about the theoretical foundations and explanations to present their work as a coherent piece of research that though very classroom-based still built on academic, theoretical, and methodological foundations.

In spite of the many strengths reported in the literature, action research has been criticized for a number of reasons. Some countervailing arguments are based on the emerging qualitative approach within which action research operates:

Action research is still a relatively new approach to investigation and therefore it is open to criticisms about its underlying philosophies and approaches, the tentativeness of the processes and procedures for carrying it out, the rigor of data analysis, its lack of replicability, and the limited generalizability of the findings (Burns, 2009: 127).

In response to whether action research can count as a research methodology or as a research at all (Jarvis, 1991), Burns states that 'teachers are involved in a genuine research process of data collection, analysis and interpretation, which contrasts with intuitive reflection' (1999: 25). She argues that action research is 'part of the general 'reflective teacher' movement, but it takes the possibilities for reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action further into the realms of research. It also creates opportunities to link teachers' inquiries with 'public' academic theories' (2010a: 17). This link has been established in the current research by both trying to represent the process of the research (through the action research narratives) and also by connecting this account to more theoretical or conceptual contribution regarding the nature of engagement.

The other criticism of action research is that its models that 'prescribe' how 'good' action research should be conducted are too strict (Cater and Halsall, 1998; Burns, 1999; Dadds and Hart, 2001; Burns, 2005; Burton and Bartlett, 2005; Burns, 2010a). Burton and Bartlett, for example, claim that diagrams 'that indicate stages in a research cycle may encourage the view that these are the 'correct' order in which to conduct action research' (2005: 39). Also, Burns refers to McNiff (1988) who argues

that models are not 'intrinsically educational' and they 'imply only that teachers apply a system of action research, without at the same time recognising the role of the teachers' own theorising and personal development in the action research process' (1999: 35). Although models such as Kemmis's and McTaggart's (1988) (see figure 4-1) have the potential to act as a guide for teachers who are interested in conducting action research in their contexts, they can be an over-simplification of the complex situations teachers usually engage with when doing action research. Burns claims that this model 'has been criticised for its over-representation of AR as a series of fixed and predictable steps' (2005: 59). The actual processes of data collection are usually more complicated than the linear way this model presents them. According to Burns:

action research is 'chameleon-like'. It is difficult to make firm plans in advance about the underlying questions or steps in the approach, because the process must vary according to how the research resonates with changes and improvements in practice' (2009: 127).

That is why it may be a mistake to consider action research as a series of separate elements (whether we characterise them as steps or stages) and it may be more helpful to consider them as elements which may happen simultaneously - in this sense they are interrelated. Burns (2005) introduces her action research set of interrelated practices: exploring and identifying a research topic, planning the action, collecting, analysing and reflecting on the data, speculating, intervening (changing and modifying teaching approaches), observing, reporting, and writing (see 5.2.). Richards also criticises the action research descriptions and models which may suggest 'an eternal cycle spiralling through a professional life, but in practice there will be limits to what is possible or desirable' (2003: 25). For all these reasons, models should not be treated as prescriptive frameworks but rather as a source of

guidance as strictly following them may lead to practice that is 'correct' rather than 'good'. Noffke and Somekh argue that 'models are only intended as rough planning tools, not exact representations of a process' (2005: 91) especially in human sciences where research processes cannot be predictable as 'human beings are wonderfully adept at confounding the sort of predictions that operate in the natural world' (Richards, 2003: 9).

Action research has also been criticised for focusing too much on change. Allwright, for example, argues that 'only a serious effort to understand life in a particular setting will enable you to decide if practical change is necessary, desirable, and/or possible' (2003: 128). Although the focus on change has been criticised and portrayed as a weak point, change is viewed as a strong point by proponents of action research. Burns, for example, argues that 'action research can be contrasted with other types of research which may aim to hypothesize, describe, analyze, explain, interpret, theorize, and generalize – but not to make immediate changes in specific teaching practices within the research context' (2009: 115). Kemmis (2010) goes further in emphasising the role of change and explores 'the place of action research in shaping and making history by changing what is done' (2010: 417). In the current research, change is perceived as a strong point. It is what made the research alive and responsive to the developments in technology, methodology and thinking.

4.3.4. Evaluating the Quality of Action Research

The quality of action research has been questioned because it 'draws frequently on qualitative research approaches, which typically rely on the ability of the researcher

to interpret the meanings of the data' (Burns, 2009: 127). A novice action researcher, according to Burns, may ask "what's the point of this research, when it is just something I have done subjectively in my classroom?" In other words, they worry about the quality and validity' (*ibid.*), and also the reliability of their research. These worries, however, 'misinterpret the aims and goals of action research and come from the perspectives of the experimental research tradition' (*ibid.* 128). Action research does not 'aim for the kind of objectivity required in experimental quantitative research' (*ibid.* 127). Creswell, however, makes the point that 'early qualitative researchers felt compelled to relate traditional notions of validity and reliability to the procedures in qualitative research' (1994: 157). Whereas reliability describes 'the extent to which a research instrument or method is repeatable' (Burton and Bartlett, 2005: 26), validity refers to 'the 'truthfulness', 'correctness' or accuracy of research data' (*ibid.* 27). Edge and Richards argue that with the emergence of the qualitative approach, however, 'traditional concepts such as reliability and validity are no longer accepted as unproblematic, the onus is on the researcher to establish his or her own warrant' (1998: 335).

The quality of qualitative research needs to be evaluated using different concepts from those of positivist research. Positivist concepts with their underlying assumptions about the objective truth can no longer address the new types of concerns qualitative researchers have. According to Edge and Richards, 'forms of knowing and discovering other than the rationalistic are necessary when we attempt, not to dominate our physical environment, but to understand human beings' (1998: 336). That is why qualitative researchers have to develop 'their own language to

distance themselves from the positivist paradigms' (Creswell, 1994: 157) as the knowledge they seek is context-bound and dependent on the participants involved. Examining the list below by Edge and Richards (1998: 345) illustrates how in the different research approaches different criteria need to be used to evaluate the quality of research:

Underlying concept	Rationalist criterion	Naturalistic criterion
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

It is clear from Edge and Richards's list that 'the type of 'truth' which is appropriate to demand of naturalistic inquiry is that it be a credible version of what happened, both in terms of description and interpretation' (*ibid.*). The credibility of this version would be enhanced by providing evidence for the claims made. As for transferability, 'naturalistic inquiry will not deliver a generalization which can be abstracted and 'applied', instead it seeks to produce understandings of one situation which someone with knowledge of another situation may well be able to make use of' (*ibid.*). This is similar to what Creswell says with regard to qualitative studies that are embedded in a particular context. He argues that:

the uniqueness of a study within a specific context mitigates against replicating it exactly in another context. However, statements about the researcher's position - the central assumptions, the selection of informants, the biases and values of the researcher – enhance the study's chances of being replicated in another setting (Creswell, 1994: 159).

Regarding dependability, in qualitative studies the processes and findings are all dependent on the context and the people involved and, therefore, cannot be exactly

replicated in a different context. Also, confirmability is not about the objectivity that the researcher would claim in quantitative studies but rather about the evidence provided to support the claims made:

Dependability is not a matter of replicability, but of taking care that the inevitable changes in the situation being investigated, in the participants, and in the emergent design of the research itself are properly documented, so that the decisions made and the conclusions reached are justifiable in their own contexts. Similarly, confirmability is not an issue of matching descriptions to objective facts, but of providing evidence which confirms the presence of the data according to the perspective, standpoint, or value-system espoused by the researcher (Edge and Richards, 1998: 345)

Action research needs to address the same kinds of issues identified in the naturalistic approach. Ensuring the credibility of action research requires providing evidence of the claims made. Validity ‘relates to the ‘trustworthiness’ of action research – are the findings presented supported by the data? How accurate are the claims being made?’ (Burns, 2009: 127). In other words, action researchers need to ensure the good quality of their research by showing ‘that the steps in the research are reasonable and logical and the conclusions presented are well supported by the available evidence’ (*ibid.* 128). With regard to the transferability of action research to similar contexts, action research needs to be reported using thick description. ‘In that way, other teachers who read the findings will be able to ascertain whether or not the project is applicable to them or their students’ (*ibid.* 127). As dependability accounts for the inevitable changes in the processes of the research, action researchers need to report the changes that happen to the process. Burns claims that ‘in reporting or publishing action research, it is important to ‘tell the story of the research’ as completely as possible, so that consumers of the research are able to clearly detect the steps in the design’ (*ibid.* 128). Addressing the paradigmatically-

appropriate concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability is, therefore, important for conducting and presenting a trustworthy action research.

One way to strengthen trustworthiness in action research is through **triangulation**, an approach commonly used in qualitative research ... By using several data-collection techniques and comparing what they tell you, you can determine whether your analysis and findings are well supported across different sources of information ... Other ways of increasing action research quality are ... to consider the changing dimensions and stages of the study; to describe the context in sufficient detail for the specific circumstances to be well understood; and to be as objective and unbiased as possible by drawing on the data rather than your assumptions (Bold in original, ibid. 127).

In the current research, I am using the following strategies to strengthen the trustworthiness of this research. I will be adopting a narrative form of representation (as part of my analysis) which will account for the inevitable changes that took place throughout the action research process (see Chapter Five) and so does justice to 'the story of the research' (ibid. 128). The aim of using these detailed accounts is to reflect 'fidelity to real life, context- and situation- specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents' (Cohen et al, 2007: 149). I also conducted different research methods that were suitable to investigate the issues I wanted to investigate and were consistent with the paradigm within which this research operates (see 4.4.). According to Burton and Bartlett, action researchers should be 'concerned with the suitability of the methods for eliciting qualitative, accurate and detailed accounts from each respondent' (2005: 26). The aim of using different research methods is to draw on and compare between the different data extracts to ensure that what is reported is well-supported and evidenced. Triangulation 'entails using more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena' (Bryman, 2004: 275). It means 'checking one's findings by using several points of reference' (Burton and

Bartlett, 2005: 28). According to Creswell, 'the concept of *triangulation* was based on the assumption that any bias inherent in particular data sources ... would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources' (Emphasis in original, 1994: 174). So, the rationale for triangulation is that the weakness of one method could be counterbalanced with the strength of another and that would enhance the trustworthiness of the research. Duff makes the point that although 'the notion of triangulation may have originally had positivist undertones (multiple sources of information leading to one "truth" to be discovered by the researcher), it can also be used to ascertain multiple forms of interpretation (or multiple realities)' (2008: 30). In qualitative research, it is assumed that researchers 'use the different sources of data to give greater depth to their analysis' (Burton and Bartlett, 2005: 28).

4.3.5. Ethical Considerations

In action research, where the teacher is the researcher and deals with learners in natural classroom settings, ethical issues become highly relevant. The decisions about what methods to use for data collection and how to use them needed to be continually negotiated with the participants to ensure the ethicality of a teacher-researcher's actions in the context. Burns argues that 'key principles in the ethical conduct of action research are *responsibility*, *confidentiality* and *negotiation*' (Emphasis in original, 1999: 71). As a teacher-researcher, I was conscious of these principles. In addition to negotiating the use of the data collection methods, I also took into consideration other ethically important issues. I made sure that data accessed were kept in a safe place and that participants' rights were respected. Their rights to decide on their participation in the research and to withdraw at any point were made clear both orally and in the written consent forms which were distributed

among all the research participants (the Dean, the Head of the Department, the teachers and the learners involved). Creswell argues that 'first and foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the informant(s)' (1994: 165). Also, participants were informed that their names will be anonymous and that whatever information they give will not be associated with their names. However, as the name of the institution is given and the courses as well, it is very difficult to ensure complete anonymity where the context is clearly identified. Walford argues that 'in many forms of qualitative educational research it is often actually impossible to offer confidentiality and anonymity. Further, it may be undesirable to try to do so' (2005: 84) as 'most information is given in the expectation that it will, in some form or other, be made public in research publications' (*ibid.* 85).

In this research, all teacher and learner participants were first provided with participant information sheets that included information about the research purposes, methods and procedures. When participants expressed their willingness to participate in this study, consent forms were provided. They were told that although they signed the consent forms, their right to withdraw from the study was still ensured. However, I was aware of the complexity of the situation especially with regard to the learner participants. Being the teacher may affect students' decisions, but it is worth mentioning here that being introduced as a co-teacher was very much helpful in this regard. To some extent at least, it alleviated the problem of my status. Learners saw me more of a helper than a teacher in the traditional sense. My identity was somewhere between a teacher and a student. They knew that I was also a student (at

the University of Warwick) and that I had been a teacher previously. That allowed learners to express their feelings about taking or not taking a part in the research more openly (see 5.2.1.).

As for the Dean and the Head of the English Department, they were also provided with participant information sheets and consent forms. They very kindly read and signed them while expressing their kind wishes for a successful completion of data collection and hopes that this research provides insights on the internet's useful applications to support EFL learning in the Institute.

4.4. Research Methods

Like all qualitative traditions, research methods such as observations, recordings, interviews, documents, and journals can also be used in action research 'though journal keeping by the practitioner-researcher is perhaps more prominent than in other traditions' (Richards, 2003: 25). Rather than seeing different methods 'in opposition, it might be better to see them as complementary within a multi-part study' (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 33). Creswell argues that:

A combined method study is one in which the researcher uses multiple methods of data collection and analysis. These methods might be drawn from "within methods" approaches (...). Alternatively, it might involve "between methods," drawing on qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures (1994: 174).

This research has taken a 'within methods' approach that draws on qualitative data collection procedures. The different qualitative methods used are observations (taking field notes), audio-recordings, interviews and diaries as will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.4.1. Observation

Observation is 'the systematic viewing of people's actions and the recording, analysis and interpretation of their behaviour' (Gray, 2009: 397). It is 'one of the most commonly employed data collection procedures in classroom research' (Gass and Mackey, 2007: 165). It allows 'researchers to gather detailed data on the events, interactions, and patterns of language use within particular foreign and second language classroom contexts' (*ibid.*). Dörnyei makes the point that observation 'provides direct information rather than self-report accounts' (2007: 178). In this sense, observational data capture the actual practices and behaviours and provide insights into how things are done rather than how they are thought should be done.

A researcher may choose to be a participant observer who 'becomes a full member of the group, taking part in all the activities' (Dörnyei, 2007: 179) or a non-participant observer who sits back in the corner observing without being actively involved. In relation to action research, Burns claims that:

The very nature of action research, conducted, as it typically is, within a specific school or organisational context, implies that all teacher researchers are participants to some extent, although, in practice, participant observation may mean adopting different levels of involvement in the research situation. These range from completely active involvement, where the teacher is both a participant and an observer, to a more passive form of involvement, where the teacher researcher may be an observer but not a participant (1999: 82).

In this study, my role as an observer changed throughout the process from being a passive observer in the first cycle to being an active participant observer in the second cycle. Alder and Alder claim that participant observation 'enjoys the advantage of drawing the observer into the phenomenological complexity of the

world, where connections, correlations, and causes can be witnessed as and how they unfold' (1994: 378, cited in Richards, 2003: 119).

Burns (2010a) highlights the point that AR observation is different from the observations teachers may be involved in their daily classroom practices. She claims that action research observation is 'self-conscious' because it is:

- focused: you are seeking specific information about something, rather than looking in a general way;
- objective: you are aiming to see things as they really are and not just through a personal, subjective or intuitive lens;
- reflective: you are observing in order to see things from a position of inquiry and analysis;
- evaluated and re-evaluated: you check out your own interpretations by yourself or collaboratively with others (Burns, 2010a: 57)

In this sense, observation and its thorough documentation contribute to the trustworthiness of action research (see 4.3.4).

Observations can also be classified as structured and unstructured. Dörnyei claims that 'the 'structured/unstructured distinction is similar to the 'quantitative/qualitative' distinction in observational terms' (2007: 179). To him, 'structured observation involves going into the classroom with a specific focus and with concrete observation categories' (*ibid.*), whereas unstructured observation is more qualitative

as it is 'less clear on what it is looking for and the researcher needs to observe what is taking place before deciding on its significance for the research' (*ibid.*). In the case of this research, the observation conducted was semi-structured in the sense that the teacher-researcher knew in a general sense what she was looking for but the categories were not pre-specified. Dörnyei makes the point that this is 'a continuum, and in practice usually some combination of the two approaches takes place' (*ibid.*).

Given the qualitative nature of this research and the time pressure on a teacher-observer, the observational data took the shape of note making. In the first cycle, as I was a passive observer, I took notes when learners were busy doing the tasks, whereas in the second cycle and as I was involved in students' discussions, I decided to reduce my note taking while the activities were being done as taking notes was believed to distract learners and influence their interactions. So, I only took notes of particular events during the interactions that I thought I could not remember if postponed. Since I audio recorded all lessons (see 4.4.2.), it was less important to capture full descriptions of all activities than would have been the case had I been relying entirely on notes.

Burns claims that 'not all observation data are counted. Some are produced using a descriptive and narrative style and are not as structured as observation checklists. These kinds of data are recorded in the form of notes made by the researcher' (2010a: 67). Burns points out that these kinds of data 'are used to note descriptions and

accounts of what happened in the classroom, including – depending on what you are focusing on' (*ibid.*). According to Burns,

Observational note-making of various kinds is a flexible tool for action research data collection, although, of course, it requires additional time during or after teaching. It can be utilised (...) as a way of documenting and analysing issues and themes already identified as the main purpose of the research (1999: 85).

In the current research, I used the notes not only to describe what happened while doing the internet activities but also to guide and to structure my questions to the learners after doing their internet activities. The notes helped me to ensure the immediacy of getting feedback as the short time span between the action and the feedback was believed to generate more detailed comments from the learners.

Another distinction is made between covert and overt observation. In covert observation, the participants are not informed that they are being observed whereas in overt observation they are told that they are (Gray, 2009). Gray claims that 'one of the arguments in favour of covert observation is that people may change their behaviour when they know they are being observed, thus threatening the validity of the results' (2009: 397-8). However, the problem with this kind of observation is that 'it can be construed as unethical' (*ibid.* 398). In practice, 'the extent to which participants in a research project are informed that they are being observed ranges from full disclosure to no disclosure at all, with many projects somewhere in the middle' (*ibid.*).

4.4.2. Classroom Audio Recordings

'Audio recordings are, in many ways, the easiest means of capturing spoken interaction in classrooms' (Walsh, 2011: 68). They are 'valuable sources of accurate information on patterns of interactional behaviour which may not be obvious during the actual teaching process' (Burns, 1999: 94). Now, some may argue that although audio recordings are useful for collecting interactional data, audio recorders may affect the participants' performance as they will always be aware of their presence. However, Burns claims that 'familiarity with the presence of the equipment is likely to occur much quickly' (*ibid.*, 96) than we expect. In my research, although learners had been told at the beginning and given permission, they still used to confuse the recorder for a mobile phone from time to time (see figure 4-2). Indeed, as the mp3 recorder looked very similar and others also had mobile phones visible, it was less conspicuous than may at first be thought.



Figure 4-2 My MP3 Recorder

Burns (1999) claims that transcribed data allows a fairly quick way of looking at the audio-recorded data and making sense out of them in a relatively short period of time. In the case of this research, although all classes were audio-recorded, the aim

of audio-recording was to focus on students' interactions while doing internet-related activities. The transcripts of the interactions were triangulated with other data sources like interviews and learners' immediate comments to achieve better understandings of the appropriateness and effectiveness of integrating supplementary internet materials. In the field, I carefully listened to the recording of every class, transcribed the parts that were related to my notes to develop further questions for the participants, if needed.

4.4.3. Interviews

Interviews are usually divided into structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007), Richards points out that 'there is a difference between those following a specific agenda, where the interviewer controls the development of the interview, and those which are allowed to develop more naturally' (2003: 51). In a structured interview, 'the agenda is totally predetermined by the researcher, who works through a list of set questions in a predetermined order' (Nunan, 1992: 149), while in the semi-structured interview 'the interviewer has a general idea of where he or she wants the interview to go, and what should come out of it ... topics and issues rather than questions determine the course of the interview' (*ibid.*, 149). Nunan claims that the advantages of a semi-structured interview are first 'that it gives the interviewee a degree of power and control over the course of the interview' (1992: 150). Secondly, 'it gives the interviewer a great deal of flexibility. Finally, and most profoundly, this form of interview gives one privileged access to other people's lives' (*ibid.*). Richards ignores 'the sort of tightly structured interview that has at best a rare place in qualitative research' (2003: 48) and the unstructured interview as he

says ‘there is no such thing as a completely ‘non-directive’ interview’ (*ibid.* 51). The qualitative nature of this research required conducting semi-structured interviews.

There is another ‘distinction between formal and informal interviews’ (Richards, 2003: 51). Richards argues that:

Some interviews are formally arranged in advance and all parties understand what is taking place, but others arise in the context (...) When we observe, and listen, we don't shut ourselves off from what is happening around us, and in the course of our work there will be plenty of opportunities to talk with the people we encounter. Whether or not such talk could be described as interviews really doesn't matter too much (...) we could say that talk becomes an interview when the researcher designs their contribution to elicit responses focused on a particular topic (2003: 51).

Given the nature of this research and my role as a teacher-researcher, I found using informal talk very helpful in eliciting the participants' comments and feelings about their daily experiences of using the internet materials. These talks were mostly recorded, although learners sometimes used to come to me and to talk about their experiences when we were about to leave the classroom and when my recorder was off, but I used to write all the details immediately after getting out of class.

Mann (2010) argues that many metaphors are used to describe the interview process. These metaphors ‘are revealing from an epistemological perspective’ (Mann, 2010: 2). He cites Kvale (1996: 5) who makes a contrast between two interview metaphors: ‘mining’ and ‘traveling’. In fact, ‘the traveller evokes a post-modern constructivist position that stands in contrast to the positivist miner extracting nuggets of raw truth’ (Mann, 2010: 2). Given the qualitative nature of this research and the constructivist paradigm within which it operates, the interviews conducted were perceived as co-

constructions in the sense that the questions asked to each interviewee were not predetermined. They were interactively shaped throughout the interview. Mann argues that ‘it is now well established that interview talk is inevitably a co-construction between the interviewer and interviewee’ (*ibid.* 4).

According to Mann ‘an emphasis on co-construction leads to a greater emphasis on the interviewer’ (2010: 11). He argues that:

The social science literature has focused primarily on distinctive features of the interviewee (e.g. attention to age, race, gender, and issues of power). The importance of co-construction is that it inevitably requires more attention to be paid to what the interviewer is bringing to the process (2010: 5).

To highlight what the interviewer brings to the process, a number of procedures need to be taken. The researchers, for example, ‘need to be more open in their accounting for how membership, roles and relationship can affect the way talk develops’ (*ibid.* 11). Is the interviewer the teacher and the interviewee a student? Power distance is a very important factor to consider in this regard as students may only report what they think the teacher wants them to report. Mann points out that ‘researchers often fail to consider the impact of key aspects of interviewer identity in their analysis’ (*ibid.*). Another procedure to take is to provide transcribed extracts from interviews that include both the interviewer’s and the interviewee’s turns. Mann claims that ‘it is likely that any study that seriously grapples with the co-construction dilemma will need to represent the talk with some kind of transcription’ (*ibid.* 10). Also, the context in which the interview is conducted needs to be considered. In Chapters Five and Six, I try to show longer stretches of interviews to show some of my contributions and not airbrush them out.

In qualitative research, interviews are usually conducted to understand social events from the participants' perspectives. The researcher may 'ask numerous open-ended questions, or open-ended probes ... Such open questions are important in allowing the respondents to say what they think and to do so with greater richness and spontaneity' (Nunan, 1992: 81). Richards claims that 'in qualitative inquiry we need to go deeper, to pursue understanding in all its complex, elusive and shifting forms; and to achieve this we need to establish a relationship with people that enables us to share in their perception of the world (2003: 50). This was what I tried to do in order to build this kind of trust between the interviewer, me in this case, and the interviewees, to establish a good relationship that would ensure rapport; a quality that 'keeps the respondent motivated and interested in answering the questions truthfully' (Oppenheim, 1992: 89). Mann argues that 'each interview is set up and there are often requests, explanations, and rapport building before the research interview begins in earnest' (2010: 5).

4.4.4. Diaries

Gray claims that it is 'advisable to keep a diary throughout the action research project as it can, as a minimum, provide a factual description of events, dates and people' (2009: 325). He suggests other useful purposes of keeping a diary:

- An *aide-memoire* of short notes for later reflection.
- A detailed portrait of events to provide a 'thick description' for later reports.

- A reflective account through which the researcher makes tentative interpretations of events, or through which the researcher records personal feelings and anxieties in order to try to understand them.
- An analytical tool that could contain a framing of the original research focus and a provisional analysis of the data as they are gathered (Italics in original, *ibid.*).

According to Burns, the aim of using a teacher-researcher diary is that it 'can provide valuable insights into classroom interactions and the students' responses to their learning experiences' (1999: 133). In this research, I started using a diary while I was still planning to go to the field. I used to write factual descriptions of the processes, reflections and decisions. Throughout the process, the diary contributed to my developing understanding and decision-making and that was very helpful for me as an action-researcher. I also asked learners to keep diaries. The co-teacher whom I worked with in the second cycle agreed to keep a diary but later apologized for not doing so. Her decision was respected. According to Dörnyei, the limitation of a diary is that the informant needs to be comfortable at writing it as 'it is very demanding on the part of the informant' (2007: 158).

In the following table, I present an overview of the research methods used and the data collected. These methods need also to be related to the different phases of this action research and therefore will be revisited in the Chapter Five.

Research Methods and Data Collected	Cycle One (from the 1 st of July till the 7 th of September 2009)	Cycle Two (from the 14 th of September till the 24 th of December 2009)
Classroom audio-recordings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 audio-recorded sessions in the THLI Teachers' Computer Room. • The length of these sessions ranged from half an hour and an hour and a half. • All the interactions in these sessions were transcribed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53 audio-recorded two-hour classes in Room 57 in the THLI. • Only the interactions around internet-assisted activities were transcribed.
Observation and field notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sessions were observed by the TR and field notes were taken (Non-participant observation). • The field notes were descriptions of learners' behavioural reactions to the internet materials and activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All classes were observed by the TR and field notes were taken (Participant Observation). • The field notes were descriptions of learners' behavioural reactions to the internet materials and activities.
Learners' interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 post-session group interviews were conducted with the four volunteer advanced learners from the Conversation Course. • The length of these interviews ranged from fifteen to twenty minutes. • All these interviews were transcribed. Code-switching was very common. The transcribed Arabic was later translated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 post-course individual interviews were conducted with learners from the Constant Learning Course. The length of these interviews ranged from 45 minutes to one hour. • 13 post-class informal interviews were also conducted throughout the course but only when internet materials were used in these classes. The length of these informal interviews was relatively short (sometimes about 7-8 minutes). All these interviews were transcribed and translated to English.
Teachers' interviews	<p style="text-align: center;">—</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 interviews were conducted with teachers who had previous internet experiences with EFL learners. The length of these interviews ranged from fifteen to forty minutes. All these interviews were conducted in the THLI Staff Room. All these interviews were transcribed. • One post-course interview with the co-teacher. The interview took place in the THLI Staff Room. It lasted for an hour. • All teachers' interviews were conducted in English.
Learners' diaries	4	4
TR's diary	1	1

Table 4-3 Overview of Methods Used and Data Collected

As evident from the table above, I used qualitative data methods such as semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and diaries. The main criticism of these methods ‘concerns the idiosyncratic nature of the small participant samples’ (Dörnyei, 2007: 41). In other words, it would not be possible to generalize the findings. That is why it is important to use thick and rich description. ‘In that way, other teachers who read the findings will be able to ascertain whether or not the project is applicable to them or their students’ (Schwalbach, 2003: 9 cited in Burns, 2009: 127).

4.5. Handling the Data

After the data are collected, the qualitative researcher usually goes through the data over and over again looking for patterns and emerging ideas. However, in action research, data analysis ‘does not have to wait until the end’ (Burns, 2010a: 135). It starts at the very early stages of data collection. Working under the qualitative umbrella and within the action research tradition has shaped the approaches I adopted to data analysis as ‘researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 84).

4.5.1. Methods of Data Analysis

Mann argues that ‘qualitative research allows for an approach that draws on a number of analytic tools’ (2002: 74) as ‘in essence, one recipe guides analysis’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78). In this sub-section, the aim is to discuss the different analytical approaches that guided my qualitative data analysis in this action research

study. The ‘decision not to concentrate on one method, then, is a principled one’ (Mann, 2002: 74).

4.5.1.1. Narrative Analysis

Edge and Richards argue that educational developments have led to a growing interest in teachers’ personal narratives ‘which are beginning to permeate the world of TESOL … bringing with them new attempts to make space for the actual voices of those who have previously been merely represented’ (1998: 341). Through action research, teachers’ voices have been given much space to account for their experiences as they evolve over time. Hannu et al. argues that ‘action research reports are often narratives, located in the context of the evolving experiences of those involved’ (2007: 5). Similarly, Clandinin and Connelly argue that ‘narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience’ (2000: 18). It is actually ‘well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning’ (Webster and Mertova, 2007: 1). Given the evolving nature of action research, a narrative form of representation is used to account for the processes and experiences while developing appropriate internet methodology in the context of the research.

A narrative account can be analytic. Narrative Analysis is a form of qualitative data analysis. It ‘provides a storied analysis’ (Croker, 2009: 14). It ‘takes the perspective of the participant(s) and uses first-person accounts of life experiences as data, mostly gathered through interviews’ (*ibid.*). In this research, semi-structured and informal interviews (see 4.4.3.) were used to gather narrative data about participants’

experiences throughout the research process. De Fina and Perino ‘see storytelling in interviews as a fertile ground for theoretical and methodological reflection that is paramount for narrative analysis’ (2011: 2).

In action research, one way the teacher-researcher ‘can analyse and reduce observations and observational note-taking data is by telling the research story’ (Burns, 2009: 123). Burns argues that there are four ways to present notes or recordings:

- Chronological – reducing them into a form that recounts the main events (the story of the process over time).
- Selective – picking out unusual, special, or critical events that show how/why the direction of the research changed (the story of key incidents).
- Particular – focusing on particular students, activities, classroom materials and their uses, or locations and describing their roles in the research (the story of a specific case).
- Conceptual – focusing on issues or decisions that arose as you observed and took notes on your practice (the story of your developing understandings and teaching theories). (*ibid.*)

By drawing on all aspects of the list above, the narrative reports in this research ‘look inward, outward, backward, and forward at … experiences in order to capture their temporal nature and their personal and social dimensions, and to see them as

situated within the places or sequences of places in which they occur and from which they emerge' (Johnson and Golombok, 2002: 3).

4.5.1.2. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is defined as 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). It 'minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail' (*ibid.*). The reason why I adopted thematic analysis in this study is that it 'offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data' (*ibid.* 77). In the table below, Braun and Clarke identify the main phases involved in thematic analysis:

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 4-4 Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 87)

The process, therefore, starts with taking notes and identifying interesting features while reading or transcribing the data. Trying to label elements of the data is usually known as coding. Then, gathering similar codes helps in developing patterns or themes to represent parts of the data in a way that would answer the questions that may have already been defined by the researcher or redefined in the process of the data analysis. Braun and Clarke point out that ‘a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question’ (*ibid.* 82).

In thematic analysis, themes can be identified in two ways: ‘in an inductive or ‘bottom up’ way … or in a theoretical or deductive or ‘top down’ way’ (*ibid.* 83). ‘An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves … (as such, this form of thematic analysis bears some similarity to grounded theory)’ (*ibid.*) in the sense that themes emerge from the data. According to Braun and Clarke,

In this approach, if the data have been collected specifically for the research (eg, via interview or focus group), the themes identified may bear little relation to the specific questions that were asked of the participants. They would also not be driven by the researcher’s theoretical interest in the area or topic. Inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions. In this sense, this form of thematic analysis is data-driven (*ibid.*).

In contrast, ‘a ‘theoretical’ thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher’s theoretical or analytic interest in the area, and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven’ (*ibid.* 84).

Rather than perceiving them as opposites, it may be better to think of the inductive and the deductive thematic analyses as complementary to each other in the sense that one’s drawbacks would be enhanced by the strengths of the other. The way it worked in this research exemplifies how they could complement each other. When I started analysing the qualitative data in the field, I adopted the inductive approach trying to find out about the appropriateness and the effectiveness of using supplementary internet materials through examining the participants’ daily experiences and perceptions. Adopting the inductive approach to analysis helped me in developing

appropriate internet methodology. But, with regard to the effectiveness of the materials used, the process was very complicated. The inductive approach seemed to take me in no particular direction. I started to get lost in the data which were showing evidence of the effectiveness of the internet materials in different areas such as active participation, motivation, and autonomy. Focusing on only one of the emerging areas was not only unfair to present what was coming out from the data but also impossible as even when I tried to focus my questions and observations on one particular area the data I got were not telling what I wanted to hear. This was not an easy process. On the contrary, it was very difficult, time-consuming, frustrating, and even worrying sometimes as I could see how the research was losing focus and direction. So, I decided to go back to the literature to see where all these emerging areas could lead to. While the internet literature did not help me find a theoretical framework to bring all the different parts together, the literature on motivation did. Engagement as a multidimensional construct had emerged in this back and forth process (between the inductive process and categories derived from my reading). Exploring the literature, I could identify recent and comprehensive models of learners' engagement (Svalberg, 2009; Caulfield, 2010) that account for the behavioural, cognitive, affective, and also social aspects of individual responses to certain activities. The analytical framework I used in this research was developed from these already existing models and, therefore, applied deductively (or at least in the back and forth manner described above). Making use of existing models helped me compensate for the drawbacks that resulted from merely relying on the inductive approach.

The analytical framework provided the main themes for engagement under which deductively- as well as inductively-developed sub-themes fell. Braun and Clarke argue that:

You will need to identify whether or not a theme contains any sub-themes. Sub-themes are essentially themes-within-a-theme. They can be useful for giving structure to a particularly large and complex theme, and also for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data (2006: 92).

Richards et al argue that thematic analysis ‘is based on the identification of themes in a text at different levels’ (2012: 79); i.e., themes and sub-themes. Taking the main themes and some sub-themes from the engagement literature and adding others that were inductively developed from the data did not only result in enriching the existing models on learners’ engagement but also in applying them to the area of Internet-Assisted Language Learning.

After doing the thematic analysis, the presentation of themes in the final analysis needs to be supported with extracts from the data. A ‘data extract refers to an individual coded chunk of data’ (*ibid.* 79) which has been extracted from a data item. A ‘data item is used to refer to each individual piece of data collected, which together make up the data set’ (*ibid.*). Using more than one extract and from different data items and sets to exemplify a theme would reflect how common it is in the data and reduce the risk of engaging in ‘cherry-picking’ (Morse, 2010). Braun and Clarke point out that ‘there are various ‘conventions’ for representing prevalence in thematic (and other qualitative) analysis that does not provide a quantified measure’ (2006: 83), for example, ‘the majority of participants’, ‘many participants’, or ‘a number of participants’. ‘Such descriptors work rhetorically to suggest a theme

really existed in the data, and to convince us they are reporting truthfully about the data' (ibid.). Although it is important to represent the prevalence, 'the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures _ but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question' (ibid. 82).

In short, in spite of all the advantages that using thematic analysis brought to this research, some of the disadvantage were that unlike narrative analysis, in thematic analysis 'you are unable to retain a sense of continuity and contradiction through any one individual account, and these contradictions and consistencies across individual accounts may be revealing' (ibid. 97). Also, 'in contrast to methods similar to DA and CA, a simple thematic analysis does not allow the researcher to make claims about language use, or the fine-grained functionality of talk' (ibid.). That was why I needed to draw on other types of analyses to compensate for the disadvantages specified above.

4.5.1.3. Interaction and Interactional Analyses

In analyzing classroom interaction data, I drew on tools from both interaction and interactional analyses. According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), interaction analysis needs to be distinguished from interactional analysis. While 'interaction analysis describes functional aspects of classroom interaction (for example, teacher provides explanation)' (ibid. 166), interactional analysis 'on the other hand, provides a means of describing the interactions in which learners participate' (ibid.).

Interactional analysis focuses on aspects of interaction such as negotiation of meaning and communication strategies.

4.5.1.3.1. Interaction Analysis

In this research, I adopted an *ad hoc* approach to interaction analysis (IA). According to Walsh, *ad hoc* approaches help in developing a ‘flexible instrument, which may, for example, be based on a specific classroom problem or area of interest. The instrument may be designed *as part of an action research project* in which practitioners wish to answer a particular question’ (Emphasis added, Walsh, 2011: 79).

The main advantage of this approach to IA is that it allows us, as observers, to focus on specific details in the interaction that we can then describe and attempt to explain. The whole process is much more from the inside looking out and less from the outside looking in. In other words, an *ad hoc* system is ... likely to promote understanding and generate explanations (*ibid.* 80).

Walsh gives the example of a teacher asking ‘a student to clarify something the student has said’ to illustrate how an *ad hoc* approach would ‘help teachers gain closer understandings of their teacher talk’ (*ibid.* 79). As the focus in this action research was on learners’ engagement, an *ad hoc* approach to interaction analysis helped in identifying facilitators and impediments of learners’ engagement throughout the action research process and later in finding examples for the different types of learners’ engagement with internet materials (behavioural, cognitive, affective, and social). Walsh provides a summary of the advantages of *ad hoc* approaches to interaction analysis and refers to its usefulness particularly for practitioner researchers:

- *Ad hoc* approaches to classroom observation give participants ownership of the research design process and greater insights into the issues under investigation.
- By focusing on the detail of the interaction, such approaches allow practitioners to access and understand complex phenomena that might otherwise take years of class experience to acquire (*ibid.* 80).

As discussed in the Literature Review Chapter, engagement is a complex phenomenon and ‘behavioral manifestations are incomplete ... as measures of student engagement’ (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991: 263). Examining what learners ‘say, how they interact, how they use the L2 and so on’ (Walsh, 2011: 50) is important to account for the complexity of the construct.

4.5.1.3.2. Interactional Analysis

In order to examine how learners interacted especially with regard to social engagement (see 6.2.4.), I focused on interactional aspects such as negotiation of meaning and the use of communication strategies. Negotiation of meaning refers to ‘conversational exchanges that arise when interlocutors seek to prevent a communicative impasse occurring or to remedy an actual impasse that has arisen’ (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005: 166-7). Whereas ‘negotiation of meaning is ‘listener-oriented’, communication strategies are ‘speaker-oriented’; that is, they are used by learners to compensate for lack of L2 knowledge or their inability to access the knowledge they have’ (*ibid.* 170-1).

Ellis (2003) identifies four strategies for negotiating meaning. These strategies are comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks and recasts. Communication strategies, on the other hand, are very difficult to classify as they are more spontaneous and less planned by their users. They are usually affected by the interlocutors' willingness to keep the conversation going. Examples of communication strategies would be paraphrasing and cooperative strategies (Bygate, 1987). Whereas paraphrasing can be exemplified by lexical substitution and superordinates, appeal for help is an example of cooperative strategies.

4.5.2. Some Related Issues to the Presentation of the Data

4.5.2.1. Transcription

'The aim in any transcription is to describe the talk as fully but as simply as possible' (Richards, 2003: 182). 'If you include too much detail the transcription will be very difficult to read, but if you settle for just the words you hear this may fail to capture important aspects of the interaction' (*ibid.*). In the current research, I used some of the transcription conventions summarized in Richards (2003). Here are the symbols I used:

- The *period* is used to indicate falling intonation, such as would be used to mark the end of a sentence when reading. In talk, it indicates a point where it would be legitimate for another speaker to take a turn without being seen to interrupt.

- A *comma* indicates exactly the opposite. This represents a ‘continuing’ contour, the sort of intonation that shows the speaker wishes to carry on speaking.
- A *question mark* signals questioning intonation.
- The *exclamation mark* indicates an exclamatory utterance.
- Periods in brackets to indicate pauses (*ibid.* 182-4)

In addition to these conventions and in classroom interaction transcripts I used inverted commas to indicate that the words were from the internet and not the interlocutor’s own words. I also provided some contextual descriptions or explanations where necessary and put them into brackets. When a laugh was heard, I indicated that in the transcript by using the word ((laughs)) for individual laughing or ((laugh)) if the whole group was laughing. One more thing to mention here was that interactional data (whether from interviews or classroom interactions) were presented in numbered lines ‘for ease of reference’ (*ibid.* 182).

4.5.2.2. Translation

As Arabic is the first language of the research participants, they were given the choice whether to use their mother tongue or English in their interviews and diaries. In their interviews, teachers chose English as a medium of communication, whereas learners used to code-switch. Code-switching made my transcribing and translation tasks complicated but very interesting at the same time and I used to encourage learners to switch to Arabic whenever they felt the need to. Mann argues that the language that the participants use ‘is integrally related to the nature of the co-

construction' (2010: 10) as it is the tool for building up co-constructed understandings between different interlocutors. Mann also discusses the issues of code-switching and the choice of language when being interviewed:

There needs to be more attention given to code switching practices in interviews (when both parties have access to L1 and L2). For example, is it worth encouraging interviewees to code-switch if they feel that an explanation can be fuller in L1? There are also translation complexities that get airbrushed out (e.g. some research students interview in L1 and then analyse and present them in L2) (2010: 10).

Unlike teachers' interviews where English was the medium of communication and learners' interviews where code-switching was the norm, Arabic was the only language that was used in diaries (both the teacher-researcher's and the learners'). To use extracts from diaries, I had to translate them first and then present them in my thesis. The only challenge I had to face as a translator was in translating very culture-specific expressions that would not convey the same message when translated into English. However, being a native speaker of Arabic and having a cultural experience in an English-speaking country like England, the task was not as difficult as it seemed to be. Of course, the first priority was to be truthful to the data and then, if possible, to make the translation clearer to an English audience.

In this chapter, I provided the methodological framework within which this research operates. The next chapter focuses on the action research process through which I was able to develop appropriate methodology for using internet materials that would better meet learners' personal needs and interests in the context.

Chapter Five The Action Research Process of Developing Appropriate Methodology

Indeed, action research by nature sets up a spiral relationship between research and action ... during the process of teaching the teacher learns about the classroom; this learning gives rise to an adaptation of the teaching methodology; the learning process continues to evaluate the changes to the teaching methodology, which in turn requires learning about the changed classroom situation which it brings about, and so on.

Holliday (1994: 164)

5.1. Introduction

The idealistic teaching assistant, who went back to her home university carrying the seeds of all the innovative ideas that she learnt about in England, found herself struggling to plant them in her labyrinth of reality. With this statement I would like to introduce this part of my thesis which would not have existed without my conviction that there was a way out. Developing appropriate methodology throughout the action research process was the only way out.

5.2. The Action Research Process

‘In reporting or publishing action research, it is important to “tell the story of the research” as completely as possible, so that consumers of the research are able to clearly detect the steps in the design’ (Burns, 2009: 128). The story of my action research began before I started working on this project. As stated earlier in Chapter One, I was recruited as a teaching assistant in the THLI in 2005 and had the chance to teach there for two years before coming to England to pursue my higher studies. Having two years of teaching and working experience in the THLI, I with other EFL teachers and learners could identify a substantial gap between EFL learners’ personal

needs and interests on the one hand and what the coursebooks seemed to offer on the other (see 1.3). This problem negatively affected learners' participation in the EFL classroom and therefore needed to be addressed. To deal with this problem, supplementary internet materials were sometimes used to better meet EFL learners' personal needs and interests in the context.

My interest in using the internet to assist language learning in the context increased when I joined the MA course at the Warwick Centre for Applied Linguistics in October 2007. During my MA course, I learnt about a wide variety of internet applications that could support English learning in EFL contexts, and that inspired and motivated me to do something innovative in my context. According to Noffke and Somekh, 'action research frequently does not start with a research question. The driving force will be an impetus for change/innovation' (2005: 91). The plan was to innovate with a new language lab that had been recently made available in the THLI. However, this was not an easy task at all. My idealistic views about using internet-connected computers in the THLI came up against a number of contextual constraints that made the original plan impossible to achieve and meant that I had to develop appropriate internet methodology. It took me the whole first cycle to realize that the start should be from where people actually were.

As stated earlier in Chapter Four (see 4.3.3.), action research cycles involve a set of interrelated practices of exploring and identifying a research topic, planning the action, collecting, analysing and reflecting on the data, speculating, intervening

(changing and modifying teaching approaches), observing, reporting, and writing (Burns, 2005). That is why in representational terms it is important not to present them as separate stages. Burns argues that action research, ‘in practice is much ‘messier’ than most models suggest’ (2005: 59). The story accounts for the messiness of the process as I report on the evolving experiences and research questions. It accounts for my experience as a teacher-researcher (based on my observations, field notes, and diary) as well as that of the participants’ (based on their interviews, interactions, and diaries).

5.2.1. Cycle One

The first cycle started in December 2008 with a scoping visit to the THLI. The aim of this visit was to collect information that would help me plan for my action research (information about the courses I was planning to teach, the coursebooks that were used in these courses, internet facilities, etc.). In my meetings with the Dean and the Head of the English Department, I learnt about a new language lab that had been recently made available for teachers and learners in the THLI and thought that would be the ideal place to conduct my research. However, I was informed that it was not yet connected to the internet but that by the time I was due to come for data collection this would be solved:

Extract 5.1

Today I met Dr. Hala (the Dean) and Dr. Amany (the Head of the English Department) in Dr. Hala’s office and talked to them about my research interest in using the internet as a supplementary source of materials. They both looked at each other with smiles on their faces and said that they might have good news for me. They told me that they had recently been visited by the Minister of Higher Education with whom they celebrated the opening of our new language lab. For a moment, I was speechless. I was so happy and so they were. They said that although it was not yet connected to the internet, it would be connected soon.

(Extract translated from the teacher-researcher’s diary, 18.12.2008)

I asked for their permission to use the Lab as a physical context for my research and they both very kindly agreed. I visited the Lab and took pictures of it. The Lab contained twenty-five computers, which were sufficient for individual use of learners from different courses and classes in the Institute (see figure 2-2). All these computers could be controlled by the teacher who could give instructions and feedback through the computer located in the front to every learner on his/her own computer (see figure 2-3). Learners could also interact with each other via their computers (*intranet* system) to achieve a given task. Some teacher training courses had been provided to train teachers on using the Language Lab programmes. An electronic engineer was recruited to offer assistance when needed.

After this scoping visit, I started planning for the data collection and kept in touch with the engineer to know whether the Lab was yet connected or not. In his emails, the engineer confirmed that the Lab could be connected to the internet. He said that it was ‘possible to directly connect to the internet like in any internet café and to control and manage all the computers in this Lab via an intranet system’ (email translated from Arabic).

The plan was to start collecting the data in July 2009 when the Conversation Course would be running (for courses selection criteria, see 2.4.3.2.). EFL learners on the Conversation Course would have to attend two-hour classes three times a week. I intended to devote one class a week for the internet work. The plan was to get learners live access the internet in the Lab to get materials that could better meet their personal needs and interests. I would design group and class activities based on

the topics that they would choose to help them share and discuss what they had individually accessed. This was my plan when I went back to the field.

As planned, the data collection started on the first of July 2009. The first thing I did was to ask for permission. According to Burns (2010a.), two kinds of permission need to be sought; first, the institution's and second the participants' involved. In the case of this research, I asked for the Dean's and the Head of the English Department's permission to first do the research in the THLI and secondly to teach throughout the research process. I was welcomed to do the research in the THLI but only to co-teach in the courses I chose. The Dean informed me that during their sponsorship period of study, teaching assistants would not be allowed to teach and would not be asked to do any work for the Institute. The two-month Conversation Course was to start running on the sixth of July 2009. I checked the timetable and got the name of the Advanced Level teacher hoping that she would agree that we co-teach the course. I met her, not for the first time of course as we already knew each other, and asked for her permission to co-teach the Course with her. I introduced my research and explained that the plan was to get learners access internet materials in the Lab once a week. She very kindly agreed to teach two sessions a week so that I could teach them the third in the Lab. We also agreed that I would attend the regular classes to get to know the learners and the coursebook materials better so that the Lab work would not be disconnected from the course.

Extract 5.2

Today I met Mariam, the Advanced Level Group teacher, and told her about my research plans. She was so nice and helpful. I am glad that she agreed to co-teach the course with me. Hope things go well with the learners.

(Extract translated from the teacher-researcher's diary, 02.07.2009)

As I was not sure that learners would agree with what we planned, I also met the Upper-Intermediate Level teacher and introduced her to my research so that I could have another course opportunity if plans did not work with the Advanced Level group.

On the sixth of July 2009, I attended the Advanced Group first class. I introduced my research, explained its aims, and asked for learners' permission to take a part in it. Out of fifteen, ten learners said that they knew how to use the internet and they would like to make use of it in this Course. The rest who did not have previous internet experiences said that they would also like to attend the Lab sessions. All the fifteen learners signed the consent forms. They did not only give me their permission but also thanked me for providing them with this opportunity.

Extract 5.3

13 Sami: we never had this opportunity in the Institute or anywhere else.

14 I think this is great.

15 Rose: This is wonderful. Thanks.

(Extract from classroom interaction, 06.07.2009)

After the class, the teacher told me about her impression. She was surprised with learners' reactions. She did not expect as much excitement. She also hoped that this Course would be a real success.

In the first week of July 2009 and before the Course started, I was informed by the engineer that although the Language Lab was equipped with internet outlets, accessing the internet needed a code which could only be given by the University Computer Centre. The Dean recommended that I meet the Manager of the Computer Centre, explain my research requirements and ask for permission. After making an appointment for July the seventh, I met the Manager in person, explained my research aims to him and asked for his permission to access the internet in that THLI Lab. His answer was that accessing the internet in the THLI Lab was not in the plan, and he suggested that I use the Teachers' Computer Room in the Institute instead. That was very unexpected and disappointing response especially after I talked to the learners and got their permission to work in the Language Lab:

Extract 5.4

I did not imagine that such a response would come from a manager of a computer centre. I thought I was going to meet someone who more than anyone else would welcome and facilitate using technology in the University. I just felt that he was putting sticks in the wheels.

(Extract from the teacher-researcher's diary, 07.07.2009)

I talked to the Dean about it and she immediately called him to further explain the situation. She was talking about the importance of accessing the internet in the Lab for my research, but I could see from her facial expressions that she was being told what I had already heard. As a result, she gave me the permission to use the Teachers' Computer Room where teachers usually check their emails and print some teaching materials. Examining its resources, I saw that the Room was by no means adequate for the purposes of my original plans. It only contained two internet-connected computers, one of which was very old and could hardly work.

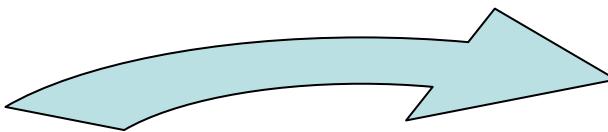
I met the engineer to discuss if there were any other options and he suggested that I use a software program that would allow me to download websites on my memory stick and save them on the Lab computers for learners to use. This was not what I really wanted as the aim was to let learners choose their own internet materials and not to impose the materials on them as it was already the case in the coursebooks'. I informed learners about the impossibility of accessing the internet in the Language Lab and they were disappointed. That was a very disappointing moment for me as well.

Extract 5.5

- 18 TR: I am so sorry to tell you that, really sorry.
19 Rose: you know I was so happy. I even told my friends about it.
20 TR: oh! I am really sorry.
21 Amer: no, you shouldn't. it's not your fault. they should be sorry.

(Extract from classroom interaction, 08.07.2009)

The contextual constraints I was experiencing affected not only my original plans as a teacher-researcher but also my research focus. Instead of focusing on the effectiveness of using the internet as a source of materials, I found myself struggling to find a place to access it in the first place. That was when the focus on 'appropriate methodology' started to emerge. Although I was not aware of the term at that point, the research questions I was asking throughout the first cycle helped in developing appropriate internet methodology for the context of the research (see figure 5-1). Because appropriate methodology is temporal and developmental (Holliday, 1994), I present it as an ongoing process in this cyclical model, which works as a structure for my investigation of this area in the first cycle.



What problems are there?

What changes to make?

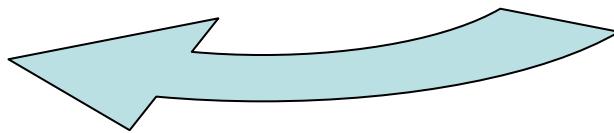


Figure 5-1 Cycle One Model for Developing Appropriate Methodology

As I was still aiming at getting EFL learners to live access internet materials within the THLI, I decided to keep trying with the internet facilities available. With the shortage of the internet-connected computers, I had to drop the idea of having Lab sessions. I could only work with a maximum number of four learners in the one-internet-connected Computer Room. Burns points out that in action research ‘further actions must inevitably be made with reference to the specific circumstances and social contingencies of the research context’ (2005: 59). I had to adapt my plan and decided to conduct sessions in the Teachers’ Computer Room with a volunteer group of learners from this Course. Out of the ten volunteer learners who said that they had previous internet experiences, I had to choose four to teach in the Computer Room. Not to put more pressure on them, the teacher very kindly agreed that she would finish her Monday classes half an hour before so that learners would not have to come to the sessions at a different time from that of their Course. (Regular Monday classroom work from 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. – Internet session from 1:30 – 2:00 p.m. although this gradually changed as learners were happy to have more internet sessions on their other Course days and for longer periods of time, sometimes till

3:00 p.m.). The four participants were very committed and supportive throughout the sessions I conducted in the Computer Room.

The Computer Room Sessions

In the Teachers' Computer Room, I conducted nine sessions with the four volunteer learners. The sessions were audio-recorded. Learners were asked to keep diaries and were interviewed in post-sessions group interviews. The aim of these sessions was to get EFL learners access materials that would correspond to their personal needs and interests. However, getting internet materials was not a straightforward task. We experienced many internet-related contextual constraints that necessitated developing appropriate methodology (see figure 5-1). As a reflective practitioner, I kept reflecting on my actions, identifying contextual problems, and making methodological changes to cope with the problems identified.

The first session took place on the thirteenth of July 2009. The aim of this session was to get to know the four learners and to learn about their needs and preferences. The session started right after they finished their regular class at 1:30 pm. We had a short conversation in Arabic just to introduce ourselves. The four learners were Rose, Sami, Tarek, and Ziad (pseudonyms). Rose was a recently graduated agricultural engineer from Tishreen University. She said that she usually used the internet to chat with relatives and friends in Arabic. But, when searching for information that could help her for her study, she would normally do the search in English as well as in Arabic. Sami was a vet. He normally used the internet to check

articles in his specialty in English and to chat with his international friends. Tarek was a second year student in the Biology Department. He said he was interested in English as a language of international communication. The fourth participant was Ziad. He was a fourth year student in the Electronic Engineering Department at the University. To him, computers were his specialty and English was very important for his future career.

To know about their preferences, I asked learners to identify the topics they were interested in and the linguistic aspects and skills they needed most so that I could design internet-assisted activities to address their personal needs and interests. Learners identified speaking as the most necessary desirable skill as they said they would be interested if they could have the chance to talk about their favourite topics. They all came with different topics but tried to agree on some that would interest them all. Some of the topics they chose were about cultural customs, health problems, UK life style and famous people. Here is an extract to illustrate that:

Extract 5.6

- 012 TR: and could you please tell me what you think is the most helpful
013 for you? I mean, what you really want to do with the internet.
014 Sami: if we have information about things we like, we can talk about them.
015 Tarek: yes.
016 Sami: like animals for example.
017 Rose: oh please no. I hate animals.
018 Sami: really? you can't hate animals if you really know them.
019 Rose: not even. I don't even want to know them.
020 Sami: oh my God!
021 TR: okay! no animals now. what do you prefer Rose?
022 Rose: I prefer something, something may be taking care of our health
023 Ziad: nice.
024 TR: do you agree?
025 Sami: sure, health is important.
026 Tarek: yes.
027 Ziad: I also like cultures.
028 TR: cultures?
029 Sami: I love Chinese culture.

030 TR: okay (...) then (...) may be we could do something related to cultures?
031 Rose: interesting.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 13.07.2009)

In the extract above, Sami identified speaking as the most desirable skill on *line 14* and Tarek confirmed on *line 15* (also see 2.4.3.3.). As a vet, Sami was very interested in animals but did not impose the topic on other learners who were not (especially Rose). Learners tried to agree on topics that would interest them all as they knew that they would not have the chance to work individually in a one-internet-connected computer room. To structure learners' internet work, I designed an activity based on learners' interests; i.e., the topic they chose, and their needs; i.e. the need to speak and practice English.

Session 2 Activity

- Browse the internet for “cultural customs”.
- Choose three interesting ones.
- Try to find information about the meanings behind these cultural customs.
- Discuss the customs and their cultural meanings within your group.

In this session, I came to the Computer Room earlier than the learners. I wrote the activity, as it appears above, on the board. I checked the internet connection and placed the chairs next to each other and all in front of the computer as any difficulties in reading or in accessing the internet can combine to cause a frustrating learning experience. When learners came, I asked them to do the activity as a group. Websites were not pre-determined for the learners but the key or the search words were given; i.e., “cultural customs”. During the activity, learners were observed and their interaction was recorded. Here is an extract from their interaction:

Extract 5.7

295 Sami: but it's not clear.
296 Tarek: small. (Talking about the font)
297 Rose: too small.
298 Sami: I think my way is better than this. this website is very big.
299 it takes a lot of time to see all.
300 Tarek: yeah.
301 Sami: let's take that.
302 Rose: (xxx)
303 Sami: yes. I think it's good. Okay.
304 Rose: we can.
305 Sami: yeah. yeah.
306 Rose: let's open it and search it.
307 Sami: yeah. yeah. take it, yeah.
308 Tarek: I think (xxx)
309 Sami: should be fine.
310 Tarek: (xxx)
311 Rose: oh no.
312 Ziad: wait and wait (1.20)
313 Sami: look at this bad line. really bad!
314 (Talking about the internet connection)
315 Tarek: bad net.
316 Sami: yes. bad net line, I say it the whole time. I want to break this computer.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 20.07.2009)

Given that the four learners were sharing the same computer, reading from the screen was relatively difficult especially when the font was small. On *line 296*, Tarek identified this problem and Rose confirmed it on *line 297*. Also, there was the problem of the bad internet connection which negatively affected learners' experience. Having to wait for the webpages to open resulted in long pauses as in *line 312* and in negative feelings such as boredom and frustration. On *line 312*, Ziad seemed bored, whereas Sami seemed to be frustrated on *lines 313*, and *316*. Tarek was also complaining on *line 315*. These and other problems were also reported in both learners' diaries and post-session group interview. Learners were asked to evaluate their participation and to specify the factors that affected it either positively or negatively. They were also asked about their feelings during and after the activity. In her diary, Rose, for example, identified problems that negatively affected her participation:

Extract 5.8

I could not participate well because the search was so slow and I could not see clearly because the words were too small and there were a lot of words I could not understand very much because I couldn't translate them.

(Extract translated from Rose's diary, 20.07.2009)

Similar problems were reported by Tarek. In his post-session group interview, he said that:

Extract 5.9

The small size of words made me uncomfortable as I was reading from the screen. They were also long. I could not understand them and the internet was really bad. We typed a word; it took a lot of time to search.

(Extract translated from post-session group interview, 20.07.2009)

Although all these problems were identified, the most influential one was the slow internet connection which negatively influenced learners' participation as well as their attitudes. Regarding learners' attitudes, Ziad, for example, made it clear as he was waiting for the webpage to open that it was a waste of time and Rose confirmed that:

Extract 5.10

- 372 Ziad: I think we are wasting time.
373 Rose: yes, it is too slow. (Talking about the internet)

(Extract from interaction transcript, 20.07.2009)

In the interaction, the slow internet connection also disengaged learners from the internet materials. Their interactions were interrupted every time they had to move to another link as evident in the following extract:

Extract 5.11

- 245 Ziad: "along the Yellow River"
246 Rose: yes.
247 Tarek: "(xxx)"
248 Rose: and "clay" and "clay".
249 Ziad: eh. so this is about China.
250 Sami: let's move.
251 Rose: let's stop.
252 Ziad: oh!

253 Sami: the internet doesn't move!
254 Ziad: you have to be patient.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 20.07.2009)

What made the problem of the slow internet connection that influential on learners' participation was the little guidance learners received from the teacher-researcher. The plan was to give them the chance to decide on websites and materials, as opposed to pre-determined coursebook materials where learners have no say in what they learn. In practice, however, the slow internet connection made searching for materials very difficult for learners. Given that learners were not asked to work with a particular website, they ended up spending most of their time searching with a slow internet connection for relevant internet materials which they could somehow understand:

Extract 5.12

385 Ziad: we found a lot of things but they are not customs.
386 Sami: another page, another page, another page. so slow (0.54)
387 okay, "strange habits, India", okay.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 20.07.2009)

In the post-session group interview, Ziad reported that having to search for materials did not help him focus on or even enjoy what he was reading. Sami and Rose shared the same opinion:

Extract 5.13

023 Ziad: I think we wasted a lot of time searching for something good, something we could understand, and then the problem was that even when we found a page, we couldn't stop searching. why?
024
025
026 TR:
027 Ziad: because we kept thinking there could be a better one. I could not concentrate at all. I could not enjoy what I was reading because all I was thinking about was to search for more, to go to another link, as if I had two tasks in one, searching and learning, but all I could do was searching and waiting for the webpages to open.
028
029
030
031
032
033 Sami: I totally agree.
034 Rose: Me too.

(Extract translated from post-session group interview, 20.07.2009)

On reflection, it was obvious to me that even if the aim was to give learners the chance to decide on the materials they liked, that was not possible within the contextual constraints identified. Working with one computer and with a very slow internet connection was not going to engage learners unless the activities were adapted to cope with these constraints.

To make the internet-assisted activity more appropriate, I did a preliminary analysis of the data collected in this session to identify the constraints that seemed to negatively affect learners' participation and engagement so that I could revise the structure of the internet-assisted activity to cope with these constraints. Burns points out that in action research 'data analysis does not have to wait until the end' (2010a: 135). She also argues that:

By following a simple plan and starting your data analysis early you can use the insights and findings you are gaining to (re)shape the directions for your research. Like the AR cycle itself, data analysis is dynamic, cyclical and recursive (*ibid.*).

Analyzing the data collected in this session helped me identify a number of problems that negatively affected learners' interaction and attitudes. They could be summarized as follows:

- The bad internet connection had a negative impact on learners' participation. Having to wait for the webpages to open interrupted their interactions and made learners feel bored and frustrated.
- The little guidance that learners received from the teacher-researcher with regard to the websites used also had a negative impact on learners' participation. Learners spent most of the time searching for what was

relevant, easy to understand, and interesting. They did not stop the search at any point to focus on the materials accessed. For them, better materials were still to be found.

- Learners found it difficult to read the small font as the four of them were sharing the same screen.
- Having no time to prepare the materials in advance had a negative impact on learners' participation and attitudes.

Although all these problems were identified, the problems of the bad internet connection, the little guidance that learners received, and the difficult internet content were the ones prioritized as it was not clear for me at that point how the problems of the small font and the one-shared computer could be addressed. I had to change the design of the activity (see figure 5-1) to make it more teacher-guided:

Extract 5.14

It seems impossible to do what I planned to do. The facilities are far worse than I expected. So, what can I do now? I think I need to do the search myself and choose the materials for learners so they do not have to waste their time searching for nothing. And, as for the difficult words, they could use dictionaries. They could also ask me if they want.

(Extract translated from the teacher-researcher's diary, 21.07.2009)

I searched online for cultural customs, the topic of the second session, to choose a website with interesting and appropriate content. Dudeney and Hockly (2007) develop evaluative website criteria which I used as a reference to decide on a website for learners to use:

- Accuracy: Is the page content reliable and factually correct?
- Currency: Is the content up-to-date?

- Content: Is the site interesting and stimulating?
- Functionality: Does the site work well? (2007: 34)

Taking into consideration Dudeney's and Hockly's (2007) criteria, I chose *Dave's ESL Café* as a website for learners to learn about interesting cultural customs. Its content seemed to be interesting, stimulating, and reliable and its links worked perfectly well. I came an hour earlier to the Computer Room to check whether the internet was working. Fortunately, it was. So, I opened the website on the Home page and wrote the activity instructions on the board before learners came.

Session 3 Activity

- Go to Dave's ESL café. The website address is <http://www.eslcafe.com/>
- On the Home page, choose *Stuff for Students* → *Quizzes* → *World Culture 1*.
- As a group, try to agree on the correct answers and then click on *Submit for Evaluation*. You will get immediate feedback as well as your result.
- Use the dictionary when needed (I provided it).

After taking into consideration the less-than-ideal internet conditions, a number of changes were made to the structure of the previous activity to cope with the constraints identified in the last session:

- Instead of asking learners to browse the internet themselves, the website was provided by the teacher-researcher. The rationale behind this change was to save learners' time searching for materials with a very bad and unstable internet connection.

- Instead of having to deal with a huge amount of authentic online content, learners were asked to do a quiz on a website designed for learners of English. The rationale behind this change was to address the problem of the difficult authentic internet content identified in the last session. Learners were also given the chance to use a dictionary to check unfamiliar words on the page when needed.

I explained to learners the changes I made and the reasons for making these changes so that they could see how their feedback was contributing to the process of developing appropriate internet methodology.

During the activity, I observed learners trying to agree on the correct answers and using the dictionary to check unfamiliar words which all indicated the positive impact of the changes made on their engagement (see 3.4.3.2.1. for characteristics of behavioural engagement). These observed behaviours can also be traced in the interaction transcript:

Extract 5.15

013	Ziad:	“in the United States (.) a pot luck party is”?
014	Sami:	“a party where everyone sings”?
015	Tarek:	“sings”, may be.
016	Sami:	or “a party where everyone bangs on pots”?
017	Ziad:	“bangs on pots”? oh, no!
018	Tarek:	“pots”
019	Sami:	yeah, “a party where everyone brings some food to share”.
020	Rose:	yes. yes. I think so.
021	Sami:	I think the first. what do you think?
022	Tarek:	I don’t know. what is a “pot”? (Opening the dictionary)
023	Ziad:	Wia’a. (pot in Arabic)
024	Tarek:	ah! okay. then I think the last one.
025	Sami:	“a party where everyone brings some”? Okay. We will learn.

(Extract from interaction transcript 27.07.2009)

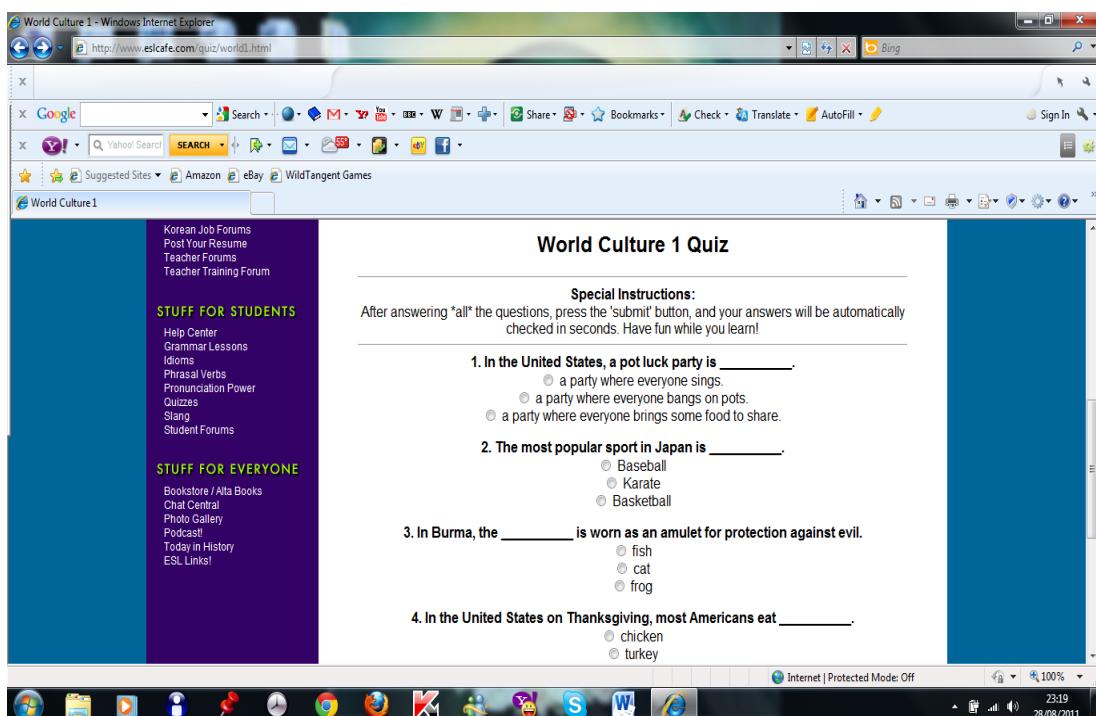
I could observe how learners were engaged with the materials as they did not have to waste time searching with a slow internet connection. After doing this quiz, they asked me if they can do another one:

Extract 5.16

- 084 Sami: let's take another please?
085 TR: okay. You can do "World Culture 2" if you like.
086 Ziad: some were so strange. You can't expect them.
087 Sami: yeah, but I like to know strange things about other cultures.

(Extract from interaction transcript 27.07.2009)

Although the quizzes were not 'authentic materials', they were learner-authentic because of learners' engagement. Learners' authenticity is 'the most crucial type of authenticity, for unless a learner is somehow 'engaged' by the task, unless they are genuinely interested in its topic and its purpose, then the other types of authenticity may count for very little (Guariento and Morley, 2001: 350-1).



Screenshot 5-1 World Culture 1 Quiz (Session 3)

In the two quizzes, learners were reading from the screen and looking at and talking to each other (see 3.4.3.2.4. for characteristics of social engagement). The structure of the activity positively affected their collaboration in the group. Ziad, for example, said in the post-session group interview:

Extract 5.17

- 19 Ziad: When we read the question, we asked for each other's
20 opinion. What's your opinion, Sami? What's your opinion,
21 Tarek, Rose? And in the end we agreed on one choice and
22 clicked. Not everyone alone. We worked together and
23 everyone was involved.

(Extract from post-session group interview 27.07.2009)

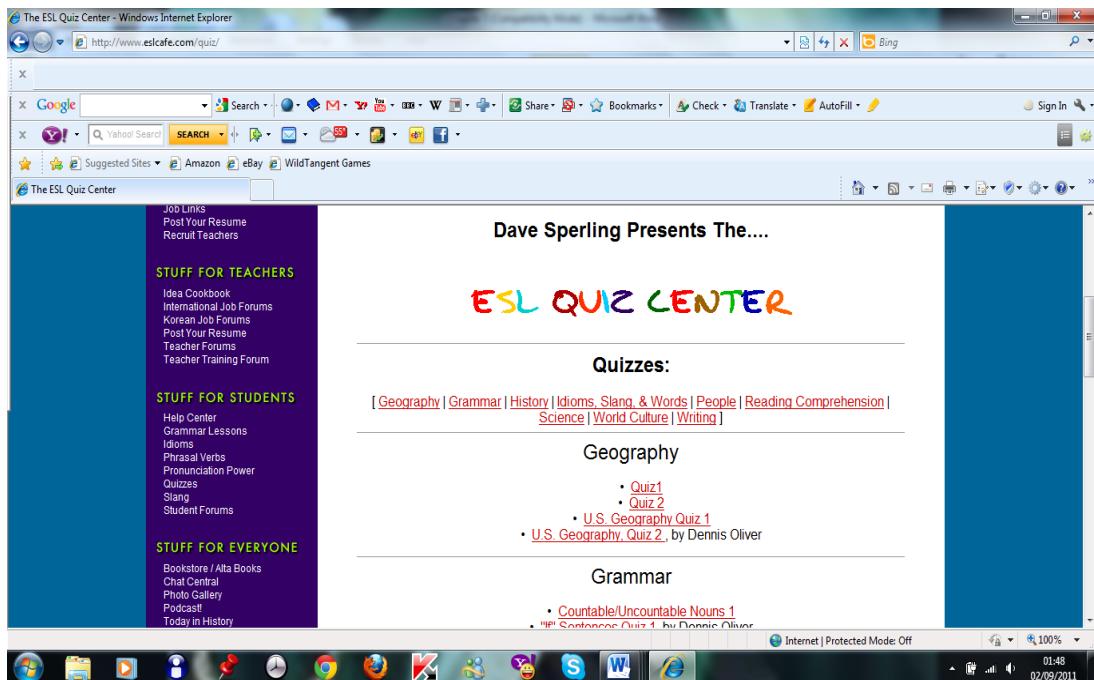
There was a real sense of engagement with the materials. Learners were involved. They were happy and proud of their work (see 3.4.3.2.3. for characteristics of affective engagement). They actually reported that the adapted structure of the activity played a role in that and helped them engage with the internet materials. Sami, for example, wrote in his diary:

Extract 5.18

We had a good result and it was very funny. The information was funny and we laughed on our mistakes. I think today was much better from last time. Today we had the time. We had everything clear. No difficulties so we really enjoyed it.

(Extract translated from Sami's diary 27.07.2009)

On reflection, an initial analysis of the data collected in this session helped me structure the internet work for the next session. I decided to use the same website with learners with one change to the structure of the activity and that was learners could choose the quiz they wanted depending on their needs and interests. Dave's ESL Café provided a number of different quizzes with a form focus on grammar, idioms, slang, reading comprehension, and writing and a meaning focus on topics like science, people, history, and culture (see screenshot 5-2).



Screenshot 5-2 Quizzes Options (Session 4)

Session 4 Activity

- Go to Dave's ESL Café Home Page (address given).
- On the Home page, click on *Stuff for Students* → *Quizzes*.
- Choose a quiz.
- As a group, try to agree on the correct answers and then click on *Submit for Evaluation*. You will get immediate feedback as well as your result.
- Use the dictionary when needed.

In the fourth session, learners chose to do two quizzes: one was the face idioms and the other was the animal idioms (see screenshot 5-3 and 5-4). Their choice of idiom quizzes was based on their perceived needs to improve their vocabulary knowledge. Rose, for example, in her reply to my question about the reason for choosing idioms said that:

Extract 5.19

33 Rose: because they are very important in English and
34 very difficult but with the quiz, I think I will
35 remember them after ten years because I thought
36 about them and we laughed on them.

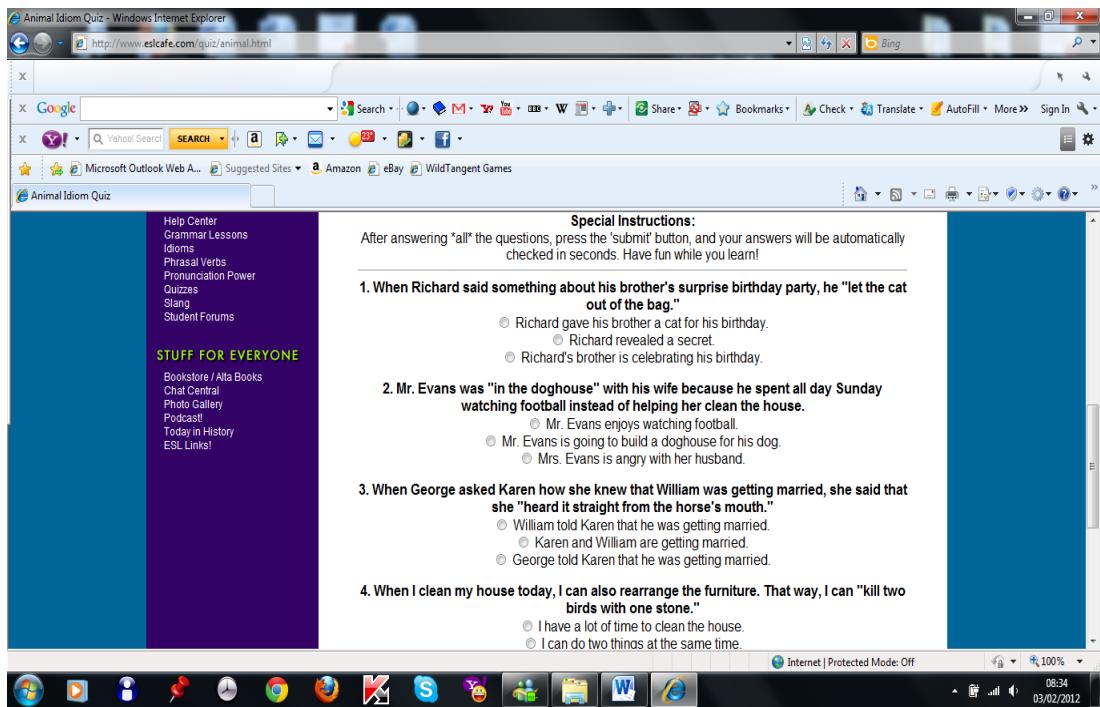
(Extract taken from learners' post-session group interview, 03.08.2009)

While doing the quiz, learners were active and engaged. They all participated and contributed to the activity. They were trying to agree on answers as also evident in the following extract:

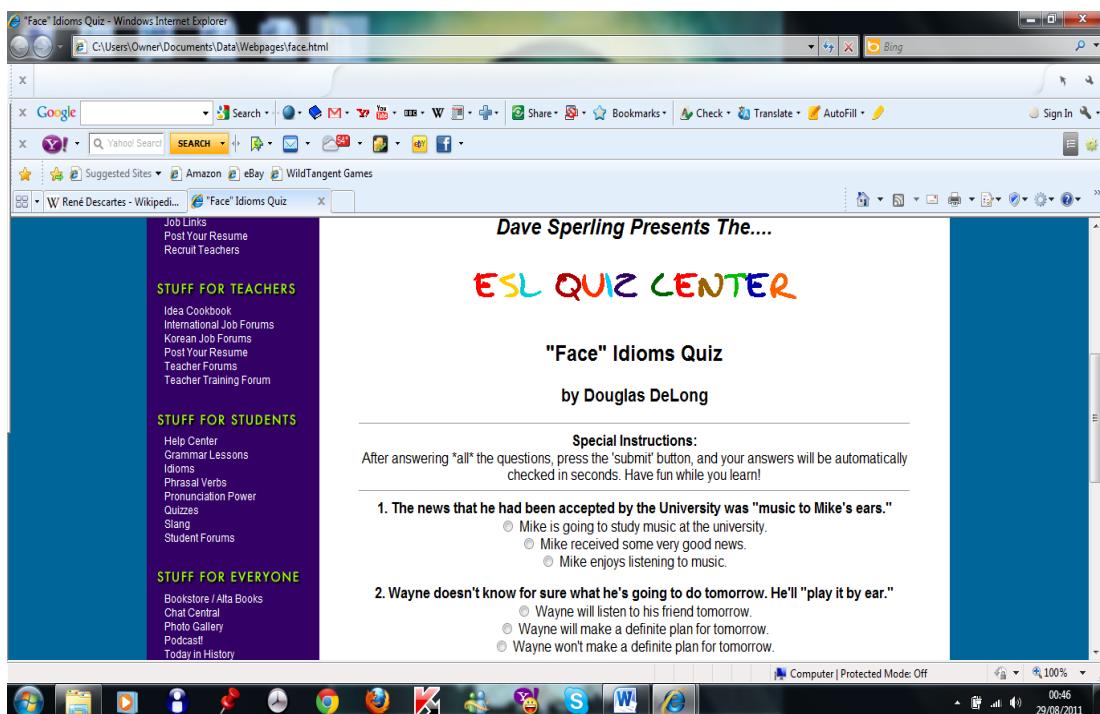
Extract 5.20

064 Tarek: try it.
065 Sami: no. no. do you have another suggestion?
066 Rose: I don't understand the sentence.
067 Ziad: okay. we can repeat it.
068 Sami: read it.
069 Rose: "when George asked Karen how she knew that William was
070 getting married, she said that she heard it from the horse's
071 mouth". I think that means that "George told Karen".
072 Sami: "told Karen"?
073 Rose: no. no. "George asked her".
074 Sami: yes.
075 Ziad: so "William told her"?
076 Sami: I think so. because he is the one. okay. choose it.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 03.08.2009)



Screenshot 5-3 Animal Idioms Quiz (Session 4)



Screenshot 5-4 Face Idioms Quiz (Session 4)

Because learners had positive feedback on quizzes, I decided to ask them to do another quiz in the fifth session. The quiz was about English lifestyle, one of the topics which learners suggested in the first session. The aim was that learners could work with materials that meet their expectations in these sessions. When I came to the Room, I checked the internet connection and it was working. Then, I opened the webpage and started writing the activity on the board when I noticed that there were recurrent power cuts. Although a power cut did not take more than seconds, it meant restarting the computer all again.

Extract 5.21

- 017 TR: let's start again.
018 Sami: okay.
019 (TR talking to the engineer about power being off and on many times)

(Extract from interaction transcript, 10.08.2009)

The same happened with learners but the problem for them was worse as they had to remember their answers and do the quiz all again. The following extract illustrates that:

Extract 5.22

- 073 Sami: "how many days a week do they open their shops? your answer,
074 six, seven, five (0.3) how many days a week do they open the
075 shops?"
076 Rose: I think eh:
077 Ziad: I think "six".
078 Rose: "five".
079 Tarek: "six".
080 Rose: because five days work.
081 Sami: but shop doesn't depend on holiday, I think.
082 Rose: oh, no! (Power cut) Not again.

(Extract from interaction transcript 10.08.2009)

Power cuts had negative impact on learners' engagement and caused frustration. Although I started to realize the impracticality of using the internet in the Computer

Room, I continued trying different activity structures hoping that things would improve.

In the sixth session, I asked learners to discuss at least one of today's news reports on the BBC Website.

Session 6 Activity

- Use the BBC Website to check today's news.
- As a group, choose a news report and comment on it.

Even though the website was given, the problem was again power cuts. Unlike laptops which do not go off with power cuts, desk computers do. That made doing online activities with the desk computer going on and off very disengaging for learners. Learners did not even want to carry on doing the activity as evident in the following extract:

Extract 5.23

009	Sami:	no. choose something else.
010	Ziad:	“Africa”
011	Sami:	Yeah.
012	Tarek:	“Africa”? No!
013	Rose:	“Middle East”. You can choose it.
014	Ziad:	“Middle East”?
015	Sami:	“Middle East”, yeah. Okay. “Middle East”, take “Middle
016		East”.
017	Ziad:	Oh my God. It’s crazy (Power cut)
018	Sami:	If like last time, I don’t want to do it.
019	Rose:	No.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 17.08.2009)

In his diary, Sami wrote that he was upset in this session. He also mentioned that he really wanted to discuss the current news, but did not think that would be interesting with all the power cuts that happened:

Extract 5.24

I am not happy. I am not happy at all. These power cuts are driving me crazy. I really wanted it to work. I love watching and reading the news especially on the BBC. I thought I would talk for hours today but no way with these stupid power cuts.

(Extract translated from Sami's diary, 17.08.2009)

To avoid the problem of power cuts, I considered using my personal laptop as well as learners' laptop computers. Ziad said that he had one and that he could bring it the next session and I said I would bring mine. Other learners had desk computers and therefore could not help in this regard.

As learners identified famous people as one of their favourite topics in the first session, I decided to make use of the two laptop computers to design a pair-work activity for learners to look for information about their favourite celebrities using Wikipedia website.

Session 7 Activity

- In pairs, choose a famous person whom you would like to know more about his/her personal life and career.
- In pairs, go to [wikipedia.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/) and check those people's Wikipedia Webpages (Every pair uses one laptop computer)
- Discuss and select the most interesting information to present to the other pair.
- As a post-internet pair work, share and discuss the information you have got with the other pair.

In the seventh session, both Ziad and I brought our laptop computers to the Computer Room. The engineer changed the settings of our laptop computers so that

we could access the internet in the THLI Computer Room. As I was writing the activity on the board, I could hear learners murmuring their famous people to each other. I asked them whom they chose. Sami and Rose chose Oprah Winfrey whereas Ziad and Tarek chose Rene Descartes (please see screenshots 5-5 and 5-6).

Oprah Winfrey - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - Windows Internet Explorer

W Oprah Winfrey - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Article Discussion Read View source View history Search

Oprah Winfrey

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"Oprah" redirects here. For her talk show, see *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

Oprah Winfrey (born Oprah Gail Winfrey^[1] on January 29, 1954) is an American television host, actress, producer, and philanthropist, best known for her self-titled, multi-award winning talk show, which has become the highest-rated program of its kind in history and was nationally syndicated from 1986 to 2011.^[2] She has been ranked the richest African American of the 20th century,^[3] the greatest black philanthropist in American history,^{[4][5]} and was for a time the world's only black billionaire.^{[6][7]} She is also, according to some assessments, the most influential woman in the world.^{[8][9]}

Winfrey was born into poverty in rural Mississippi to a teenage single mother and later raised in an inner-city Milwaukee neighborhood. She experienced considerable hardship during her childhood, claiming to be raped at age nine and becoming pregnant at 14; her son died in infancy.^[10] Sent to live with the man she calls her father, a barber in Tennessee, Winfrey landed a job in radio while still in high school and began co-anchoring the local evening news at the age of 19. Her emotional ad-lib delivery eventually got her transferred to the daytime talk show arena, and after boosting a third-rated local Chicago talk show to first place^[8] she launched her own production company and became internationally syndicated.

Credited with creating a more intimate confessional form of media communication,^[11] she is thought to have popularized and revolutionized^{[11][12]} the tabloid talk show genre pioneered by Phil Donahue,^[11] which a Yale study claims broke 20th century taboos and allowed LGBT people to enter the mainstream.^{[13][14]} By the mid 1990s, she had reinvented her show with a focus on literature, self-improvement, and spirituality. Though criticized for unleashing confession culture, promoting controversial self-help ideas,^[15] and an emotion-centered approach^[16] she is often praised for overcoming adversity to become a benefactor to others.^[17] From 2006 to 2008, her support of Barack Obama, by one estimate, delivered over a million votes in the 2008 election.^[18]

Oprah Winfrey

Internet | Protected Mode: Off 100% 00:43 29/08/2011

Screenshot 5-5 Famous People – Oprah Winfrey (Session 7)

René Descartes - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - Windows Internet Explorer

W René Descartes - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Article Discussion Read Edit View history Search

René Descartes

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"Descartes" redirects here. For other uses, see *Descartes (disambiguation)*.

René Descartes French pronunciation: [ʁene dekaʁt]; (31 March 1596 – 11 February 1650) (Latinized form: *Renatus Cartesius*; *adjectival form*: "Cartesian")^[3] was a French philosopher and writer who spent most of his adult life in the Dutch Republic. He has been dubbed the Father of Modern Philosophy, and much subsequent Western philosophy is a response to his writings, which are studied closely to this day. In particular, his *Meditations on First Philosophy* continues to be a standard text at most university philosophy departments. Descartes' influence in mathematics is equally apparent; the Cartesian coordinate system—allowing algebraic equations to be expressed as geometric shapes (2D coordinate system)—was named after him. He is credited as the father of analytical geometry, the bridge between algebra and geometry, crucial to the discovery of infinitesimal calculus and analysis. Descartes was also one of the key figures in the Scientific Revolution.

Descartes frequently sets his views apart from those of his predecessors. In the opening section of the *Passions of the Soul*, a treatise on the Early Modern version of what are now commonly called emotions, Descartes goes so far as to assert that he will write on this topic "as if no one had written on these matters before". Many elements of his philosophy have precedents in late Aristotelianism, the revived Stoicism of the 16th century, or in earlier philosophers like St. Augustine. In his natural philosophy, he differs from the schools on two major points. First, he rejects the analysis of corporeal substance into matter and form; second, he rejects any appeal to ends—divine or natural—in explaining natural phenomena.^[4] In his theology, he insists on the absolute freedom of God's act of creation.

Descartes was a major figure in 17th-century continental rationalism, later advocated by Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz, and opposed by the British empiricists, René Descartes has had a lasting influence on Western thought.

René Descartes

Internet | Protected Mode: Off 100% 00:44 29/08/2011

Screenshot 5-6 Famous People – René Descartes (Session 7)

While doing the activity, Rose and Sami were observed to be very engaged with the internet materials whereas Tarek and Ziad were struggling with the difficult Wikipedia content on Rene Descartes. In a post-session group interview, their perceptions of their participation and some reasons for their engagement and disengagement were given:

Extract 5.25

- 015 Ziad: We didn't discuss anything. It was too difficult. We just
016 read so many difficult words, and none of us knew what
017 it was all about. We could only tell Sami and Rose that he
018 was a mathematician and philosopher. We really felt so bad.
019 Rose: I think you had so many difficult words because you chose
020 a scientist. So you should have expected scientific terms. But,
021 we chose Oprah so we didn't have any difficulties.
022 Tarek: May be.

(Extract taken from post-session group interview, 24.08.2009)

In her diary, Rose described how she and Sami were engaged in the activity. She identified the easy internet content about their favourite celebrity as the main reason for their active participation:

Extract 5.26

We got a lot of information about Oprah Winfrey, easy information, easy words. We actually got all the meaning. Some information surprised us so we were discussing and talking about her life. We also explained things to each other.

(Extract taken from Rose's diary 24.08.2009)

As for the post-pair-work discussion, the interaction transcript showed that there was very little interaction between the two pairs. When Oprah was discussed by Sami and Rose, Ziad and Tarek did not seem to be very interested. No clarification checks or questions were asked. The same happened when Ziad and Tarek were discussing Descartes.

Extract 5.27

004 Rose: We searched for eh about Oprah. I think everyone
005 knows Oprah. She appears on TV Channel Two.
006 “she is the most influential woman”. In fact, she is
007 “American woman from South Africa. She was born in January
008 29th in 1954. She has (xxx) rich, richest African American”
009 Sami: It’s okay.
010 Rose: And from eh:
011 Sami: “South Africa”
012 Rose: “she was born into poverty in rural Mississippi” (also translates
013 to Arabic) “she landed a job when she was in high school and
014 began co-anchoring* at the local evening news” at the age twenty.
015 No, “nineteen”.
016 Sami: “nineteen”, yeah.

(Extract from interaction transcript 24.08.2009)

As evident in the above extract, it was only Rose and Sami who were talking. Neither Ziad nor Tarek contributed to the discussion. In his diary, Ziad actually talked about this problem and explained why it happened:

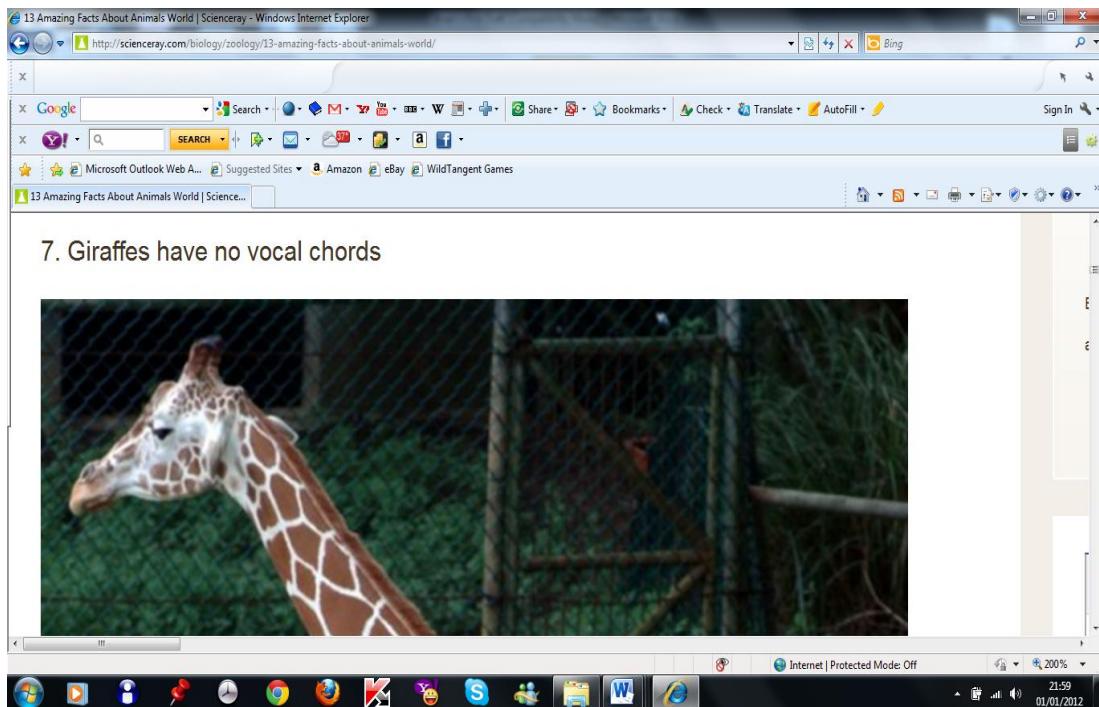
Extract 5.28

I did not feel I benefited from this discussion. First, I could not say much about Descartes and second I did not feel the other pair students were interested. Although I said he was also a philosopher, Sami and Rose only remembered that he was a mathematician which is what we already know about him. This gave me the impression that they were not listening. They were happy with what they got about Oprah and were not interested in hearing about Descartes. We were not interested in Oprah either.

(Extract taken from Ziad’s diary 24.08.2009)

Learners were beginning to develop a sensitivity to the choice of materials and how these might impact on other learners’ understanding – things like lexical difficulty and familiarity with the field. Learners needed to be familiar with and very interested in the subject of the text (rather than the issues it raised) in order to be engaged with the materials. When the internet’s content was perceived to be easy and interesting, learners’ reactions and attitudes were positive. So, I decided to choose a website that provided interesting information and many pictures and illustrations about animals (see screenshot 5-6). ‘Pictures, symbols, words, animations, etc. can be combined in interactive ways to facilitate pupils’ understanding and engagement’ (Mavrou, 2010:

499). ‘The ability to integrate different modes of presentation is an improvement over traditional materials’ (Reinders and White, 2010: 66). Although I was afraid that Rose might not like it, I thought the nice presentation of the information would make it appealing.



Screenshot 5-6 13 Amazing Facts about Animals (Session 8)

I saved the webpage on my USB and designed the following activity for learners to discuss the information about animals.

Session 8 Activity

- Have a look through this webpage. It tells you amazing facts about animals.
- Did you already know these facts? Would you like to share other interesting ones with the group?

While doing the activity, learners were very interested in the information provided.

They were surprised with some of it. They made comments and shared their personal

knowledge about the animals mentioned and other animals as well that all indicated their active engagement. Examining the following extract illustrates that:

Extract 5.29

- 038 Sami: yes, “crocodiles are color-blind” .
039 Rose: ah like ama alwan (color-blind in Arabic)
040 Sami: yes.
041 Tarek: good information.
042 Ziad: “owls are the only bird that can see”
043 Tarek: “the color blue”
044 Sami: Yeah?
045 Rose: “owls are the only bird that can see the color blue”. Oh!
046 Sami: Yes.
047 Ziad: I think owls can turn their neck 360 degrees. It can look
048 to back.
049 Sami: Yes. Yes. ((laughs))
050 Rose: And there is information about owls can move her
051 eyes around in all directions.

(Extract from interaction transcript 31.08.2009)

In his diary, Tarek reported that he enjoyed the discussion about animals and so did everybody:

Extract 5.30

I liked the website so much. It was very interesting. We were laughing all the time. Even the pictures were so funny.

(Extract taken from Tarek’s diary 31.08.2009)

In the post-session interview, Rose also referred to the role of pictures and the multimodality of presentation. She said that helped her get the meaning sometimes and Sami confirmed that:

Extract 5.31

- 192 Rose: The pictures helped us, like owls. When I saw the picture I knew
193 the word.
194 TR: Aha.
195 Rose: Yes.
196 Sami: Yes.

(Extract taken from post-session group interview, 31.08.2009)

The positive impact on learners' participation and engagement could be, therefore, related to the interesting and appealing multimodal content and the appropriateness of the activity structure for the contextual conditions.

Reflecting on the experience so far, I had to deal with two kinds of problems: technical (e.g. one internet-connected computer, slow internet connection, power cuts) and content problems (e.g. difficult, uninteresting, etc.). In dealing with these problems, we moved from working with learner-chosen to teacher-chosen internet materials. Although learners decided on the topics, they did not decide on the materials. This was part of my initial plan but it was impossible for learners to choose materials without struggling with technical and content problems and that negatively affected their engagement. The only appropriate way for learners to choose materials was to access and prepare the internet materials at their own pace (e.g. at home). Linder points out learners can 'conduct research on the Web using outside computers, and bring into the classroom authentic data for specific class projects or specific topics being studied in class' (2004: 12). So, I asked them to choose a topic for the next session. They chose a very up-to-date one at that time and that was swine flu. I designed the activity and did not specify a website for them. I wanted to give them the freedom to choose what they liked.

Session 9 Activity

- Use the internet at home or in any internet café to bring information about one of the following points:
 1. What is swine flu?
 2. Its causes and symptoms
 3. Prevention and treatment
 4. Global reaction to the potentially deadly illness
- You will be able to share and discuss the information you have in the next session with the group.

In the ninth session and when we entered the Computer Room we did not see the desk computer that we used to work with. There was only the broken computer there. Although the activity design did not require using the computer in class, we all wanted to know what happened to the computer. I talked to the engineer and he said that there was a guest speaker lecturing in another room and that they needed the computer for the projector. The engineer also said that because it was the only computer which did not belong to anybody in particular, some would take it to other rooms whenever needed without giving a notice in advance. It was obvious to me at that point that this Room was not different at all from any other room that did not have any computer facilities. The only facility we had lately been using in this Room was the internet outlets to connect our laptops to the internet. But, these outlets were already available in all the other THLI rooms. In other words, there was no particular reason for continuing to use this Room as a physical context for my research.

Extract 5.32

When we did not see the computer today, we were speechless for a moment and then we started laughing and laughing out loud, of course not because we were happy but because the situation was so ironic; a computer room without a computer. I honestly don't know how to describe what happened today. All I know is that it was so frustrating and disappointing.

(Extract translated from the teacher-researcher's diary 07.09.2009)

After talking to the engineer, it took us about ten minutes before we could start working on the activity. We were discussing how important it was to have the internet materials prepared in advance so that we would not be disturbed with unpredictable computer problems. Then, we started working on the activity. I checked whether learners brought the information about swine flu.

Extract 5.33

001 TR: today, you're expecting Sami to share with you the
002 information he has about swine flu causes and symptoms?
003 Sami: yes.
004 Rose: yes.
005 TR: have you got the information, Sami?
006 Sami: yes. yes.
007 TR: okay, and Tarek is expected to have something on prevention
008 and treatment?
009 Tarek: yes.
010 TR: alright, and Rose would tell you about the global reaction to
011 the illness. may be to prevent the spread of this illness?
012 Rose: mm. Yes.
013 TR: how about you Ziad?
014 Ziad: yeah. I've got something on the history of swine flu. Also,
015 definitions and things like that.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 07.09.2009)

In this session, I observed learners smiling, obviously animated in their body language and interested in each other's information. They were active and involved in the discussion of materials (Where learners were reading the materials from a paper, their words would appear in inverted commas):

Extract 5.34

091 Sami: yeah, common type is called H1N1, transmitted to humans
092 eh: transmit to humans. How? Result of direct contact
093 with them, with pigs or with swines, between humans
094 and eh::: and symptoms, I will explain in a small sentence. It's
095 the same as regular flu, just symptoms like humans.
096 Rose: yes.
097 Sami: like fever. Do you know what fever?
098 Rose: Houmma (fever in Arabic).
099 Sami: yeah, so, "high temperature, sleepy". you can see the human
100 like sleep all the time, sleepy, cough, also cough.
101 Rose: yes.
102 Tarek: yes. yes.
103 Sami: and "running nose".
104 Rose: yes.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 07.09.2009)

In their post-session group interview, learners related their active participation to having the time to prepare the materials at home:

Extract 5.35

018 Rose: I think we saved the time because we prepared the information at home. I translated the difficult words.
019
020 I checked many webpages and took my time and it was
021 on my computer which I am used to.
022 Ziad: That's right. It is easier at home. We did the search and
023 we could save the time for discussion.

(Extract taken from post-session group interview 7.09.2009)

These kinds of outside class strategies show learners' engagement out of the actual class and therefore they are likely to lead to greater opportunities for language learning.

Reflecting on the experience as a whole, I realized that:

- The Teachers' Computer Room was not an appropriate place for learners to access the internet in the THLI because of the many technical problems that were experienced (power cuts, slow and unstable internet connection, one internet-connected computer which may not necessarily be there all the time, the need to use personal computers which most learners did not have).
- If the internet was to be used in the THLI, websites should be specified for learners or saved on USBs. If that was the case, the internet as a source of materials would not be necessarily any more different from printed materials or coursebooks.

- Accessing the internet outside the THLI (home or internet cafe access) was well suited to give learners time to choose and prepare materials according to their needs and interests.

5.2.2. Cycle Two

The process of developing appropriate internet methodology in the first cycle was structured around the two research questions: *What problems were identified?* and *What methodological changes to make?* (see figure 5-1). On reflection, I came to realize that developing appropriate internet methodology first required deep understanding of the internet's use in the context (see figure 5-2).

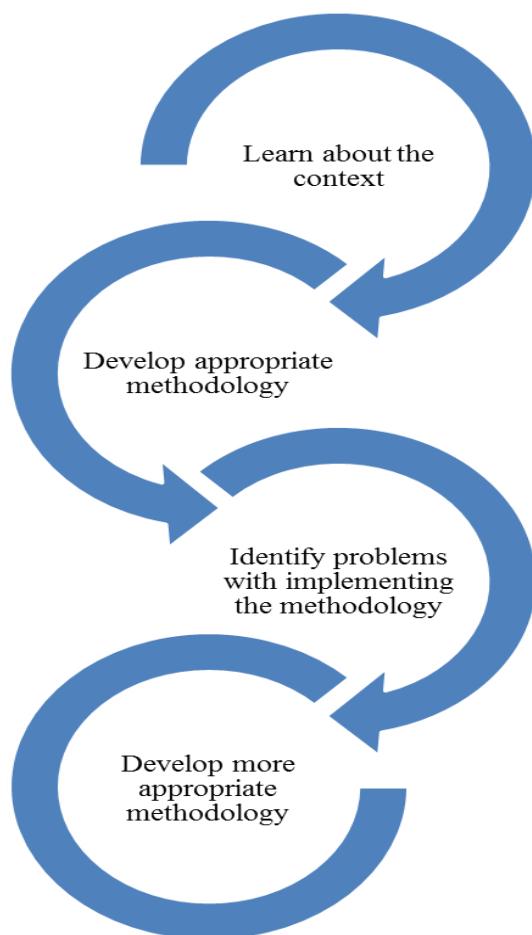


Figure 5-2 Developing Appropriate Methodology Model

This model for developing appropriate methodology was a developed version of my first cycle model (see figure 5-1). My second cycle model accounted for the importance of learning about the context's opportunities and constraints before developing methodology. The model provided a structure for the consequent processes of developing appropriate methodology in the second cycle. Similar to the first cycle, my big question was still:

How can internet materials be appropriately integrated to meet learners' personal needs and interests in the context?

The difference was only in the approach taken. Instead of adopting an idealistic approach to implement the intervention and then appropriating to the context, I realized how important it was to start from where people actually were to develop appropriate and effective methodology. As evident in the model above (figure 5-2), the sub-questions I was trying to answer were sequential:

Second Cycle Focus

What did I do to learn about the internet's use in the context?

Based on my contextual knowledge, what factors could I identify for developing appropriate internet methodology?

Implementing the methodology, what were the contextual problems identified?

What methodological changes were made to develop more appropriate methodology?

What did I do to learn about the internet's use in the context?

In order to learn about the internet's use in the context, I decided to interview teachers who had used the internet with EFL learners in the THLI. Although I knew that some teachers had used the internet as a supplementary source of materials, I did not have much detail about their experiences. Listening to these experiences would help me reexamine my personal beliefs about the context, improve my teaching practices, and refine my research focus:

Examining our personal beliefs and being aware of their inevitable presence in the research process is valuable. *It is to do with being aware and openminded. It helps alert us to any built-in assumptions we might have about what actions to take and what our data will reveal.* This is especially important in AR as you have to play the dual role of researcher and teacher. (Emphasis added, Burns, 2010a: 26).

After getting the Dean's and the Head of the English Department's permission, the secretary gave me one paper document which had all the teachers' names, emails and telephone numbers. I contacted the teachers and learnt that out of thirty-one English teachers in the THLI (including the Head of the Department), eighteen used the internet with EFL learners. Those who said they did not use it were either novice teachers who had just joined the English Department, or teachers who were 'not technology-oriented' as they said. So, I interviewed all teachers who said that they had used the internet with EFL learners except for two; one was on her maternity leave at that time and one was doing his military service. The total number of the interviews was therefore sixteen. All the interviews were conducted in the THLI Staff Room in the last two weeks of September 2009. The interviewed teachers had their MA or PhD degrees in ELT or ESP from UK universities (See Table 5-1). The length of every interview depended on the teacher's actual experience of using the internet in the THLI (the length ranged from fifteen to forty minutes). Three out of

the sixteen teachers reported that their experiences of using the internet were only in private universities or institutes and not in the THLI because of the less-than-ideal internet conditions. Therefore, extracts from their interviews will only be used when related to the THLI, the physical context of the research.

Teachers	Qualifications and Length of Teaching Experiences	Date of the Interview
T1	MA in English for Specific Purposes She had eight years of teaching experience.	Thurs 17. 09. 2009
T2	MA in English for Specific Purposes She had eight years of teaching experience.	Thurs 17. 09. 2009
T3	MA in English Language Studies and Methods He had four years of teaching experience.	Thurs 17. 09. 2009
T4	MA in English for Specific Purposes He had eight years of teaching experience.	Tues 22. 09. 2009
T5	PhD in Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching. He had five years of teaching experience	Tues 22. 09. 2009
T6	PhD in Applied Linguistics. She had six years of teaching experience.	Wed 23. 09. 2009
T7	PhD in Linguistics She had six years of teaching experience.	Wed 23. 09. 2009
T8	MA in English Language Teaching She had two years of teaching experience.	Wed 23. 09. 2009
T9	MA in English Language Teaching He had one year teaching experience.	Thurs 24. 09. 2009
T10	MA in English Language Teaching She had three years of teaching experience.	Mon 28. 09. 2009
T11	PhD in English Language Teaching She had ten years of teaching experience.	Mon 28. 09. 2009
T12	MA in English Language Teaching She had ten years of teaching experience.	Mon 28. 09. 2009
T13	MA in English for Specific Purposes She had three years of teaching experience.	Mon 28. 09. 2009
T14	MA in English for Specific Purposes He had three years of teaching experience.	Tues 29. 09. 2009
T15	MA in English for Specific Purposes She had five years of teaching experience.	Tues 29. 09. 2009
T16	MA in English for Specific Purposes She had seven years of teaching experience.	Tues 29. 09. 2009

Table 5-1

Teacher Interviewees: Qualifications, Length of Teaching Experiences, and Dates of their Interviews

I started all these interviews with an open-ended question about the teachers' internet experiences with EFL learners. The open-ended question gave the teachers the opportunity to start with what they perceived as the most important about their internet experiences and functioned as a 'grand-tour' (Spradley, 1980) opening question to get them to foreground what they felt to be most important. The questions I was interested in were only asked if relevant to the teacher's experience and not covered:

1. Why using the internet as a supplementary source of materials?
2. How was it used?
 - a. Where was it accessed?
 - b. What internet content was sought?
 - c. What activities were used?
 - d. What contextual considerations?
3. How did teachers describe learners' reactions to the use of internet materials in their EFL classes?

Thematic analysis was used to answer these questions. Although they may at first sight appear to be tangential to the main narrative, the themes developed from the teachers' interviews will be presented in this chapter. I provide space for a full account of the teachers' interviews because they were instrumental in raising my awareness of key issues within the Institution and therefore helped in the development of appropriate methodology.

1. Why using the internet as a supplementary source of materials?

In answer to this question, teachers identified a number of reasons for using the internet as a source of materials. The various reasons reported by the teachers reflected their beliefs in the potential usefulness of integrating internet materials into their EFL courses for increasing learners' motivation and supporting their engagement.

The Internet as a Supplementary Source of Materials to Boost Learners' Motivation

The main theme that emerged from teachers' answers was their use of supplementary internet materials to boost EFL learners' motivation. All teachers reported that. Guo argues that '*all motivation components boost motivation for engagement*' (2010: 13). Teachers' beliefs in the potential usefulness of internet materials to boost motivation were very helpful as they drew my attention to the area of learners' motivation that helped me later refine my focus on learners' engagement. Words such as 'interesting', 'fun', 'involving', 'motivating' were repeatedly used by all the teachers. In her interview, T2, for example, said:

Extract 5.36

- 062 T2: very, very interesting, so all the students got
063 motivated (...) got involved (...) tried to participate (...)
064 ask questions at the end (...) it was interesting for me
065 and for them also.

T3 said that he would use internet materials when he feels that the coursebook materials are not motivating for learners:

Extract 5.37

- 011 T3: when
012 you feel that (.) sometimes I feel that my students are not

013 motivated. The materials in the coursebook, they're not
014 that motivating for students. So, I have to go to the internet
015 to search for something, just to raise their motivation. I try
016 to let them (.) mm (.) use something new.

Also, T4 said that he would usually integrate internet materials into his classes to boost learners' motivation especially in conversation classes:

Extract 5. 38

005 T4: asking students
006 to bring materials from the internet, to do presentations
007 in class, sometimes, usually, especially if we start to
008 have these boring moments, especially in conversation
009 classes, okay, and you need sometimes to motivate
010 students.

Although all teachers reported that they used supplementary internet materials to increase learners' motivation, they differed in their justifications of the causal relationship. The probing question I had to ask was: *What was it about the internet's materials that made you think they would be motivating?* The sub-themes emerged from analysing the data suggest that the internet has a motivational potential as a supplementary source of materials because it:

- Allows access to interesting materials
 - Allows access to personalised materials
 - Allows access to up-to-date materials
 - Breaks the routine
 - Encourages autonomous learning
 - Draws on learners' internet experiences outside the classroom
 - Provides information to clarify coursebook content

The reasons provided by the teachers reflected their awareness of the motivational potential of internet materials which if used appropriately would create the conditions for learners' engagement. Extracts from teachers' interviews are provided to illustrate the sub-themes developed.

Allows access to interesting materials

Some teachers reported how the internet was used to access interesting materials especially when the coursebook's materials failed to interest learners. In her interview, T10 reported how she asked students to get interesting texts from the internet when coursebook's texts were not interesting. She gave the example below:

Extract 5.39

015 T10: the whole unit was talking about food and meals in general, and the
016 reading text in the textbook was very, very dull and very boring.
017 you know, I taught that before and I realized that it was very, very,
018 I don't know. I don't want to say demotivating but students
019 were not interested in it at all. So, what I did was to ask the two
020 students to go to the internet and find two different texts.

Although she asked learners to bring different texts, she was not expecting that the learners would bring very interesting ones. She was surprised that they did. She also reported how the internet materials were not only interesting for the learners but also for her as a teacher.

Extract 5.40

100 T10: the text itself was very interesting. I mean, I didn't expect
101 the students to bring such a text. I expected them to bring something
102 boring just like the one in the textbook.
103 TR: mm.
104 T10: like talking about the famous meals in Syria and such things. but,
105 no. they were talking about meals in special occasions all over the
106 world. So, for example, in Christmas in the US they do this and
107 they cook that, why, what are the traditional things. very
108 very interesting. The way they were talking about why coffee, I

109 think in Mexico, and I think they said that the black beans protect
110 us from the evil eye and such things. very, very interesting. I was
111 really interested in this topic.

T3 reported the need for using the internet as a source of supplementary materials as coursebooks sometimes fail to provide interesting texts:

Extract 5.41

132 T3: all textbooks, they talk about food, tourism, transportation,
133 and students are not interested in these things sometimes. so, if
134 you feel they are interested, fine, if you feel they are not
135 interested, you have to find other outlets really.
136 TR: yeah.
137 T3: so you, you can't say
138 to your students, this is the coursebook, you have to stick
139 to it and that's it. No. You have to try something new.
140 okay? This coursebook is for the benefit of students, and
141 if, if you feel that it's not, as I told you, up to the standard,
142 you have to change something and the internet is one way.

Using the internet to supplement coursebook materials with more interesting ones highlights the teachers' beliefs about the internet's motivational and engaging role for EFL learners in the context of the research.

Allows access to personalised materials

Most teachers believed that internet materials were motivating because of their potential for personalising content. T2, for example, reported that she used the internet as a source of materials to address learners' personal interests and, therefore, increase their motivation.

Extract 5.42

043 T2: to make the topics related to, to the things they like, the
044 things that are interesting for them, just to get them motivated,
045 to make them more motivated.

She gave the example of students getting materials related to their specialities.

Extract 5.43

053 T2: so, some of them, I remember, tried to bring something
054 about diets because, and not, not only about their
055 specialization, but the thing that all the students might be
056 interested in and involved, to get them all involved.

While T2 asked learners to get internet materials that would correspond to their needs and interests, T9 chose to do that himself. He searched the internet for relevant and interesting materials for groups of learners who had scientific interests:

Extract 5.44

047 T9: so, yeah. I used for example to surf some websites like English
048 Science, and the other one called Science Daily. It's a magazine.
049 and the Times online also, and I also got some materials from
050 the BBC Science website.

He also commented that learners' liked these materials because of their relevance to their interests:

Extract 5.45

144 T9: and their reaction to this was quite good because they love to do
145 something related to their worlds rather than the coursebook.

This highlights the importance of using the internet as a supplementary source of personalised content to motivate EFL learners. T5 also emphasised that:

Extract 5.46

123 T5: I would say it is very useful. It includes every or information
124 about everything. Some students are interested say in biology,
125 other students are interested in environment, others in entertainment
126 or things like movies. You can find information on all these things
127 online.

Accessing personalised and relevant materials would assist learners' motivation and engagement in the language classroom (see 3.4.3.1.).

Allows access to up-to-date materials

Some teachers reported that one of their reasons for using the internet was that the internet is a rich source of up-to-date materials. T3, for example, made a contrast between updated internet materials and coursebook materials which may not be necessarily up-to-date:

Extract 5.47

005 T3: sometimes I feel it's very important to
006 catch up with new information, especially from the
007 internet because the coursebooks you use, sometimes
008 they're not up-to-date.

Similarly, T7 made this contrast between the internet's and the books' materials to justify her use of the internet as a source of materials:

Extract 5.48

038 T7: because I thought the internet would have, would
039 have more updated information about their field rather than going
040 to some books which could be out of date or so, I just wanted to find
041 material that is, let's say, more recent and relevant to their study.

T9 made the relationship between up-to-date internet materials and learners' motivation clear as he said:

Extract 5.49

052 T9: I got all. I mean, my interest was just to get some materials or
053 articles about something up-to-date, something to grab the
054 attention of my students.

He gave examples of up-to-date materials that he had got for his students. One was about swine flu, a very up-to-date topic at that time:

Extract 5.50

063 T9: I remember something about swine flu for example, yeah,
064 at the very beginning of that (.) the disease. So, I brought
065 a very good article comparing the normal cold, let's say,
066 with swine flu.

Breaks the routine

Most teachers reported that adhering to the coursebook is a routine action that could cause boredom in the classroom. Integrating internet materials into EFL classes was perceived as a way to break the routine. T8, for example, said that she resorted to internet materials to get away from the coursebook.

Extract 5.51

178 T8: because I don't want to stick to the book all the time, only this
179 information, we have to finish exercise A, B, C, and D.

T2 said that in a three-month language course, it would be necessary to break the routine with some internet materials:

Extract 5.52

010 T2: sometimes, to make my classes more
011 enjoyable, more interesting, I ask my students
012 to, because you know, we have a course which
013 lasts for three months, three times a week.
014 So, sometimes the students get bored, become
015 bored. So, you need something new.

T9 highlighted the point that using internet materials was important not only to break the routine but also to meet learners' expectations who preferred non-coursebook materials:

Extract 5.53

138 T9: something like change to the classroom, rather than
139 merely dealing with this coursebook. You know, sometimes
140 I call it cursebook rather than coursebook because students
141 most of the time love to do something from outside the book.

T12 also reported that she would use the internet to break the routine and to support learners' active engagement. The link between breaking the routine with internet materials and learners' engagement was made clear on *lines 008, 009 and 010*.

Extract 5.54

001 TR: could you please talk to me about your experience
002 using the internet in your English classes?
003 T12: Yes. Actually, I didn't, I didn't use it to a lot,
004 but sometimes, most of the time, I use it just to
005 break the ice between me and the students, and
006 sometimes I feel that they are very (.) very passive.
007 TR: mm.
008 T12: So I just, to make them more, just to, to make them
009 more active, you see, to find something new to change
010 the mood.

Breaking the routine with internet materials can be considered as a motivating strategy. Therefore, the link to learners' engagement seems to be in line with the literature which suggests that 'all motivation components boost motivation for engagement' (Guo, 2010: 13).

Encourages autonomous learning

A very important theme that was reported by most teachers was learner autonomy. Teachers believed that asking learners to use the internet would enhance their autonomy. T4, for example, consciously referred learners to use the internet with the aim of improving their autonomous learning. He said that:

Extract 5.55

129 T4: you know autonomy is an essential
130 concept here. So, they started to feel, okay, we can do something
131 on our own, and for me it was this kind of message, usually
132 because in this age, no matter how much you teach your students,
133 you can't teach them everything so you have to teach them how
134 to go and start as autonomous learners because as we know,
135 TR: aha.
136 T4: in this time of globalization and the huge loads of information
137 people have to learn how to depend on themselves.

Similarly, T6 encouraged learners to use the internet outside the THLI so that they become independent learners.

Extract 5.56

011 T6: I advise my students
012 to use it at home or at internet cafes because I think they should
013 learn how to teach themselves English, because we as teachers
014 are not there to help them.

T8 made the relationship between learners' autonomy and motivation very clear as she said that:

Extract 5.57

174 T8: actually I used it to motivate students, let them go and search, like to
175 be independent, so they can depend on themselves and not on the
176 teacher.

This relationship between learners' autonomy and motivation (that are both supported by the use of the internet) highlights the engaging potential of the internet as a source of materials. Dörnyei and Ushioda claim that 'a key argument in linking autonomy and motivation is that both are centrally concerned with the learner's active engagement with and involvement in the learning process' (2010: 58).

Draws on learners' internet experiences outside the classroom

Some teachers referred to the fact that we live in the information age to justify their use of the internet as a source of information. Most learners already have internet experiences outside the classroom and it would be very useful to draw on that. T4, for example, said that:

Extract 5.58

183 T4: I think with time passing, I think everybody is going to move
184 to this, everybody, and now with the new generation, everything
185 is online, pushing us in that direction, and I think in the future
186 all teachers, they are going to involve the internet in their teaching
187 as part of the curriculum, okay, not necessarily because they want to
188 but because of this information age and the new generation so
189 hopefully they are going to provide us with the internet here.

T9 made a similar comment. He referred to the fact that we live in the information age to emphasise the need to use the internet:

Extract 5.59

174 T9: We can't just live, even inside the classroom, you can't
175 ignore the internet because this is how life is like now.

T16 also referred to the need to draw on learners' internet experiences outside the classroom to help learners enhance their language learning.

Extract 5.60

098 T16: I mean, because they
099 usually use the internet, but not for research. They usually use it
100 to chat. I could teach them how to use it to learn and get extra
101 information.

Drawing on learners' experiences outside the classroom is important to support their engagement. The literature emphasises 'the need for teachers to engage learners by bringing the outside into the classroom' (Brewster and Fager, 2000: 7).

Provides information to clarify coursebook content

Some teachers reported how using the internet could help clarify some of the difficult coursebook content. For example, T10 said that using the internet helped her and the students to understand culture-specific coursebook content:

Extract 5.61

196 T10: yeah, I use it a lot, as a teacher, because there are a lot of
197 things that I don't know about especially the American
198 culture. I mean, we have, you know, I have studied in
199 the UK for a year which is not enough of course, but a lot of
200 things in the British textbooks, I can, you know.
201 TR: yeah.
202 T10: I can manage and explain them to the students, but with
203 the American, there are a lot of things which I don't know, a lot
204 of things that we have about the songs and the movies that

205 students don't know, and I don't know either, so
206 I use the internet to do that as well.

Also, T13 explained how using the internet as a source of information helped her and the learners understand some of the coursebook's acronyms and resulted in active engagement:

Extract 5.62

017 T13: so you need, for the acronym LCD, especially, it
018 sounds, it is very familiar for most of the students.
019 TR: yes.
020 T13: but it turned, I mean, I started asking them what is
021 LCD? Most of them said liquid crystal display and
022 I asked them so what is liquid crystal display? Most
023 of them, like looked at me and they were like what
024 is that? So, they didn't really understand that
025 TR: aha.
026 T13: and I was like surprised because some were students of
027 informatics.
028 TR: I see.
029 T13: so I supposed that they will help me to, like just to
030 explain what that was.
031 TR: mm.
032 T13: so, I waited and waited for few minutes and nobody answered.
033 Actually, some gave me like very vague ideas.
034 TR: I see.
035 T13: like not very specific, and I said okay, if you don't know
036 what LCD is, you will go home, access the internet, since
037 they were, most of them had access, so I said go
038 to the internet, google it, okay, and that is your homework.
039 TR: mm.
040 T13: your homework for next time is to give me the meaning of LCD
041 and I also asked for some of the differences, like you need to
042 compare the LCD with all traditional screens.

Asking teachers about their internet experiences generated narrative data as they talked about their reasons for using the internet, what they did, and how learners reacted. The narrative reports in teachers' interviews helped me understand engagement as a process facilitated by the integrated internet materials:

Extract 5.63

045 T13: and the next lesson, I started talking about screens. So, did you
046 do your homework? But when I gave them the task, some students
047 took it really seriously.
048 TR: how?
049 T13: It seemed that some of them took it seriously as they started

050 searching of course, and the next lesson, four students brought
051 whole pages full of the differences.

Teachers' perceptions of the internet materials as motivating and the reasons they gave to justify their beliefs highlighted the internet's potential for supporting learners' engagement in the context (see 3.4.3.1.). Guo argues that:

In fact, *all motivation components boost motivation for engagement*. Choice, engagement, persistence and concept of motivation determined by interest, relevance, expectancy and outcomes lead to satisfactory language learning processes and language methodology ... *Building motivation concepts* such as relevance, completeness, authenticity, satisfaction and immediacy into materials *would encourage students to persevere* and succeed in language learning (Emphasis added, 2010: 13).

2. How was the internet used?

The data acquired from asking teachers this question were very important for developing appropriate methodology. Their views made me realize how idealistic I was in thinking and planning to use the internet inside the THLI and how realistic I need to be in order for the internet's use to be effective and engaging in this context.

a. Where was it accessed?

Teachers identified using outside computers at home or in internet cafes as the only appropriate way for learners to access internet materials. Given that the internet was not provided for learners in the THLI, teachers had to find other alternatives such as making use of outside computers to access and bring internet materials to class. Linder points out learners can 'conduct research on the Web using outside computers, and bring into the classroom authentic data for specific class projects or specific topics being studied in class' (2004: 12).

Extract 5.64

066 TR: Where was the internet accessed?
067 T2: it was home access actually, because in the institute
068 we don't have these resources. The internet access,
069 it's not available for students, as you know.

Also, T4 confirmed that the internet was not provided for learners in the THLI and therefore their access of internet materials at home:

Extract 5.65

143 TR: so they accessed the internet at home?
144 T4: yes. sure, because in the institute, as you know, everybody
145 knows, we have shortage of these kinds of technology.

Teachers also sought other alternatives such as bringing their personal computers to class. T1, for example, said that:

Extract 5.66

136 T1: this is one of the things, the other thing is that even if
137 I want to have computer access for students, it's not
138 available for them in the faculty here, in the institute, so
139 what I do is that sometimes I bring my computer with me
140 with the wireless connection I have so that they can do the work
141 in class.

No one said that the internet was accessed inside the THLI. Reflecting on what happened in the ninth Computer Room session where learners used outside computers to bring information about swine flu and the findings derived from teachers' interviews, I had to reconsider my idealistic approach and revise my plan for later action.

b. *What internet content was sought?*

As stated earlier in Chapter Two, the internet service in the country is unstable and slow. This limits access to flash-based web-pages and the downloading of larger

packages of information (videos, sound-files, etc.). That explains teachers' choices to use text-based internet materials rather than audios or videos. Some teachers asked their students to bring articles from the internet that related to their interests and specialties:

Extract 5.67

052 T16: I used to ask them to bring articles from the internet, about the
053 subject they chose to write about.

Also, T3 said that he would usually get reading materials from the internet to discuss with the students:

Extract 5.68

080 T3: I usually choose reading
081 materials from the internet.

Similarly, T9 said that he would usually look for articles online to motivate his students:

Extract 5.69

052 T9: I mean, my interest was just to get some materials or
053 articles about something up-to-date, something to grab the
054 attention of my students.

T1 said that her students would sometimes go online to bring internet materials such as pictures and articles to class. The reason for that would be that students find the internet more interesting than book materials:

Extract 5.70

110 T1: and because students,
111 our students are not like library-oriented, they wouldn't
112 go and check in a book. It is not interesting enough
113 to them. So, online is more interesting. Sometimes, they
114 bring pictures, sometimes they bring articles.

Teachers reported using other content internet materials such as news reports and song lyrics. T3, for example, said that:

Extract 5.71

082 T3: most of the time reading materials,
083 like online newspapers.

Some teachers also highlighted the importance of using song lyrics to motivate learners, especially teenagers. In his interview, T4 talked about his experience of using the internet as a source of song lyrics:

Extract 5.72

043 T4: teenagers, okay, to some extent, you know teenagers, they are
044 in love with music and movies, things like that, so we decided to
045 do this kind of an exercise, everybody, choose your best song
046 in English, the one you love the most, okay? Listen to it quite a
047 few times, try to write the lyrics, and then go to the internet, you
048 know, everybody, on the internet you can just put the words of the
049 song and that's it, in front of you.

Also, T3 referred to the importance of using song lyrics in EFL classes to expose teenage learners to authentic language in use:

Extract 5.73

210 T3: and teenagers are crazy about songs, and the lyrics are in English.
211 TR: yeah.
212 T3: they learn the words as they are, like how they are used in everyday
213 situations.
214 TR: yeah.

T5 said that he used the internet to get song lyrics and to design missing words activities for his students:

Extract 5.74

129 T5: another thing, we, we actually, we actually use the internet for is
130 lyrics, lyrics for songs.

Using missing words activities leads us to the next question about the internet activities used.

c. What internet activities were used?

Teachers chose the structure of internet activities based on whether the aim was to extend or expand coursebook activities. They made their decisions based on learners' needs and interests.

Vocabulary Activities

Teachers reported on their use of the internet to design vocabulary activities that could engage learners' interests. Song lyrics activities were one example. T5, for example, said that:

Extract 5.75

132 T5: yeah. so I had this activity in my classes, even I as a teacher
133 make use of this facility provided by the internet, sometimes when
134 I listen to a song, I don't understand every word, so I get the lyrics
135 from the internet, and I try to pick up some words from the lyrics,
136 use them as missing words, yeah, so students listen to the song,
137 and fill in the spaces on a sheet of paper.

Another example was provided by T1. She asked learners to use the internet in order to bring descriptions of new vocabulary items in the coursebook.

Extract 5.76

013 T1: for example, two weeks ago in the
014 faculty of mechanical engineering, the lesson was about
015 cams, and the students, no matter how hard I tried to
016 explain to the students what a cam is without referring to
017 it in Arabic because they would know it so it was a bit
018 difficult and challenging. so, their task for the next class
019 which happened to be the next day, the day after, so,
020 it was to bring photos and descriptions of cam,
021 of cams, generally speaking.

The narrative provided by T1 exemplifies how the internet could be used as a source of supplementary materials to support vocabulary learning in the context.

Speaking Activities

Speaking activities were reported by all the teachers. That was understandable because of learners' needs in the context to improve their conversation and speaking skills (see 2.4.3.3.). Group work activities, oral presentations, and open discussions were all used as a structure for integrating internet materials into the EFL classroom. T3, for example, said that he used group work and pair work activities to encourage learners to speak:

Extract 5.77

058 T3: So, I give them time, may
059 be five, ten minutes to read, and after that I start group work,
060 pairwork to let them talk to each other about the topic itself.

Oral presentations were also used as a structure for internet-assisted speaking activities. T5 talked about how he used to ask students to use the internet as a source of information to prepare for in-class presentations:

Extract 5.78

032 T5: one way actually was to ask students to prepare
033 some, some kind of presentation to be done in the classroom.
034 so they can choose whatever, whatever topic they want,
035 do some search about it, bring some information to class,
036 and present it for about fifteen minutes.

According to T5, the reason for his use of oral presentations was to help learners improve their speaking skill which is the most desirable skill in the context. He said that:

Extract 5.79

052 T5: they
053 actually have little experience addressing audience. They can't,
054 they can't stand in front of like fifteen students and talk about
055 something in English, like general, about some general topics

Also, T10 talked about her use of presentations as a structure for internet-assisted activity to create opportunities for students to speak:

Extract 5.80

072 T10: and I don't want to go into details, but my aim was just to let
073 them speak, because it was the first time they got something
074 to present. So, it was an initial step or way to get them speak.
075 TR: aha.
076 T10: to improve their presentation skills.

T2 mentioned that she would usually ask students to look for information online about the things they would like to present about.

Extract 5.81

031 T2: I try to use it, to ask students, who'd like to
032 prepare something for us, for example, next session,
033 or next week, to have, to prepare for a presentation,
034 or something like this, try to collect, to surf the internet
035 to bring some ideas for a presentation. This is what I do.

Also, T4 said that many times he asked his students to use the internet as a source of materials to prepare for presentations in class:

Extract 5.82

005 T4: many times, for example, asking students
006 to bring materials from the internet, to do presentations
007 in class.

In addition to presentations, teachers also reported on their use of open discussions to share and discuss materials from the internet. In answer to my question about the structure of internet-assisted activities in class, T3 identified open discussions as the main structure used:

Extract 5.83

053 TR: so what about structuring the internet activities in class?
054 T3: most of the time, open discussion, of course

Similarly, T2 said that she would ask learners to find interesting materials online so that they could talk about them in class.

Extract 5.84

047 T2: okay? try to, to find the things that you like to speak about
048 and let's try to discuss it in class.

T8 positively perceived the discussion of internet materials about learners' favourite singers in class:

Extract 5.85

141 T8: and the next lesson, most of the students, they were few, the
142 number was eleven students.
143 TR: aha.
144 T8: around, around eight of them I can say, brought like a short
145 passage about their favourite singers and we had a discussion. It was
146 nice.

Listening Activities

Every classroom in the THLI is provided with a tape-recorder to be used for listening activities. Some teachers extended coursebook's listening materials with personalized listening activities. For example, T4 got learners from the Conversation Course listen to their favourite songs. The internet was their source for getting their favourite songs lyrics:

Extract 5.86

045 T4: everybody, choose your best song
046 in English, the one you love the most, okay? Listen to it quite a
047 few times, try to write the lyrics, and then go to the internet, you
048 know, everybody, on the internet you can just put the words of the
049 song and that's it, in front of you.
050 TR: yeah.
051 T4: print it and bring it here, okay?
052 TR: yeah.
053 T4: and everyday, somebody brings the CD. We listen to the song.
054 I sometimes made the student read the words, explain why he or she
055 likes this song. This was in summer classes this year. It was very
056 funny for those students.

d. What contextual considerations?

In order for the internet to assist learning in less-than-ideal internet conditions, a number of contextual factors need to be taken into consideration. Based on my analysis of the Computer Room sessions and other teachers' recommendations, I came up with a list of considerations that helped me in developing appropriate

internet methodology for the context. The list is presented later in Table 5-2. The different considerations that the teachers identified were:

Learners' Interests

Many teachers highlighted the importance of taking learners' interests into consideration when using internet materials in EFL classes. T1, for example, said that:

Extract 5.87

010 T1: I usually take into consideration their interests and language
011 level.

Similarly, T3 said that learners' interests and favourite topics would determine the internet content used:

Extract 5.88

120 T3: so most of the time I ask my
121 students what do you, what do you like to talk about,
122 and they say, mm, we want to talk about fashion,
123 okay, so I go to the internet and try to get something about
124 fashion. Okay? So, this is what we call, mm, students are
125 interested in these things, may be, I as a teacher I'm not
126 interested but I have to, I have to take into consideration
127 my students' points of view.

The literature acknowledges the role of the internet as a source of content that could be exploited to engage learners with materials that correspond to their personal interests. It also acknowledges the teacher's role as a facilitator of this process. Ushioda claims that 'the Internet gives L2 learners immediate access to such a wide range of L2 Web content ... that it would be surprising indeed if they were unable to engage their own real interests and identities via this medium at some level (2011: 207).

Learners' Level

Teachers identified learners' English proficiency level as one of the main considerations when thinking about using the internet with EFL learners in the context. T3, for example, said that using internet materials with elementary levels is problematic and causes frustration because of difficult authentic content. His point was that internet materials should be used with advanced groups of learners:

Extract 5.89

086 TR: okay, and what about the level of the students?
087 T3: ah, this is a problem, this is a problem because sometimes
088 you feel that the students are not really up to the words they,
089 and they have this kind of frustration, as I told you, and you
090 feel that unless you are dealing with advanced students, there is
091 no point in bringing them news from the Guardian or the Times
092 because they will feel that it is too much for them, they will
093 not be able to deal with the information.

Similarly, T4 said that he would only use internet materials with higher proficiency level groups:

Extract 5.90

119 T4: so it was very good one, but as I said, once again, these
120 tasks are usually from intermediate to, as you know, advanced
121 levels, the introductory level, we usually have a problem with it.

Also, T2 reported that it would not be possible to use internet materials with low-level students:

Extract 5.91

017 T2: I try to use it with students in intermediate levels,
018 because you can't use it with elementary levels.

This can be confirmed from the literature. Li and Hart point out that 'beginners ... may find it difficult to use the Web at all' (2002: 374-5). Some teachers, however, reported that they used internet materials in elementary level classes, but they were the ones who accessed the internet and brought the materials for learners. They did not ask learners to do that. T10, for example, said that:

Extract 5.92

080 TR: and what were the courses or the level of the students?
081 T10: actually, advanced and intermediate more than beginners.
082 TR: mm.
083 T10: but of course that doesn't mean that I didn't do that with, you
084 know, elementary courses, but with elementary courses, I,
085 I did the job. I went to the internet. I searched for the appropriate
086 texts. I designed the exercises, and it was only for a change in the
087 classroom.

Some other teachers mentioned that the level of learners would affect the types of activities used. T8, for example, said that open discussions worked well with his upper-intermediate students:

Extract 5.93

148 T8: that lesson was really nice because their level helped me to make
149 it like an open discussion about the materials that they brought.

Number of Learners

In relation to class sizes, it is important to differentiate between classes in the THLI and classes in other faculties at Tishreen University. Unlike most classes at the University, classes in the THLI are small (a maximum number of 15 learners in each class). Teachers identified class size as one of their considerations for using internet materials with EFL learners:

Extract 5.94

152 T1: the number is reasonable, but I wouldn't do it in departments
153 like literature department, my students in the education department
154 or Arabic literature department, because the number of students
155 is massive, and I cannot have any activities on classroom level
156 because it would be chaotic a bit, noisy and chaotic.

Similarly, T2 referred to the small number of learners in the THLI and identified the small number of learners as the reason behind her use of internet materials to motivate EFL learners in the Institute:

Extract 5.95

073 T2: it could
074 be used to create a new atmosphere in the, something
075 new, something more challenging, motivating and
076 interesting especially in the institute, because we don't
077 have large numbers of students, something like ten
078 students, you know.

Voluntary Internet Work

Teachers highlighted the importance of keeping the internet work voluntary because of a number of contextual problems. One of the problems reported by the teachers was that some *learners may not have previous internet experiences* and therefore it would be unfair to ask them to bring internet materials to class. T1, for example, said that:

Extract 5.96

121 T1: well, generally speaking, in the, let's say, in the region,
122 yeah, now, one of the problems is that not all students
123 have computer access, and not all of them, if they have
124 computers, they don't have internet access, so sometimes,
125 I put into consideration that students don't have, they don't have
126 the access.

In her answer to my question about selecting two learners to do the internet search, T10 also referred to this problem:

Extract 5.97

025 TR: yeah, and why did you choose these two students?
026 T10: actually they were volunteers. They wanted that because as you
027 know, not all students have the access to the internet.

T10 also raised the issue of social inequality as learners who do not have internet access or experience may feel inferior to their peers who are more fluent with using the internet.

Extract 5.98

169 TR: and did all the students bring the materials for the task?
170 T10: well, with this advanced course, I only had six students, and all
171 of them had access to the internet, they all brought things from
172 the internet, but this is different from the other task I told you

173 about where only two students had the access. I really don't know
174 whether the others felt disappointed or less than others because they
175 are not good at using the internet, I'm really not sure.

Despite the problem of social inequality with regard to internet use and experience, it was still important for teachers to make use of the internet in their classes. They depended on learners who had previous internet experiences to help their peers with this problem. According to Ushioda (2011), depending on learners who are fluent with technology can be a strategic option for teachers to raise learners' awareness of the potential of technology for empowering their language learning:

The role of the teacher is thus critically important in mediating students' awareness of the L2 learning affordances offered by the everyday technologies they use. Creating this kind of fusion between how students use technology inside and outside the language classroom will help reduce the barriers between L2 learning and life. Moreover, once they are brought to recognize this fusion, those students who are more fluent with the technology can help lead the way and work with teachers or less technically skilled students to understand how the technology can be creatively and imaginatively exploited as an L2 learning resource (Emphasis added, Ushioda, 2011: 207).

Other problems reported by teachers had to do with the internet's provision for learners in the THLI. In his interview, T5 talked about this problem:

Extract 5.99

092 T5: yeah, actually we have problems at different levels, first of all,
093 at the institutional level, we don't have this facility in the institute,
094 and in the university in general we don't have enough funding
095 actually to provide this facility for all students, and I don't think of
096 the, the administration, the university administration, they,
097 they say they encourage such things but they don't, they don't supply
098 us, I mean in the institute, they don't supply us with the money we
099 need in order to have such facility.

Because the internet was not provided for learners in the THLI, teachers had to consider the fact that asking learners to access the internet may be a financial burden for some of them:

Extract 5.100

088 T7: because, as you know, and may be it is another problem, that the
089 internet is not offered to students as part of their study at university,
090 so it is a financial issue because most of the students have to go to
091 internet cafes and pay on hourly basis for their use of the internet.
092 so I think this could be a burden to some extent.

That was why teachers reported that they would not frequently ask for internet work. T1, for example, said that:

Extract 5.101

129 T1: and it is sometimes time- and money-
130 consuming for them. so, I take this into consideration.
131 that's why I don't ask for a lot of internet access or
132 stuff to do.

So, it can be money-consuming and also time-consuming for some learners. T4 referred to that in his interview:

Extract 5.102

173 T4: as I said, some kept saying, we don't have time to go to the internet
174 because, you know, they are adults, married, they have
175 responsibilities, so no time, something else, maybe they are
176 not used to the internet, like the new generation, now the new
177 generation is totally, you know, internet-oriented.

That was why, T5, for example, concluded that for the internet experience to be effective, teachers would need to take all these constraints into consideration.

Extract 5.103

117 T5: we have financial issues, we have like time issue.
118 so what I'm saying is that we as teachers need to consider all these
119 issues in order for this experience to be successful.

To cope with these constraints, the amount of internet work required from learners needed to be reasonable. In his interview, T5 said that:

Extract 5.104

081 T5: so I try to do that like, to specify one day a week within the course
082 and that is how I make it more enjoyable and less of a burden.

Also, learners needed to be ‘on board’ or instrumental in recommending the use of internet materials. They needed to be involved and in agreement in order for the

internet materials to be effective in this context:

Extract 5.105

156 T4: but in the end this depends on
157 students, how they wish their course to be like.

Some teachers found the solution in doing the internet work themselves by printing and photocopying the materials for learners. T7, for example, said that:

Extract 5.106

083 T7: it didn't seem
084 feasible as I would be, let's say, unfair to the students who don't
085 have internet. So, I preferred downloading and photocopying and
086 distributing them to students.

Conservative Attitudes

Teo argues that ‘attitude towards use’ (2011: 2432) needs to be taken into consideration when teachers consider the integration of internet technologies in their classrooms. In the context, teachers considered the conservative nature of some EFL learners’ families when integrating the internet into their EFL classes. T1, for example, said that:

Extract 5.107

169 T1: some families, they want to
170 raise their children in a conservative way, so the, they
171 wouldn't have TV access for cable channels or even they
172 wouldn't allow their children to a certain age to go online alone
173 without supervision, so when, when the teacher gives tasks
174 for students to, to how to do on their own at home, then this
175 may contradict with the family values that you're not a teen yet,
176 for example, or you're not twenty or you didn't finish your
177 university, you're not allowed to have internet access. So, here
178 it would be just like there is conflict between the family
179 values, what the parents are considering as healthy
180 environment for their family and children to protect them and
181 what the teacher is asking for.

Another consideration regarding the conservative nature of some EFL learners was gender-related. T5 talked about that in his interview:

Extract 5.108

111 T5: and if they want to
112 really have good internet connection, they have to go to internet
113 cafes. Some of them can do that, say before six pm, you know
114 some of our female students can't go to internet cafes at night.
115 TR: yeah.
116 T5: to surf the internet there, to collect information, so we have
117 gender issues.

This problem is also highlighted in the literature. In Taki's research, one of the internet café owners said that during the day, there usually are males and females but during the night, 'one hardly finds a single female' (2010: 94). So, there are economic as well as cultural considerations. That is why the amount of internet work required from learners needs to be reasonable and, preferably, learners need to be 'on board' or instrumental in recommending the use of internet materials. Learners need to be involved and in agreement in order for the internet materials to be effective in this context.

3. How did teachers describe learners' reactions to the use of internet materials in their EFL classes?

In answer to my question about learners' reactions to the use of internet materials, teachers reported how learners behaved, thought, felt, and interacted while doing internet activities. Teachers evaluated the effectiveness of the internet experiences based on learners' participation in class. My initial analysis of teachers' responses in the field revealed a reciprocal relationship between addressing learners' interests through the use of internet materials and learners' active participation. T2, for example, said that:

Extract 5.109

061 T2: and the topic was
062 very, very interesting, so all the students got
063 motivated, got involved, tried to participate,
064 ask questions at the end, it was interesting for me
065 and for them also.

T3 also referred to this reciprocal relationship when talking about learners' reactions to interesting internet materials:

Extract 5.110

071 T3: so I say, give it a try, and let's discuss the materials, may
072 be the interesting things they liked about the materials, shocking
073 news, okay? So, when you get these pieces of information to class,
074 students feel they just want to talk about this. We want to participate,
075 to take a part in these things. So, they start talking with each other.

Initial analysis also helped me identify examples of learners autonomously using the internet to bring materials about things they liked and actively discussing them with peers in class:

Extract 5.111

112 T13: one of the students brought, she likes horoscope.
113 TR: aha.
114 T13: so she brought information about stars and signs, and she made
115 a presentation about this, and it turned out that she brought this
116 from the internet.
117 TR: aha.
118 T13: and she always, like, she registered in one of the horoscope
119 sites, and she always gets emails from them. So, she liked it.
120 and it was really nice. She wrote the signs on the board, and then
121 what is your sign, so it was a nice presentation.

Similarly, T4 reported how learners sometimes structured and led the internet work themselves without even asking him for help. They were very active and involved in the discussions.

Extract 5.112

069 T4: so you just go to the internet, okay? Some people, yes,
070 they make it, I don't know, better than teachers, bringing
071 photographs, all of them are downloaded from the internet,
072 some of them, they started to distribute, okay, papers in the
073 class. The moment they did so, they started speaking. Some
074 students, they made summaries of the points, so they didn't

075 give the whole materials, instead they gave, for each person,
076 a piece of paper, the main points, sometimes, even some
077 students, they are very smart, they start to give photographs,
078 to give graphs, asking students about things, sometimes you
079 are shocked by students, with what they can do.

Teachers' perceptions of learners' reactions also revealed that learners had positive feelings towards integrating internet materials into their EFL classes. T1, for example, described learners' happiness while discussing internet materials:

Extract 5.113

082 T1: well, they were happy that they did something just like, they
083 felt that was engaging not only outside the classroom but also
084 inside the class.

Also, T8 talked about learners' happiness and motivation. She made the relationship between autonomy and motivation very clear:

Extract 5.114

250 T8: but the other situation with the students here in the Language
251 Institute, they were motivated, and they reacted happily.
252 they were happy to do something on their own, I could see
253 that in their eyes, the way they talk, even when some said
254 oh no, we can't do that, it's difficult, you can see that
255 it's only their tongue that said that and that they are happy because
256 they are doing something new, something different.

T9 talked about learners feeling proud of using internet materials in their EFL classes and showing off in front of other teachers. He said that:

Extract 5.115

054 T9: so from my own experience,
055 that was quite motivating for my students because they
056 were proud, even showing off in front of other teachers.

Similarly, T12 talked about learners feeling proud of their use of the internet to bring materials to class:

Extract 5.116

024 T12: yes, just words, and sometimes idioms, well, they
025 bring them, and then they start showing off in front of their
026 classmates, yes, like they went to the internet and they brought
027 the words, we got the meaning. They say something like this.

In this context where not every student would have internet access and experience, teachers reported that the most engaged learners were the ones who accessed the internet and brought the materials to class. T10, for example, said that:

Extract 5.117

116 T10: the others were interested in the information, but I noticed that the
117 two students were the ones who were very, you know, the most
118 involved, may be, because they already knew what it was all about
119 and they were ready to help the others. Whenever a student came to
120 them and asked, what do you mean by this, or how shall I explain
121 this, they were very happy to help them.
122 TR: mm.
123 T10: so I'm not very sure about the other students, but I can tell you,
124 I'm sure they were interested in the topic itself, but the ones who
125 brought the text were very involved.

It is almost not surprising that ‘Bates and Khasawneh (2007) found that students with higher computer self-efficacy tended to spend more time using online learning technology and were therefore more engaged in the learning processes’ (cited in Sun and Rueda, 2011: 3).

T4 also reported how students who used the internet were very interested and actively discussed and argued about the materials:

Extract 5.118

098 T4: for them, as I said, since it was voluntary work, some of them
099 were really interested, very excited doing it, going to the
100 internet and they started to argue in class, we are doing this,
101 no, I did search this, because you know, when somebody is
102 presenting something, the next day some people who, who don't
103 like what he has already said, they go to the internet once again,
104 and choose something that contradicts what he said.

T4 even complained that sometimes he could not stop students from discussing and arguing about the internet materials:

Extract 5.119

113 T4: so we used to have arguments, and sometimes I had to stop
114 people, okay, just forget about it now, okay, this person,

115 because today he's going to present something else, so give him
116 the chance.
117 TR: ((laughs))
118 T4: and no, they are insisting on discussing what's already said in the
119 class, so it was very good one, but as I said, once again,
120 these tasks are usually from intermediate to, as you know, advanced
121 levels. The introductory level, we usually have a problem with it.

'The Internet gives L2 learners immediate access to such a wide range of L2 Web content ... that it would be surprising indeed if they were unable to engage their own real interests and identities via this medium at some level' (Ushioda, 2011: 207).

The question at that stage was *where all these findings would lead me next*. My second cycle model for developing appropriate methodology (see figure 5-2) accounted for the importance of learning about the context before developing methodology. That was why I provided space for a full account of the teachers' interviews. They were instrumental in raising my awareness of key issues within the Institution and therefore helped in the development of appropriate methodology.

Based on my contextual knowledge, what factors could I identify for developing appropriate internet methodology?

Based on the teachers' interviews data, I identified context-specific factors that could help in developing appropriate internet methodology (see Table 5-2). Conacher and Royall (1998) develop what they call 'practical' and 'pedagogical' criteria that need to be considered when using the internet either as a source of content or as a medium of communication:

Access, use and *reliability* might be termed practical criteria; *stimulus, environment* and *outcome* are rather pedagogical criteria. Combining such criteria may prove particularly useful when considering, firstly, the contribution of the Internet as a resource or as a medium for language learning (Emphasis added, 1998: 39).

Therefore, contextual factors like reasons for using the internet as a source of supplementary materials, internet activities, and the outcome can in Conacher's and Royall's terms be called pedagogical criteria, whereas factors like access, content, and considerations can be called practical criteria. Cilesiz argues that 'computer use is so embedded in and constrained by its social and cultural contexts that to construe such behavior as independent would be misleading' (2009: 232-3).

Reasons	Access	Content	Activities	Considerations	Result
<u>The internet was used to supplement coursebook materials with:</u> interesting materials personalised materials up-to-date materials extra information about some coursebook content <u>To</u> motivate learners and break the routine encourage autonomous learning draw on learners' internet experiences outside the classroom	Home access Internet Cafes PCs	Articles News reports Pictures Lyrics	Vocabulary Speaking activities Listening activities Coursebook- and non-coursebook-related internet activities	Learners' interests Learners' levels Small-class size Voluntary internet work	Motivation, active participation, autonomy etc. that were later interpreted in the light of the work on learners' engagement

Table 5-2

Criteria for developing appropriate internet methodology

Taking all these factors into consideration, I decided to make use of outside computers to allow learners to access and choose materials that correspond to their personal needs and interests. The aim was to create appropriate conditions to facilitate learners' engagement. Linder argues that in contexts where the internet conditions are less-than-ideal, learners can 'conduct research on the Web using outside computers, and bring into the classroom authentic data for specific class projects or specific topics being studied in class' (2004: 12). As a source of authentic materials (Warschauer et al., 2000), the internet has a great potential for learner authenticity as 'textually authentic materials tend to have greater potential for being made learner authentic than textually unauthentic materials' (Lee, 1995: 324).

Instead of having sessions as separate from the regular classroom, the plan was to try using internet materials with learners as an integral part of their language course. So, I again asked for the Dean's and the Head of the English Department's permission to co-teach the advanced level group of the Constant Learning Course that was to be run in October 2009. They both agreed and asked me to check with the Course teacher. I got the timetable for the Constant Learning Course. The teacher allocated to teach the advanced level group was one of the teachers whom I previously interviewed. Working with a teacher who had prior internet experience with EFL learners was essential to help in implementing the intervention. I talked to her about my plan and asked for her permission to co-teach the Course.

Extract 5.120

Today I talked to Sarah for about half an hour about my research plans and asked her if we could co-teach the course. She was so happy and told me that this was her first time to teach an advanced level group, that she was worried about it but not anymore. She also told me

that with this particular group of learners (staff members), it would be really interesting to try using the internet with them.

(Extract from the teacher's researcher's diary, 01.10.2009)

We met again to plan for our first class. We decided to ask learners about their expectations and what they wanted the Course to be like. We also decided to ask them about their internet experiences and whether they would like supplementing the coursebook with some internet materials.

The course started on the fifth of October 2009. It was supposed to be running till the 31st of December 2009. Learners would have to attend three classes a week (on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday). The Coursebook used was *New Headway Advanced Student's Book* (2003). Six students registered for the Course but only four used to attend (see table 5-3). The learners were academic (Kamal), administrative (Fares and Lina) and technical- support (Zein) staff members at Tishreen University.

Learners	Gender	Qualification	Age
Fares	Male	Bachelor degree in civil engineering	33
Kamal	Male	PhD in Physics	45
Lina	Female	Bachelor degree in civil engineering	38
Zein	Male	Bachelor degree in mechanical engineering	25

Table 5-3 Advanced Learners in the Constant Learning Course

In the first class, we asked learners about their expectations and what they liked to learn from this Course. The following is an extract from this conversation:

Extract 5.121

001 T: we would really like to know what you expect from this course,
002 and if you have any suggestions?
003 Kamal: I suggest, I mean, I'd like to have some interesting things
004 from the internet, we can discuss them together?
005 Fares: that would be interesting. We're actually fed up with grammar.
006 T: well:
007 Zein: yes, please, more conversation please, and we can use the internet yes

(Extract from interaction transcript, 05.10.2009)

I still remember how Sarah and I looked at each other and could not believe it. We could hardly comment on that as we were totally shocked by students' suggestions which sounded like an introduction to what we were planning to say. I took the opportunity to introduce my research plans and aims. I also explained how learners' participation in systematic data collection would help evaluate this experience which could be later used with other learners in the Institute. While talking about it, learners were so excited and happy to hear that this kind of innovation was going to take place in their course. 'Being lucky' was repeatedly said by the learners in that class. This made me feel happy as I was passing the consent forms for them to read. They all very kindly signed them.

Implementing the methodology, what were the contextual problems identified?

What methodological changes were made to develop more appropriate methodology?

In the Constant Learning Course, I took into consideration all the practical and pedagogical factors that were identified in Table 5-2. Few problems were experienced and therefore few methodological changes were made. The internet was used as a supplementary source of materials to do some coursebook- and non-

coursebook activities. Regarding data collection, my dual role as a teacher and researcher affected my use of certain methods such as note taking and informal interviews (see 4.4.1. and 4.4.3). Learners were asked to keep diaries to reflect on their experiences in internet-assisted activities. Their interactions while doing internet-related activities were recorded and post-class informal interviews were conducted to reflect on learners' performance in internet activities. Post-course interviews were also conducted with the learners and the co-teacher to reflect on the experience and its effectiveness as a whole.

The first page of the first unit contained a warm-up activity with nice and colourful pictures of eight celebrities. The *Teacher's Book* says:

1. Ask students to work in pairs to discuss what they know about these famous people. You could discuss one as an example to get them started. Conduct a brief whole-class feedback, and find out what students know. Point out that all these people emigrated from their country of birth.
2. Ask students in pairs to match the people to the countries.
3. In small groups, or as a class if your class is not too large, ask students if they can explain why any of the people emigrated (2003: 6-7).

1

Our land is your land!

Avoiding repetition • Describing nationalities • British and American English

STARTER



1 Why are these people famous? What do they have in common? Discuss with a partner, then with the class.

1	2	3	4
Al Capone	Mother Teresa	Van Gogh	Karl Marx
[Empty lines for writing]	[Empty lines for writing]	[Empty lines for writing]	[Empty lines for writing]
5	6	7	8
Bob Marley	Nicole Kidman	Prince Philip	
[Empty lines for writing]	[Empty lines for writing]	[Empty lines for writing]	
Martina Navratilova			
[Empty lines for writing]			

2 Match each person with their country of birth and the country they died in or live in now.

Australia Czech Republic England France Germany Greece
 India Italy Jamaica The Netherlands The United States Macedonia

3 Do you know why any of these people emigrated?

Learners could not recognize most of these celebrities. They made guesses and the teachers were leading the discussion:

Extract 5.122

023 T: no problem. Al Capone? Any idea?
024 Kamal: he could be American actor.
025 T: he is American, for sure. Actor? Any idea?
026 Prince Philip?
027 Lina: Greece?
028 T: from Greece, yeah. He is Greek and? Nicole Kidman?
029 Kamal: actress.
030 T: yes, right, American actress. Bob Marley?
031 Zein: he looks like a singer.
032 Kamal: football player?
033 T: football player? Pop singer?
034 Zein: I don't know.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 05.10.2009)

Before the class started, I printed out these celebrities' Wikipedia pages. As the learners looked puzzled and frustrated, the teacher told them that I had some information about these celebrities from the internet and that they could use the information to answer the coursebook questions. Every learner chose two and read through the materials to find the answers and share them in a group discussion.

Extract 5.123

047 Zein: no one choose Nicole Kidman, please, I choose her.
048 TR: okay, Zein, Nicole Kidman.
049 T: but you already know about her, Zein, don't you?
050 Zein: no, not really ((laughs))
051 T: and Lina?
052 TR: yes, please, who would you like?
053 Kamal: all.
054 TR: all of them, yeah!
055 Kamal: okay, I will choose Al Capone.
056 TR: Al Capone, okay.
057 T: (talking to the TR) would you like me to help you?
058 TR: yes, please, I'm trying to find it, yeah, okay,
059 here you are.
060 T: and Fares?
061 Fares: Van Gogh?
062 T: Van Gogh, yeah.
063 TR: okay, you can choose two, if you like.
064 Lina: Mother, Mother Teresa.
065 T: can I take something?
066 TR: yes, sure, but I'm afraid you're only left with three choices.
067 T: Karl Marx?

068 TR: Zein got it, you could take this.
069 Lina: can you give me another one? Prince Philip, please.
070 TR: yes, of course.
071 T: are you happy now?
072 Lina: yes, thanks.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 05.10.2009)

Learners had five minutes to skim the materials and look for answers to the coursebook questions. Then, they shared the information they learnt with the rest of the class.

Extract 5.124

033 Fares: where and when was she born? Where and when?
034 Zein: she was born in “Honolulu, Hawaii”, US.
035 T: but she is Australian.
036 Zein: yes, she is Australian, but born in, her birth in “Honolulu”
037 in “Hawaii”, US.
038 T: mm.
039 Zein: so she has two citizenships, Australian and American.
040 Fares: and what about the date she born in?
041 Zein: she born in “June 1967”.
042 Fares: sixty?
043 Zein: “sixty seven”, yes, so she (laughs).
044 T: so she is not good for you, what do you think?

(Extract from interaction transcript, 05.10.2009)

As evident from the extract above, learners were leading the discussion. They were asking and answering questions about the celebrities. However, the problem I could identify was that most learners started to read the materials aloud and word by word instead of summarizing what they read. This negatively affected other learners' participation in the discussion as they sometimes could not understand what was being read either because the content was difficult or because of the bad pronunciation of some words (translated from fieldnotes). They did not even interrupt the reader to ask for clarification:

Extract 5.125

191 Fares: "the extent to which his mental illness affected his painting
192 has been a subject of speculation since his death. Despite
193 a widespread tendency to romanticise his ill health, modern
194 critics see an artist deeply frustrated by the inactivity and
195 incoherence brought about by his bouts of sickness. According
196 to art critic Robert Hughes, Van Gogh's late works show
197 an artist at the height of his ability, completely in control
198 and longing for concision and grace" ONLY READING

(Extract from interaction transcript, 05.10.2009)

A VISIT TO IRIS MURDOCH

BY JOANNA COLES

The journalist Joanna Coles interviewed Iris Murdoch at her home in Oxfordshire shortly before the novelist was diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's Disease.

PART ONE

Wild piles of books and papers

'Bell not working.
WE ARE HERE.
Knock vigorously.'

I do, and the cheery face of Professor John Bayley appears at the window, chewing baked beans. 'Come in, come in my dears,' he exclaims, opening the front door and waving a piece of toast. 'I find beans just the thing for lunch, don't you?'

He whisks us through a chaotic hall, past a vast, unsteady pyramid of books and into the most eccentric drawing room I have ever seen. There are heaving carrier bags, spilling their paper guts across the floor, and wild piles of books and papers. The walls are Georgian Green and though it is midday, it's dark, the window impenetrable to the light because of the fig leaves outside.

As we sit down, Iris Murdoch spirals gracefully into the room, and I suddenly notice there's an abandoned glass of red wine tucked away under each armchair, as if perhaps in case of emergency.



PART TWO

Just a bit of writer's block?

'Hello', Iris smiles, her eyes wide and friendly, and although I have already explained on the telephone, I explain again that I'm here because there are rumours she has given up writing for good. It's not the easiest of questions to ask such an intelligent and prolific author, and I am worried she may think me rude for even trying. But can it be true?

To my huge relief she smiles. 'Well, I'm trying to do something, but it hasn't, well ...' and then she starts laughing.

'Just a bit of writer's block I think,' interrupts Bayley, cheerfully.

'Yes, it's not ... well ... I certainly am trying,' she replies.

Iris Murdoch is without question one of the finest writers of her generation, producing 26 novels. Her last book, *Jackson's Dilemma*, was published last autumn, but nothing has followed. Has she suffered from this kind of block before?

'I think this is a very bad one,' she says absently. 'It has occurred before darling,' says Bayley, leaning towards her reassuringly. 'Perhaps,' she says flatly.

And do you still enjoy writing when you can?

'Well, I enjoy it, when I've found a way out, as it were. But, er ... otherwise ...' and she smiles apologetically.

'Otherwise ... I'm in a very, very bad, quiet place.'

We are all quiet for a moment before Bayley says to her:

'In the past, because of your philosophical mind perhaps, you've worked the whole novel out in advance, in meticulous detail, haven't you darling?'

He heads off to the kitchen to make coffee.

'I feel gloomy,' says Iris. 'The books I've written in the past I've done quite quickly. But I'm afraid at the moment that I'm just falling, falling ... falling as it were. But I may get better. I expect something will turn up. I hope so.'

The problem was also found in later classes when Kamal used to bring his laptop to class where he saved all the internet materials and read them aloud to his classmates.

Extract 5.126

The problem with Kamal is a bit complicated. He is a professor in physics. Besides, he is the oldest in the group. Learners respect him so much to the extent that they find it very difficult to interrupt him or to criticize his way of doing things. I find it difficult too but I still have to draw his attention to the problem that merely reading aloud would not help other learners.

(Extract from the teacher-researcher's diary, 29.10.2009)

The reading text was about the Irish novelist Iris Murdoch. None of the learners knew who she was, but we were planning to let them read the texts and then answer the comprehension questions. At that time, we were surprised that Kamal went to the internet and brought information about her:

Extract 5.127

001 TR: you've got an article about the writer!
002 Kamal: yes.
003 TR: where did you get it from?
004 Kamal: the internet.
005 TR: from Wikipedia?
006 Kamal: Google, it explains everything about Iris.
007 T: aha.
008 TR: and also you Fares?
009 Fares: yes, I worked with him.
010 TR: did you summarize the main points then?
011 Kamal: some, some.
012 TR: okay, tell us what you know then.
013 Kamal: can I read from computer?
014 TR: okay, but only a little bit and then you explain to us!
015 Kamal: okay, okay.
016 TR: okay.
017 Kamal: "Iris Murdoch, 1919 to 1999, an Irish-born
018 British author, married to John Bayley, a
019 professor of English literature and also a novelist.
020 Iris Murdoch dealt with everyday ethical and
021 moral issues, sometimes in the light of myths.
022 as a writer, she was a perfectionist"
023 T: interesting.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 02.11.2009)

So, Kamal gradually started to either summarize the points on a piece of paper or to invite his classmates to sit close to him where they could see and decide on what to

read and discuss. Also, Lina used to bring printed internet materials and to read them as they were. In his post-course interview, Zein referred to that as a distracting behaviour:

Extract 5.128

078 Zein: I wouldn't print the article or bring it here and then
079 read it all word by word. What I, as a learner, should
080 do is to have a paper where I could write the headlines or
081 the keywords, to organize ideas. If I forget one idea, I could
082 look at the headline or the keywords to remind myself
083 of what it was about. I could then say it. But, to just read it
084 like directly from a paper or a computer, this was something
085 distracting, may be because we were not used to this, but still
086 what I mean is that the paper should be, the maximum should
087 be seven to eight lines.

(Extract translated from Zein's post-course interview, 22.12.2009)

Lina's behaviour changed over time as she learnt to take notes and to summarize the points that she would like to discuss. In a post-class informal interview, Lina said that:

Extract 5.129

043Lina: I learnt to select the things I liked or at least the things
044 that I understood as you told us, and I noticed how Zein
045 was just using notes and few sentences from the internet
046 but not everything there. I thought that was
047 easy to do and so I did it.

(Extract translated from post-class informal interview, 10.12.2009)

The following extract from a classroom transcript shows how Lina was not explicitly integrating the information she got from the internet into her talk. She only referred to that when she talked about recent studies on *lines 437 and 438*.

Extract 5.130

417 Lina: do you know anything about noise effect, bad effects
418 for us?
419 Kamal: noise?
420 Lina: traffic, roads, anything noisy, anybody has any
421 idea? bad effects on humans?
422 Zein: yes, about noise?
423 Lina: yes, can you tell us?
424 Zein: the noise come from, or let's talk about drivers

425 they drive all day and the cars' noises, zamameer
426 (horns in Arabic)?
427 T: horns.
428 Zein: horns, this noise affect on the nervous system and make them
429 become more stressed and nervous, and when they grow older
430 affect on nervous system and I think it may cause Alzheimer
431 disease.
432 T: really?
433 Lina: yeah, yeah, this is one effect, and there are very very much
434 bad effects and diseases like headaches, we all have them but
435 we don't know why, the noise is the reason for that, we have
436 pain in our stomachs, that is one reason, we have stress, that
437 is reason. We know the effects of noise on our bodies, studies
438 now discovered very much about harms of noise.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 10.12.2009)

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

I have nothing to declare but my genius!

- 1 Read these quotes from Oscar Wilde, a well-known Anglo-Irish writer famous for his sayings. What impression do you form of Oscar from them?

‘To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.’

‘There is no such thing as an immoral book.
Books are well written, or badly written.’

‘There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.’

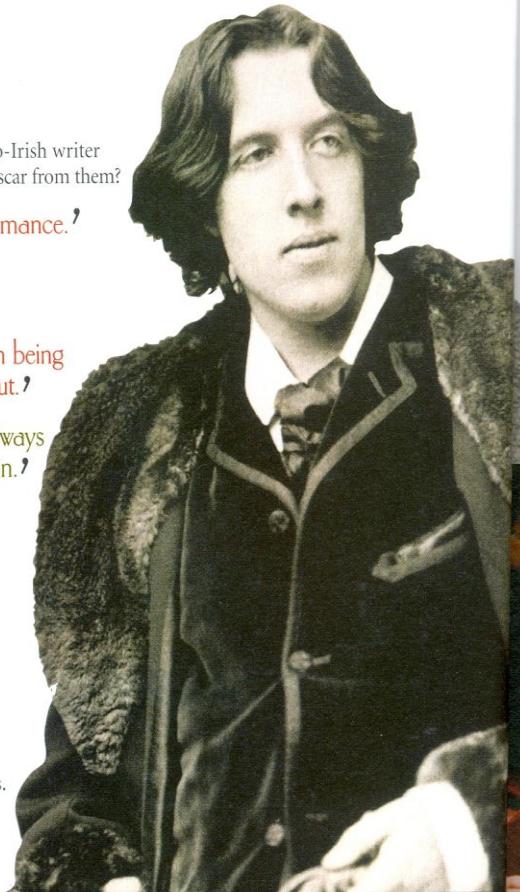
‘I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train.’

‘I can resist anything but temptation.’

- 2 Are these statements about Oscar Wilde true or false?
Discuss with a partner.

- 1 He was a famous 20th century writer.
- 2 He wrote plays, poetry, and prose.
- 3 His most successful plays were comedies.
- 4 He never married.
- 5 He was imprisoned because of his political beliefs.

- 3 Read the biodata of Oscar Wilde and check your answers.
Which play is considered to be his masterpiece?
What is the meaning of the words *earnest* and *Ernest*?
What is their pronunciation?



OSCAR WILDE 1854–1900

An Irish-born English poet, novelist, and playwright. His greatest success was in the theatre with his shrewd and sparkling comedies, such as *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895). *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) is considered to be his masterpiece. Based on the double meaning of the name Ernest, it is an attack on people who take themselves too seriously. Wilde married in 1884 and had two sons. However, in 1895 he was imprisoned for two years for homosexual practices. On his release in 1897 he went to live in France. He died in Paris in 1900.



Extract 5.131

001 T: we are going to discuss something about Oscar
002 Wilde. Do you know Oscar Wilde? Have you ever heard of
003 him? Zein? Oscar Wilde? Fares? No. Dr. Kamal?
004 Kamal: no.
005 T: no! you never heard of him!

We planned to do the second activity about Oscar's sayings, but not the reading text as it had some culturally inappropriate content; 'in 1895, he was imprisoned for two years for homosexual practices'. However, because learners did not know who Oscar Wilde was, they did not actively contribute to the discussion which was mostly teacher-led:

Extract 5.132

079 T: okay, I never travel without my diary, one should
080 always have something sensational to read on the train. so
081 yeah, may be, that's interesting, and the last one,
082 I can resist anything but temptation. you know what
083 temptation is? yeah? so, he can resist nothing, because
084 we usually, people try to resist temptations.
085 TR: yeah.
086 T: but he can resist anything but temptation. do you agree
087 with this?
088 Fares: well, it's related to him.
089 T: well, yes, it is, but still, okay.
090 TR: no comment on that? (silence)
091 T: I think if you knew Oscar Wilde or his works in general,
092 you would be able to get a better sense of these sayings.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 09.11.2009)

The next class, learners surprised us with bringing internet materials about Oscar Wilde. Their autonomous behaviour was interpreted as an indicator of their active engagement. The following extract illustrates that:

Extract 5.133

001 TR: okay, Dr. Kamal looks busy.
002 Kamal: I have something about Oscar.
003 TR: you have something about Oscar Wilde?
004 T: really?
005 TR: on your computer?
006 Kamal: yes.
007 TR: okay!
008 Kamal: yes.

009 TR: where did you get the information?
010 Kamal: only google Oscar Wilde.
011 TR: aha.
012 Kamal: yes.
013 TR: and you too Fares?
014 Fares: yes.
015 Kamal: many many things about Oscar Wilde.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 10.11.2009)

3

Big business

Describing trends • Comparing statistics • Adverbs 1 • Word linking

STARTER



- 1 Work with a partner. Look at the logos of some multinational companies.
What is the name of each company? What does it produce or sell?



- 2 Discuss these questions.

- Are these brand names well known in your country?
- Have you ever bought or used any of their products?
- Do you buy particular brands of food or clothes? Why/Why not?
- What are brands for?

Again, with this coursebook activity that was asking learners to talk about some multinational companies, we decided to refer learners to the internet to find out about these companies before we discuss them in class. I wrote the names of the companies on the board and asked learners to search for them online. I asked them to specify the nature of every company, what it produces or sells.

Extract 5.134

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 001 TR: | which company? |
| 002 Fares: | all companies. |
| 003 TR: | wow! |
| 004 T: | really? |
| 005 Fares: | yes, we worked together in Kamal's office. |
| 006 Kamal: | yes. |
| 007 TR: | great, all of you? |
| 008 Kamal: | yes, mm, I mean no, except Lina. |
| 009 TR: | Lina, how about you? |
| 010 Lina: | I got four. |
| 011 TR: | okay, good. |

In addition to using internet materials to help in doing coursebook activities, I used to ask learners to bring materials about up-to-date topics (e.g. swine flu, financial crisis, and environment problems as it was the issue discussed in the Copenhagen environment summit at that time), to address learners' needs (e.g. idiom and science quizzes), personalized topics (favourite singers and countries that they would like to visit). Learners were given the opportunity to choose their favourite topics and were asked to go online to search for relevant materials. McQuillan and Conde (1996) claim that learners 'should be instrumental in the choice of reading materials in their classrooms' (cited in Egbert, 2003: 505).

5.3. Reflection on the Action Research Process

Throughout the action research, I was involved in a process of developing appropriate methodology for using supplementary internet materials that could better meet EFL learners' personal needs and interests in the context. After failing to get permission to access the internet in the THLI Language Lab, I looked for other alternatives. The Computer Room seemed to be the only place where I could get learners to live access internet materials in the THLI. I conducted sessions with a volunteer group of learners to investigate the effectiveness of using internet materials as perceived and practised by the participants. However, many technical problems were experienced and that necessitated the development of appropriate internet methodology.

In the process, not only the methodology developed but also my understanding of how to develop methodology also developed (see figures 5-1 and 5-2). Instead of adopting an idealistic approach to implementing the intervention and then having to appropriate it, I realized that I needed to start from where people actually were, to understand the context, and to take into consideration all its constraints, and then based on my understanding develop appropriate methodology (see table 5-2).

When used appropriately with EFL learners in the Second Cycle, internet materials were found to be supportive of learners' engagement from the practitioner point of view. Yair argues that 'although engagement with instruction may seem an easy task, it is indeed an achievement' (2000: 248). In the case of this research, it was achieved through the appropriate use of internet materials. In the next chapter, I present the data that are related to learners' engagement with internet materials.

Chapter Six Learners' Engagement with Internet Materials

In order to facilitate a clearer understanding and make it researchable and able to be evaluated as a construct, engagement ... needs detailed interrogation. Its elements need to be laid bare ...

Svalberg (2009: 243)

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the action research project that are related to learners' engagement with internet materials, the focus that has emerged from the experiences and perceptions of using the internet as a supplementary source of materials especially in the second cycle. Existing literature (e.g. Linnenbrink, 2003; Zhu, 2006; Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008; Svalberg, 2009; Caulfield, 2010) identifies different types of learners' engagement: behavioural, cognitive, affective, and social (see 3.4.3.2.). Based on the literature and the data, I have developed my analytical framework (see Table 6-1) to answer the following research questions:

What types of learners' engagement with internet materials were identified?

- a. What types of learners' behavioural engagement?
- b. What types of learners' cognitive engagement?
- c. What types of learners' affective engagement?
- d. What types of learners' social engagement?

Both inductive and deductive approaches to thematic analysis (see 4.5.1.2.) have been used to identify the different types of learners' engagement with internet materials. The different types of the multidimensional construct are examined not only as observed and perceived but also as practised by the participants. Types of

engagement with internet materials are described using field notes, diaries, interview data, as well as interaction transcripts. Nystrand and Gamoran argue that ‘behavioral manifestations are incomplete … as measures of student engagement’ (1991: 263). That is why I draw on some analytic tools from interaction and interactional analysis (see 4.5.1.3.) in order to provide a nuanced and careful consideration of engagement in interaction.

Behavioural Engagement	Cognitive Engagement	Affective Engagement	Social Engagement
Accessing the internet to get internet materials	Drawing on personal experiences and background knowledge	Making humorous comments on internet content	Initiating and leading the discussions of internet materials
Active participation in using internet materials	Selecting internet materials	Expressing happiness about using internet materials	Sustaining the discussions of internet materials
Asking for more use of internet materials	Trying to understand internet materials	Enjoying working with internet materials	Teachers as learners and learners as teachers
Autonomous use of the internet as a source of materials	Expressing surprise about internet materials	Feeling confident when discussing internet materials	
Appropriating: Making the internet experience work in less-than-ideal internet conditions	Evaluating internet materials	Feeling proud of using internet materials in class	

Table 6-1

My Analytical Framework of Learners' Engagement with Internet Materials

6.2. Types of Learners' Engagement with Internet Materials

6.2.1. Types of Behavioural Engagement with Internet Materials

There are learners' behaviours that indicate learners' engagement. 'Behavioral domain attributes consist of observable behaviors' (Caulfield, 2010: 3). That is, 'the teacher can easily see if the students are engaged' (Linnenbrink, 2003: 123). In this section, I present the themes related to learners' behavioural engagement with internet materials that were directly observed and also indirectly assessed through self-reports and interaction transcripts. Behavioural engagement is investigated as learners' 'positive conduct, such as following the rules and adhering to classroom norms, as well as the absence of disruptive behaviors' (Fredricks et al, 2004: 62) but with a particular focus on internet materials.

6.2.1.1. Accessing the internet to get internet materials

One basic behavioural indicator of learners' engagement with internet materials was their access of the internet to bring materials even though it was optional and voluntary. Singh et al (2002) claims that doing homework and coming prepared for classes reflect learners' engagement. In her post-course interview, the co-teacher considered doing the internet homework an indicator of learners' interest and engagement:

Extract 6.1

- 139 T: they used to bring the homework.
140 TR: aha.
141 T: and whenever the student brings the homework, it means the
142 student is interested.

(Extract from the co-teacher's post- course interview, 24.12.2009)

Although very basic, engaged behaviours such as accessing the internet to bring materials reflected learners' positive attitudes towards using the internet as a source of materials and their beliefs of its usefulness for their language learning. In his post-course interview, Kamal highlighted that when he said:

Extract 6.2

- 13 Kamal: if we were not interested, if we did not believe
14 it was important for us, we wouldn't do it. We
15 wouldn't go to the internet in the first place.

(Extract translated from Kamal's post-course interview, 22.12.2009)

Learners, therefore, accessed the internet not only because they were asked to but also because of their conviction that it was an opportunity to improve their English language. In her diary, Lina, for example, wrote that:

Extract 6.3

I think it is an opportunity and we don't get such opportunities very often. In my learning experience, none of the previous teachers asked us to bring materials from the internet. This is the first time for me. I really want to use it to improve my English.

(Extract translated from Lina's diary, 05.10.2009)

6.2.1.2. Active participation

Active participation is identified in the literature as an indicator of learners' behavioural engagement (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008; Caulfield, 2010). In the current research, some learners were observed to be more active than others in using the internet as a source of materials. Individual differences especially in relation to internet access played a major role in this regard. Dr. Kamal, for example, who was observed to be the most active participant, was a Tishreen University academic staff member. He had free internet access in his office. In his diary, he wrote:

Extract 6.4

I use the internet for at least two hours a day to look for articles related to my specialty and to keep updated with the news. I use English websites like BBC and CNN.

(Extract translated from Kamal's diary)

Whereas Kamal had free internet access in his office, Zein who lived in the countryside of Latakia had to come to the city centre to access the internet:

Extract 6.5

040 Zein: unfortunately, I had to come to town to access the
041 internet. So, I used to hate Tuesday's homework because
042 I didn't have the time on Monday to go to the internet café
043 to get the materials, but I loved Thursday's homework
044 because I had free time on Wednesday.

(Extract translated from Zein's post-course interview, 22.12.2009)

The following extract illustrates how the difficulty of accessing the internet at certain times was an influential factor when it came to learners' behaviours and participation:

Extract 6.6

095 TR: would you like to do that tomorrow?
096 Lina: I think it's better if we have time.
097 Zein: yes, better.
098 TR: okay. So, it's going to be your task for Thursday?
099 Zein: yes, thanks.
100 Fares: okay.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 26.10.2009)

As evident in the extract above, the date on which learners were supposed to do the activity was negotiated. Appropriate use of the internet required the internet to be voluntarily used and in agreement with learners.

6.2.1.3. Asking for more use of internet materials

One of the emerging indicators of learners' behavioural engagement was learners' asking for more use of internet materials. In the first cycle, learners used to ask for more internet work when they did not experience technical problems:

Extract 6.7

084 Sami: let's take another please?
085 TR: okay. you can do "World Culture 2" if you like.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 27.07.2009)

In the second cycle, Kamal and Fares asked for after-class meetings in internet cafes to live access and discuss online materials. They asked their classmates as well as the co-teacher and the teacher-researcher twice to go as a group to an internet café. This, however, did not work out because both Zein who used to live in the countryside of Latakia and the teacher-researcher who was from a different city could not for travelling reasons make it in the evening when everyone was supposed to meet:

Extract 6.8

I was surprised how Kamal and Fares asked us all to go to an internet café in the evening to get materials about the financial crisis. They were so enthusiastic about it. I really felt sorry that Zein and I could not make it.

(Extract translated from the teacher-researcher's diary, 23.11.2009)

Towards the end of the Second Cycle Course, learners used to ask for the teachers' permission to start with the internet's work instead of coursebook's. They sometimes did the internet homework but not the coursebook's when they were expected to do both:

Extract 6.9

18 T: you did the internet homework but not the coursebook's?
19 Kamal: I'm really sorry.
20 T: (talking to the TR) you see? They are more motivated when it
21 comes to the internet ((laughs)).
22 Kamal: I do many things from the internet, because I have to go online for
23 two or three hours every day because I:
24 T: you don't have to feel guilty Dr. Kamal. I was just kidding.
25 Zein: why don't we start with the internet homework then? ((laughs))
26 T: sure ((laughs)).

(Extract from interaction transcript, 07.12.2009)

Prioritizing the internet's work to the coursebook's resulted in spending the whole class discussing the internet materials especially towards the end of the Course:

Extract 6.10

412 TR: I'm afraid we only have ten minutes, we still
413 need to do some coursebook activities, don't we?
414 T: no, no, only if learners want to.
415 Lina: no, no, please, let's continue.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 10.12.2009)

6.2.1.4. Autonomous use of the internet as a source of materials

One of the emerging themes related to behavioural engagement with the internet materials was that learners started to take the initiative in using the internet in the second cycle. They started to use it whenever they needed or liked even without being asked to. They used it to prepare for some coursebook activities. Kamal, for example, accessed the internet at home and saved some examples for phrasal verbs in full sentences from the British National Corpus (BNC) website. Neither the co-teacher nor the teacher-researcher was expecting this:

Extract 6.11

051 Kamal: I tried yesterday, for two hours playing with, enter my words.
052 TR: sorry, with what?
053 Kamal: with the BNC, like enter my own words and the phrasal verbs.
054 TR: really? to prepare for the activity?
055 Kamal: yes, yes, for example, pick up, take in, get on, get off,
056 and idioms, different examples I have in my computer.
057 T: wow!
058 Kamal: yes, and it's very easy with the BNC to catch all meanings.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 16.11.2009)

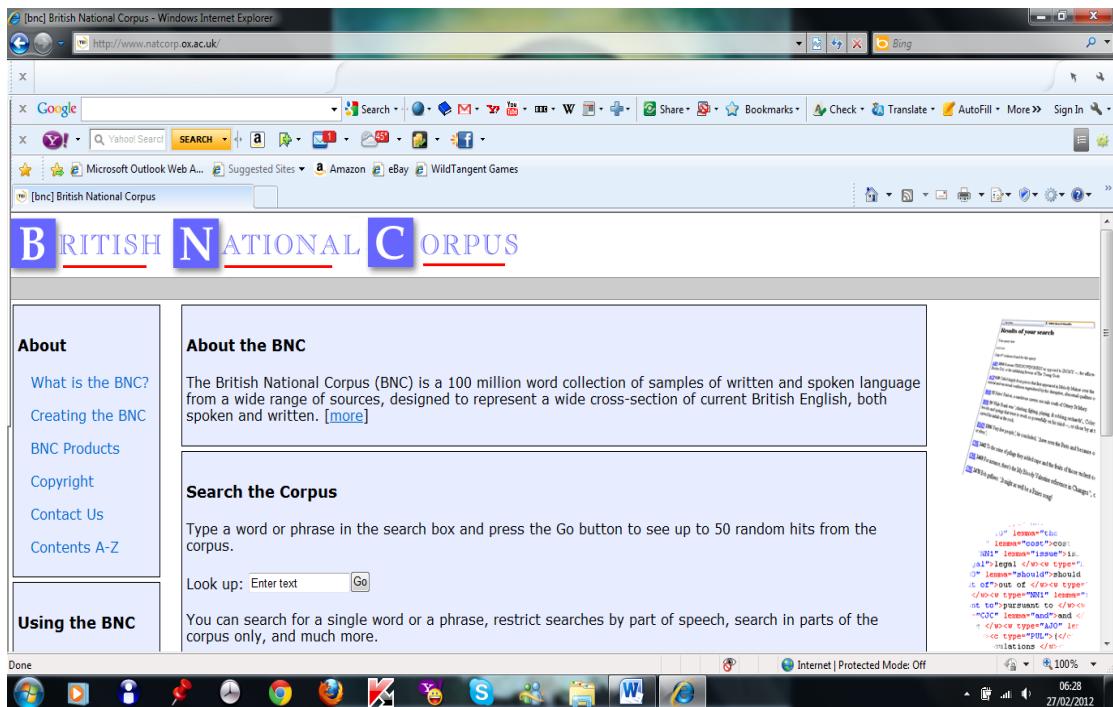


Figure 6-1 British National Corpus Website

Similarly, Fares used the BNC website to get examples that could help him in doing the coursebook activity below (see figure 6-2).

- 2 Match the verbs and adverbs. Make sentences using the adverb collocations.

A	B
scream	passionately
gaze	profusely
love	longingly
break something	hysterically
work	conscientiously
apologize	deliberately

32 Unit 3 • Big business

Figure 6-2 New Headway Unit Three Page 32

In his diary, Fares wrote about how he did that and explained the difficulties he experienced:

Extract 6.12

I searched for every verb and got so many examples. That was not so useful. Then, I searched for verbs and adverbs together, like put the verb and the adverb which I thought could be the

right one together in the search box. I found so many interesting examples and saved them on my desktop.

(Extract translated from Fares's diary, 26.11.2009)

Although Fares did not know at the beginning that he could search for the verb and the adverb that could go with it together, he discovered that for himself and could do the activity. Instead of waiting for answers from the teachers, the teachers were waiting for Fares's interesting examples:

Extract 6.13

- 014 T: you are going to help us Fares, aren't you?
015 Fares: yes, sure.
016 TR: do you want to share some of the interesting examples
017 as well?
018 Fares: there are many. I can photocopy them for all of you.
019 Lina: great, great, thanks.
020 Fares: for example, love passionately?
021 T: yes, it's right.
022 Fares: "he nourishes a fantasy that she intends him to marry Estella,
023 whom he continues to love passionately, against reason,
024 against promise, against peace, against hope, against
025 happiness, against all discouragement there could be".
026 T: wow! Sounds like Romeo and Juliet!
027 Kamal: Qays and Layla ((laugh)).

(Extract from interaction transcript, 26.11.2009)

Learners also used the internet to understand some of the coursebook's unfamiliar cultural content without being asked to. In the coursebook, there was a speaking activity about Oscar Wilde (see figure 6-3).

- 2** Are these statements about Oscar Wilde true or false?
Discuss with a partner.
- 1 He was a famous 20th century writer.
 - 2 He wrote plays, poetry, and prose.
 - 3 His most successful plays were comedies.
 - 4 He never married.
 - 5 He was imprisoned because of his political beliefs.

Figure 6-3 New Headway Unit Two Page 22

Because learners did not know who Oscar Wilde was, the next class Kamal and Fares brought some information about him from the internet without being asked to:

Extract 6.14

001 TR: okay, Dr. Kamal looks busy.
002 Kamal: I have something about Oscar.
003 TR: you have something about Oscar Wilde?
004 T: really?
005 TR: on your computer?
006 Kamal: yes.
007 TR: okay!
008 Kamal: yes.
009 TR: where did you get the information?
010 Kamal: only google Oscar Wilde.
011 TR: aha.
012 Kamal: yes.
013 TR: and you too Fares?
014 Fares: yes.
015 Kamal: many, many things about Oscar Wilde.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 10.11.2009)

On *lines 003, 004, and 005*, teachers were surprised with what Kamal and Fares did.

On *line 009*, the teacher-researcher wanted to know whether the internet was the source of information that Kamal used. She asked him a direct question to which he made it clear that the Search Engine, Google, was used to get information about Oscar Wilde. Taking the initiative in using the internet as a source of materials was one of the learners' autonomous behaviours which the co-teacher reported in her post-course interview:

Extract 6.15

146 T: you know, they used to do
147 things themselves, recommend things to us, so they did
148 take the initiative to search the net for something they liked.

(Extract from the co-teacher's post-course interview, 24.12.2009)

Learners also reported spending time working on the internet with their classmates outside the classroom. Kamal, Fares, and Zein reported how they once worked for five hours in Kamal's office where they could have free access to the internet. They saved the materials to Kamal's computer and Fares's USB. Being the only female in

the group, Lina was left out. They did not even ask her to join them. In his diary, Zein wrote that:

Extract 6.16

Time flies. Five hours passed in Dr Kamal's office. We were discussing the news on English websites. It was so interesting. I only felt sorry for Lina.

(Extract translated from Zein's diary)

Some learners also shared some of the internet materials with their families and colleagues. Kamal reported sharing some of the internet materials with his two daughters and Lina also reported sharing some with her work colleagues:

Extract 6.17

Today, I talked about Italy in front of my colleagues. I told them about the things I had from the internet and how I used them in class. I showed them the website and we all looked for Italy and other countries, too. I really feel very proud of what we are doing in this course.

(Extract translated from Lina's diary, 27.10.2009)

6.2.1.5. Appropriating: Making the internet experience work

One of the emerging themes related to learners' behavioural engagement was that learners did their best to make the internet experience work in spite of the less-than-ideal internet conditions. In the first cycle, the internet was accessed in the THLI but many technical problems such as slow internet connection and power cuts were experienced. In order to cope with these problems, Ziad used to bring his laptop computer and Sami used to avoid accessing what he called 'big websites':

Extract 6.18

- 298 Sami: I think my way is better than this. This website is very big.
299 It takes a lot of time to see all.
300 Tarek: yeah.
301 Sami: let's take that.
302 Rose: (inaudible)
303 Sami: yes. I think it's good. Okay.
304 Rose: we can.
305 Sami: yeah. yeah.

306 Rose: let's open it and search it.
307 Sami: yeah. yeah. take it, yeah.

(Extract from interaction transcript 20.07.2009)

In the second cycle and although the internet was not provided for learners, they all managed to access the internet outside the Institute and never at any point in the whole Course stopped doing that. On the contrary, they asked for more internet work towards the end of the Course (see 6.2.1.3.). In her post-course interview, the co-teacher referred to learners coping with the less-than-ideal internet conditions and made it clear on *line 281*:

Extract 6.19

277 T: and as you know, Dr. Kamal used to bring his laptop,
278 he was really trying to make it work, and Fares, you
279 know.
280 TR: yes, his memory stick.
281 T: yes, so we could cope with whatever the situation was.
282 TR: yes.
283 T: Lina used to print everything.
284 TR: yes.
285 T: so why do you think students would do that?
286 TR: mm.
287 T: I think it's because they knew how important that was for
288 their language learning in that course, and it's not only
289 them, I myself felt like a learner in this course and
290 I think that helped me a lot as a teacher.

(Extract from the co-teacher's post-course interview, 24.12.2009)

In his post-course interview, Zein reported how because he did not have home internet access, he used to go to internet cafés to look for relevant websites and materials. Rather than staying there and paying for long periods of time, he used to choose five webpages, save them on his USB, and then read them at home.

Extract 6.20

009 TR: you didn't have home access, did you?
010 Zein: no. I used to go to internet cafes but I had my
011 memory stick with me to save some things.
012 TR: aha.
013 Zein: you know, I used google and google gives you many
014 links and websites. I used to look for the ones that had a lot

015 of information. By a lot, I don't mean the quantity. I mean
016 the quality. The information should be rich and relevant. So,
017 I used to look for information from different websites,
018 usually no more than five, you know, just to save time. So, I
019 save them and read them at home.

(Extract translated from Zein's post-course interview, 22.12.2009)

Some learners also reported how they tried to improve their internet skills and the internet connections they had to make the best out of this experience. In her diary, Lina wrote about that:

Extract 6.21

From the first day of this Course, I registered for ADSL. I wanted to have a stable internet connection at home to be able to do all the activities. I didn't know that I would have to wait for all this time to have access to the service.

(Extract translated from Lina's diary, 30.11.2009)

Throughout the process, I realized that if learners did not believe using the internet as a source of materials was useful for their language learning, they would not have used all these strategies to cope with the internet's conditions in the context:

Extract 6.22

At the beginning, I thought I was the only one who felt lucky that all the learners I worked with wanted to use the internet and agreed to take a part in the research. Then, I realized that it was not only me who felt this. They also felt the same, though for different reasons. The co-teacher and the learners told me quite a few times that they were lucky that the internet was going to be integrated into their course. Perhaps that was why we all tried to make the experience a success in spite of the difficult internet's conditions we had.

(Extract translated from the teacher-researcher's diary, 17.12.2009)

6.2.2. Types of Cognitive Engagement with Internet Materials

As a mental activity, cognitive engagement is very difficult to investigate especially when the researcher is also the teacher. Asking learners about their cognitive strategies while and after doing activities was neither possible for me as teacher nor desirable. It would have negatively affected learners' cognitive engagement in future activities. Alternatively, I depended on classroom audio-recordings and analysed the

interaction transcripts for evidence of learners' cognitive engagement. Herrenkohl and Guerra claim that their 'study contributes to a deeper understanding of engagement by redefining it as a set of discourse practices and *by examining cognitive tools and classroom participant structures and their relation to student engagement*' (Emphasis added, 1998: 433). 'These practices will define engagement in students' speech and activity in whole class settings. They provide a new way of capturing student involvement and active participation in processes that facilitate learning' (ibid., 441). Zhu (2006) also develops his analytical framework for analysing cognitive engagement in discussion and uses classroom transcripts as the basis for his analysis (See table 3-3).

6.2.2.1. Drawing on personal experiences and background

knowledge

Learners who 'are allowed to choose find it easier to select topics and activities they are familiar with, and therefore better able to become actively engaged in the activity' (Schrew et al. 2001: 216). According to Schrew et al, 'prior knowledge increases engagement and understanding' (ibid.). When learners did not know who Oscar Wilde was, the coursebook's speaking activity turned into silence.

Extract 6.23

081 T: and the last one,
082 I can resist anything but temptation. you know what
083 temptation is? yeah? so, he can resist nothing, because
084 we usually, people try to resist temptations.
085 TR: yeah.
086 T: but he can resist anything but temptation. do you agree
087 with this?
088 Fares: well, it's related to him.
089 T: well, yes, it is, but still, okay.
090 TR: no comment on that? (silence)
091 T: I think if you knew Oscar Wilde or his works in general,

092 you would be able to get a better sense of these sayings.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 09.11.2009)

The aim of using the internet in this research was to create opportunities for learners to access materials that could better meet their personal interests. One example was asking learners to go online to bring materials about their favourite countries. They were given the opportunity to choose the countries, the websites, and the information they wanted to share. McQuillan and Conde (1996) claim that ‘readers are best at determining their own reading level’ and therefore ‘should be instrumental in the choice of reading materials in their classrooms’ (cited in Egbert, 2003: 505). Kamal chose to bring information about life and culture in Austria. He chose Austria because he visited it and therefore was able to draw on his personal experience there:

Extract 6.24

- 028 Kamal: about Austria.
029 Lina: yes.
030 Kamal: “location centre Europe, north of Italy and Slovenia, also
031 bordering Germany, Hungary, Croatia, Czech Republic.
032 T: have you ever been to Austria?
033 Kamal: yes, I stayed there for two months. I like it very much, Vienna,
034 Innsbruck, Baden, Salzburg. I was in the Alps for one month.
035 T: there is a song by Asmahan about Austria.
036 Zein: yeah.
037 T: Layali al-ons fi Vienna.
038 Kamal: yeah.
039 TR: yeah, very nice song.
040 Kamal: in Christmas 1995, I was in Vienna with many Austrian friends,
041 colleagues. We were in the big square, centre of Vienna, huge
042 museums, I didn’t see like that, huge buildings, museums,
043 cultural buildings. My friends began drink alcohol, beer, wine
044 they gave me a microphone and told me sing in Arabic ((all laugh))
045 T: in the square?
046 Kamal: yes, it was new year, I sang and sang.
047 TR: what did you sing?
048 Kamal: w’rkebna al hosan (Arabic folk music) ((everybody laughs)).
049 I sang many songs.
050 T: were you drunk at that night?
051 Kamal: oh, yeah! very much.

(Extract from classroom transcript, 27.10.2009)

On *lines 033* and *034*, Kamal mentioned the name of the cities he visited in Austria in a very nostalgic way, and then from *line 040* to *line 044*, he was telling the story about his experience of Christmas 1995 and the New Year eve in Austria. Drawing on personal experiences and telling stories from the past were interpreted as indicators of learners' cognitive engagement with the internet materials that they chose.

In fact, learners were not the only ones who drew on their experiences and background knowledge. Teachers also did as on *lines 035, 037, 039*. When Kamal mentioned Vienna on *line 033*, the city that he had visited and liked, the co-teacher remembered a song by a Syrian singer about Vienna and brought that to the conversation (*lines 035* and *037*). Zein and the teacher-researcher were also involved in this conversation on *lines 036* and *039*. Therefore, drawing on background knowledge was not only individual but also a co-construction between different interlocutors.

In another example of learners drawing on their background knowledge, Zein commented on what Kamal had said about big industries and their bad effects on the environment. He talked about the decrease in green areas as another reason for global warming:

Extract 6.25

- 209 Zein: Dr. Kamal said that the most serious reason of global
210 warming is industry and I agree with him, but we
211 should remember that there is a disaster about fire which
212 attack eh:
213 T: forests?

214 Zein: forests and woods.
215 TR: yeah.
216 T: yes.
217 Zein: so that, there is no plants to, to absorb the CO.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 07.12.2009)

In the first cycle and when technical problems were not experienced, learners used to draw on their personal experiences and background knowledge as well. Although the examples found in the first cycle were few, the following extract was taken from the eighth session when the webpage on amazing facts about animals was saved on my USB. Learners were not distracted by technical problems and therefore were able to engage with the materials:

Extract 6.26

169 Ziad: yes, and “a tarantula can survive for more than two years without food”
170
171 Sami: yes, armala sauda (Arabic for black widow), do you know
172 why they call it like this?
173 Rose: yes, because it kills, it kills mm
174 Sami: its husband immediately after reproduction.
175 Rose: yes.
176 Sami: and it’s very dangerous for humans, may be kill a man.
177 Tarek: it bite me one day and I went to hospital, had two injections.
178 Sami: oh!
179 Rose: really dangerous, and there is something about scorpion,
180 kills its husband.
181 Sami: scorpion kills its husband?
182 Rose: yes, and keep eggs in a pocket.
183 Tarek: yes.
184 Rose: and when children are able to live alone, they kill their mother.
185 Ziad: really?
186 Rose: yes.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 31.08.2009)

On *lines 169* and *170*, Ziad was reading the information from the screen. While everyone was looking at the screen, Sami started drawing from his background knowledge about tarantulas. He used a different name (armala sauda) from the literal Arabic translation of tarantula (ankaboot). On *lines 171* and *172*, he asked the question of why it was called black widow to introduce the information he wanted to talk about. On *line 177*, Tarek shared his personal experience of being poisoned by a

tarantula. Rose, on *line 179*, moved to talk about scorpions. Her information about them was in a way similar to what her peers mentioned about tarantulas and that could be another example of the co-construction in drawing on background knowledge.

6.2.2.2. Selecting internet materials

In the first cycle, as the internet was mostly live accessed in the Computer Room, learners were observed choosing rather than reading materials line by line. Being selective in what they read and in what they later presented to the group was considered an indicator of their cognitive engagement with the internet materials.

Examining the following extract could illustrate this point:

Extract 6.27

- 149 Sami: let's see before, and we will return to this.
150 Rose: "future projects"
151 Sami: yeah, "personal life, homes, family"
152 Rose: "family"?
153 Sami: I think eh:
154 Rose: "family (.) family"
155 Sami: "relatives"
156 Rose: "romantic history" (she also translated that to Arabic)
157 Sami: "history", oh my God (laughs), everything about her, let's take her family.
158
159 Rose: about eh (.) I think about mm
160 Sami: choose one.
161 Rose: let's talk about her family.
162 Sami: as you like.
163 Rose: family.
164 Sami: family? It's okay.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 24.08.2009)

On *line 149*, Sami asked Rose before reading about Oprah Winfrey to look at the whole webpage to explore what was there.

Extract 6.28

They scrolled down the page and read the headlines and finally decided on reading about Oprah's family.

(Extract from the teacher-researcher's field notes, 24.08.2009)

In their immediate feedback after doing the internet activity, both Sami and Rose talked about their selection of materials that they found important and interesting. Being selective of important and interesting materials indicated learners' critical thinking of the materials and, therefore, their cognitive engagement:

Extract 6.29

281 Sami: aha, I finished. There are a lot of information, we
282 chose some, but very important.
283 TR: okay, that's good.
284 Rose: I think it's interesting, the information and the person we
285 chose.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 24.08.2009)

In the second cycle and as the internet was accessed outside the Institution, learners used to bring the materials they chose to class. Some were observed to bring the materials printed out or saved on a personal computer to read them in class, while some others were observed to bring the printouts with some lines highlighted or just bring summaries of the internet materials which they had already read at home. In both cases, learners obviously chose which materials to bring to class although bringing the internet materials with lines highlighted or in the form of summaries indicated more cognitive engagement with the materials than just choosing what to print out and then read it aloud in class. 'A qualitative distinction is made between deep and surface-level strategy use. Students who use deep strategies are more cognitively engaged; they exert more mental effort, create more connection among ideas, and achieve greater understanding of ideas' (Fredricks et al, 2004: 64).

Some learners even considered choosing what to present from the internet materials as their ‘duty’. Zein, for example, said in his post-course interview that:

Extract 6.30

078 Zein: I wouldn't print the article or bring it here and then
079 read it all word by word. What I, as a learner, should
080 do is to have a paper where I could write the headlines or
081 the keywords, to organize ideas. If I forget one idea, I could
082 look at the headline or the keywords to remind myself
083 of what it was about. I could then say it. But, to just read it
084 like directly from a paper or a computer, this was something
085 distracting, may be because we were not used to this, but still
086 what I mean is that the paper should be, the maximum should
087 be seven to eight lines.

(Extract translated from Zein's post-course interview, 22.12.2009)

Although Fares used to bring the internet materials printed out, he usually brought them with certain lines highlighted and marked and with difficult words translated.

Radioactive waste

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

(Redirected from [Nuclear pollution](#))
Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

/ **Radioactive waste** is a waste product containing radioactive material. It is usually the product of a nuclear process such as nuclear fission. However, industries not directly connected to the nuclear industry may produce quantities of radioactive waste. The majority of radioactive waste is "low-level waste", meaning it contains low levels of radioactivity per mass or volume. This type of waste often consists of used protective clothing, which is only lightly contaminated but still dangerous in case of radioactive contamination of a human body through ingestion, inhalation, absorption, or injection.

The issue of disposal methods for nuclear waste was one of the most pressing current problems the international nuclear industry faced when trying to establish a long term energy production plan, yet there was hope it could be safely solved. A report giving the Nuclear Industry's perspective on this problem is presented in a document from the IAEA (The International Atomic Energy Agency) published in October 2007. It summarizes the current state of scientific knowledge on whether waste could find its way from a deep burial facility back to soil and drinking water and threaten the health of human beings and other forms of life. In the United States, DOE acknowledges progress in addressing the waste problems of the industry, and successful remediation of some contaminated sites, yet some uncertainty and complications in handling the issue properly, cost effectively, and in the projected time frame.^[1] In other countries with lower ability or will to maintain environmental integrity the issue would be even more problematic.

However, talking about his performance in the activity about Michael Jackson where he did not summarize the internet materials, Fares said:

Extract 6.31

I felt guilty because I did not summarize the internet materials. I did not have the time to read them properly at home and to translate them as usual. I was not well-prepared. I only read them and that was not good. I know that.

(Extract translated from post-class informal interview, 09.11.2009)

It was also evident in the interaction transcript of the task as Fares was only reading the internet materials word by word from the printout (internet materials in inverted commas):

Extract 6.32

- 194 Fares: okay, “he was born on August the twenty ninth,
195 in 1958, in the US. He is considered the king of pop
196 music. He released the Thriller, the best-selling album
197 in history with Beat it and The girl is mine and Billie Jean
198 (xxx) to the top of charts. His music videos made him a
199 famous phenomenon and the ten minute of Thriller is
200 considered one of all time. Thriller stayed for thirty seven
201 non-consecutive weeks at number one and sold more than
202 forty million copies. In 1984 Jackson endorsement”?
203 TR: endorsement, endorsement, yeah.
204 Fares: “Jackson’s deal with Pepsi was largest of all time. Jackson’s
205 hair caught on fire as a result of special effect accident
206 while filming a Pepsi commercial”.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 09.11.2009)

The impact on interaction was negative. As evident from the abstract above, it was only on *line 203* where we see someone else saying something, though insignificant as it was said only because Fares was not sure about the pronunciation of the word ‘endorsement’. Reading the materials word by word from the screen or from a printout as in the example above was found to generate very little interaction. That is why learners should be encouraged to select and summarise internet materials rather than read them word by word.

6.2.2.3. Trying to understand internet materials

‘The learning literature defines cognitive engagement in terms of being strategic’ (Fredricks et al, 2004: 64). Strategic learners ‘use learning strategies such as rehearsal, summarizing, and elaboration to remember, organize, and *understand the material*’ (Emphasis added, ibid.). In the current research, learners used a number of strategies to understand internet materials and that indicated their cognitive engagement. For instance, they made use of illustrations, especially in the first cycle when the internet was accessed live, to understand the meaning of difficult words:

Extract 6.33

- 192 Rose: the pictures helped us, like owls, when I saw the picture, I knew
193 the word.
194 TR: aha.
195 Rose: yes.
196 Sami: yes.

(Extract from post-session group interview, 31.08.2009)

Some pictures did not have a real impact and were not used in the discussion of internet materials (e.g. Oprah Winfrey’s) but some were and they helped learners engage with the materials:

Extract 6.34

- 075 Rose: yeah, “snails have four noses”?
076 Sami: “noses”, yeah.
077 Tarek: why they “have four noses”?
078 Ziad: ((laughs))
079 Rose: ah, “noses”.
080 Sami: one, two, three, four (pointing to the screen – picture provided), two big, and two small, you see?
081
082 Ziad: yes.
083 Sami: yeah.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 31.08.2009)

They also used to translate difficult words into Arabic or ask for the Arabic translation. When learners accessed the materials in class, they used dictionaries but when at home, they came prepared to class with the difficult words translated. Using the internet at home, therefore, is not only technically but also pedagogically

appropriate as it saves the time that might be lost going backward and forward to dictionaries (which cuts down chances for sustained interaction):

Extract 6.35

- 018 Rose: I think we saved the time because we prepared the information at home. I translated the difficult words.
019
020 I checked many webpages and took my time and it was
021 on my computer which I am used to.
022 Ziad: That's right. It is easier at home. We did the search and
023 we could save the time for discussion.

(Extract taken from post-session group interview 7.09.2009)

In the second cycle and as learners accessed the internet at home, they had the opportunity to choose the materials they understood. McQuillan and Conde (1996) claim that 'readers are best at determining their own reading level' (cited in Egbert, 2003: 505). They also had the time to prepare the materials. In class, the information holder (rather than the teachers) was asked to clarify, repeat, give examples, and translate difficult words for other learners. In the following extract, learners as well as the teacher were asking the information holder authentic questions to understand the materials:

Extract 6.36

- 077 Zein: some sound measurements in decibels. Quiet whispers,
078 30 decibels, quiet home 40, (xxx) fifty.
079 T: can you please repeat? This is interesting.
080 Lina: yes.
081 Zein: quiet whispers
082 T: yeah?
083 Zein: thirty.
084 T: thirty?
085 Zein: thirty decibels.
086 T: yeah.
087 Zein: quiet home forty decibels.
088 T: yeah.
089 Zein: quiet streets fifty decibels.
090 T: yeah.
091 Zein: normal conversation, sixty decibels, inside cars 70 decibels.
092 T: mm.
093 Zein: automobile, eighty, motorbike 88 decibels, food blender
094 90 decibels.
095 Fares: food?
096 T: oh yes they are annoying.

097 Zein: food blenders, mixers.
 098 Fares: ah, yes, yes.
 099 Zein: yeah, jet planes 130.
 100 Kamal: only?
 101 T: and the normal is?
 102 Zein: only, yes.
 103 T: and the normal level is seventy? How much was it?
 104 Zein: the normal by fifty five.
 105 T: oh yes, fifty five.
 106 Zein: above that you feel your adrenaline is high.
 107 Lina: and crying how much?
 108 Zein: I think eighty.
 109 T: ah. they usually say that the mother is usually tired
 110 and stressed when her baby cries.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 10.12.2009)

On *line 079*, the teacher asked Zein to repeat what he said because she was interested in the information and she wanted to understand it. Lina's 'yes' on *line 080* indicated that she was interested as well. When Zein started repeating the sound measures for different noises, the teacher started using 'yeah' and 'mm' as signals for Zein to continue talking when she could understand the materials (*lines 082, 086, 088, 090, 092*). Learners also used some strategies to understand the materials. On *line 095*, Fares repeated the first word 'food' of the term 'food blender' in a questioning tone because he could not understand the term. On *line 097*, Zein repeated the term and used a more familiar equivalent 'mixer' to help Fares understand the term who then confirmed that he understood the term on *line 098*. On *line 100*, Kamal who was not sure of what he heard about jet planes wanted to check whether the noises they make are only 130 decibels. The teacher on *line 101* and *103* asked about the healthy level for noises although Zein had said that before. She obviously wanted to understand the point of talking about all these measures. Zein helped her on *lines 104* and *106* as he repeated the main point that noises above the normal level of fifty-five decibels cause stress and are therefore harmful to our bodies and health.

6.2.2.4. Expressing surprise about internet materials

Schrew et al (2001) suggest that teachers can use vivid texts to engage learners. According to Schrew et al. vivid texts ‘contain rich imagery, suspense, provocative information that *surprises the reader*, and engaging themes’ (Emphasis added, 2001: 220). In this research, the internet was used by learners as a source of vivid texts about their favourite topics. Many examples were found of learners being surprised with the information they got from the internet. In the following extract from the first cycle activity on cultural customs, Sami and Ziad expressed their surprise about people wearing frogs as amulets for protection in Burma:

Extract 6.37

066 Ziad: “in Burma, the frog is worn as an amulet for protection”!
067 Sami: ((laughs)) really?
068 Ziad: yes, oh (.) my (.) God!

(Extract from interaction transcript, 27.07.2009)

Although the website was not authentic (Dave’s ESL Café), learners were able to engage with the quiz. Miceli considers ‘authenticity as not only about material from the “real” world but “a personal process of engagement” for learners, linked to “self-determination and commitment to understanding” (2010: 322). After doing this quiz, learners commented on their experience accessing information about cultural customs:

Extract 6.38

086 Ziad: some were so strange. you can’t expect them.
087 Sami: yeah, but I like to know strange things about other cultures.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 27.07.2009)

In the coursebook activity on celebrities, Zein chose to prepare the materials on Nicole Kidman:

Extract 6.39

047 Zein: no one choose Nicole Kidman, please, I choose her.
048 TR: okay, Zein, Nicole Kidman.
049 T: but you already know about her, Zein, don't you?
050 Zein: no, not really ((laughs))

(Extract from interaction transcript, 05.10.2009)

The next class, Zein had the time to read and choose what he wanted to say about Nicole Kidman. On *line 077*, he said he was surprised with the fact that her father is a biochemist. In the Syrian or Arab culture in general, acting and singing are not highly regarded jobs especially for women and the daughters of educated or conservative families would not be expected to be singers or actresses. However, the teacher on *line 080* wanted to show respect to the art when she commented that Kidman is a very good actress. Her comment encouraged Zein, Fares, and the teacher-researcher to draw on their background knowledge and talk about individual cases of educated Syrian actresses such as Jenny Esper and Sulaf Fawakherji:

Extract 6.40

073 Zein: mm, yes, "her father is a doctor, Antony Kidman is a
074 biochemist , clinical psychologist, and author, her mother
075 is a nursing instructor".
076 Lina: and she is beautiful ((laughs)).
077 Zein: yes, yes, but I was surprised because if your father is a doctor
078 you don't imagine that the son or daughter, you know.
079 Lina: acting?
080 T: okay, but she is a very good actress.
081 Zein: yes, yes, and we have it here, the Syrian actress, Jenny Esber.
082 T: okay, right.
083 Zein: her father, Dr. George Esber.
084 T: do you know him?
085 Zein: yes, yes.
086 T: but she also has a degree, from the Sports Department.
087 Fares: yes.
088 T: and her mother is Russian, I think.
089 Fares: Ukrainian.
090 TR: yeah, also, Sulaf Fawakherji, I think she is an archaeologist?
091 T: yeah, yes, she is.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 06.10.2009)

Learners were not the only ones who were found to be surprised with internet content, teachers were found to be surprised too. In her comment on what Kamal had said about German being the main language in Austria, the teacher (on *lines 057* and *058*) repeated the phrase ‘I didn’t know’ twice and that indicated her surprise:

Extract 6.41

056 T: my friend, she went this year to Austria, and
057 told me it’s really beautiful but I didn’t know all this
058 about Austria. I didn’t know people speak German.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 27.10.2009)

In fact, teachers’ surprise with what learners used to bring from the internet was a very important achievement of this intervention as it challenged our traditional role as the only sources of knowledge. ‘Changing typical patterns of interaction in which the teacher asks a student a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates that response is necessary to encourage student involvement’ (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 433). In her post-course interview, the co-teacher described how she used to look forward to what learners might surprise us with:

Extract 6.42

196 T: every time I used to go to the
197 classroom, and every time I used to see them coming to
198 the classroom, I felt that we are going to learn something
199 new.

(Extract from the co-teacher’s post-course interview, 24.12.2009)

6.2.2.5. Evaluating internet materials

In his analytical framework for cognitive engagement in discussion, Zhu considers statements that offer ‘evaluative or judgemental opinions of key points in the discussion/related readings’ (2006: 458) as indicators of learners’ cognitive

engagement. In the current research, many evaluative statements and comments were found in the interaction transcripts. They indicated learners' cognitive engagement with the internet materials. In the following extract from the first cycle, Tarek shared the information he got from the internet about swine flu. He was talking about how human beings should not, for any reason, come close to or use water that pigs touched or drank from. On *lines 213* and *214*, however, Sami was critical of that and he disagreed with what Tarek was saying. He explained how the virus could only be transmitted to humans via air and inhalation.

Extract 6.43

- 208 Tarek: put out "some water in the light, the virus can stay in
209 the light after that for eight hours".
210 Sami: aha!
211 Tarek: it's very dangerous when the person play in this water get
212 the virus.
213 Sami: ah, look, look, I think the virus cannot transmit when
214 we drink water because of the PH of the stomach.
215 Rose: stomach?
216 Sami: yes, stomach kill the virus, so the main reason is mm
217 Rose: main, main, to transmit virus with the air.
218 Sami: air or: tanaffous (Arabic for inhalation)?
219 Ziad: air.
220 Rose: inhalation?
221 Sami: yes, inhalation. with food or drink, I think, not affect.
222 Rose: mm.
223 Sami: I mean, science did not prove it.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 07.09.2009)

Windeatt et al. (2000) and Dudeney and Hockly (2007) raise the issue of accuracy and the importance of being critical of online materials. In the same activity, Rose also was critical of the materials she got about how to prevent swine flu. She considered the advice to avoid crowded places as unrealistic. Both Sami and Ziad agreed with her:

Extract 6.44

- 306 Rose: also "avoid kissing and going into crowded places".
307 I think this is very difficult because everyone use buses,
308 or go to school.
309 Sami: yeah.

310 Rose: or his work, his or her work.
311 Ziad: mm.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 07.09.2009)

In the second cycle, examples of learners criticizing internet materials were also found. In the following extract, Fares was talking about the financial crisis. He depended on the internet article he got to explain the main reason for the financial crisis. However, Kamal drew on his background knowledge and talked about other reasons. He also hinted that the article might not be telling the truth.

Extract 6.45

035 Fares: the main reason or the immediate reason for this
036 crisis is the loans for buying houses that encouraged
037 mortgages in the US. The problem peaked in 2005-2006.
038 TR: aha.
039 Kamal: or may be other reasons. Who knows!
040 TR: like what?
041 Kamal: in the financial market you never know, maybe
042 they want to crash all money the poor countries put
043 in their banks, maybe, this is another reason, but in
044 the article, mortgages, the only reason mentioned.
045 Fares: maybe but I don't think so, their people are affected.
046 they lose their jobs every day. they have problems
047 with that.
048 Kamal: yes, yes, I know, but other countries also affected.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 23.11.2009)

6.2.3. Types of Affective Engagement with Internet Materials

Affective or emotional engagement ‘refers to students’ affective reactions in the classroom’ (Fredricks et al, 2004: 63). While there is an agreement that emotional engagement is related to affective reactions, ‘the definitions in the engagement literature tend to be general and not differentiated by domain or activity’ (*ibid.*). The same applies to the research on affective engagement that has not made it ‘clear whether students’ positive emotions are directed toward academic content, their

friends, or the teacher' (Fredricks et al, 2004: 63). This research does as it investigates affective engagement directed toward internet materials.

6.2.3.1. Expressing happiness about using internet materials

One of the main indicators of learners' affective engagement is happiness (Fredricks et al, 2004). In this research, learners' happiness when working on internet materials was one of the main findings that shaped and directed my focus to learners' engagement. I could not by merely focusing on interaction account for tens of fieldnotes about learners' smiling and telling me at the end of almost every class 'I really felt happy today', 'I am glad', 'it was amazing, thank you'. That was when I realized that engagement as a multi-dimensional construct would be the best framework to present these data. The only time learners expressed their sadness was when there was no more internet work to be done at the end of each cycle. In her post-course interview, the co-teacher said:

Extract 6.46

302 T: believe
303 me, without this, the course would have been so very
304 much boring for me and for the students. today, they,
305 as you could notice, they felt really sad. I could see that
306 in their eyes, because they knew that this was the last class.
307 so this is the best proof that they really liked this course,
308 and when you told them you will be back to England, when
309 you thanked them for their cooperation, I could see tears in their
310 eyes, and this was really, it proved how much they liked the
311 course, how much they liked the experience.

(Extract from the co-teacher's post- course interview, 24.12.2009)

The main reason identified for learners' happiness was that the internet as a source of materials provided learners with the necessary information to learn about their favourite topics and to talk about the things that they really liked. Lina, for example, said that:

Extract 6.47

053 Lina: I always wanted to talk about Italy. I actually want to visit
054 it and this was the first time I had the opportunity to talk about it.

(Extract translated from Lina's post-course interview, 22.12.2009)

'The Internet gives L2 learners immediate access to such a wide range of L2 Web content ... that it would be surprising indeed if they were unable to engage their own real interests and identities via this medium at some level' (Ushioda, 2011: 207).

6.2.3.2. Making humorous comments on internet materials

Based on my fieldnotes, learners were observed to be in a humorous mood when working with internet materials except when technical problems were experienced. In the first cycle, examples of learners making humorous comments were found when reading amazing facts about animals:

Extract 6.48

095 Tarek: and "giraffes sleep nine minutes" only, nine minutes in a day.
096 Rose: nine minutes!
097 Ziad: they must have exams ((laughs))
098 Sami: yeah! ((laughs)) may be, or may be exam in the kinds of plants
099 they eat ((laughs))

(Extract from interaction transcript, 31.08.2009)

Other examples were found when learners when working on the quizzes activities about culture and idioms. In the following extract, learners considered three multiple answers for the meaning of the idiom 'in the doghouse'. They got the answer right and made some humorous comments as well. In my field notes, I described how they were using a sarcastic tone which was also evident in the transcript on *lines 022, 024, 027, 034* as learners kept laughing while reading the statement and the multiple answers from the screen:

Extract 6.49

021 Ziad: “Mr. Evans was in the doghouse with his wife”
022 Sami: doghouse”? ((laughs)) “with his wife” ((laughs))
023 Ziad: “because he spent all day, Sunday”
024 Rose: “watching football instead of helping her clean the house” ((laugh))
025 Sami: very funny, he enjoys that!
026 Ziad: “watching football”, it’s okay but not like that.
027 Rose: I think “Mrs. Evans is angry with her husband”!
028 Sami: I think so, yes.
029 Tarek: yes.
030 Ziad: yes.
031 Sami: that’s funny ((laugh))
032 Rose: I love it.
033 Sami: good.
034 Ziad: then she put him in the house of dogs! ((laugh))

(Extract from interaction transcript 03.08.2009)

In the second cycle, many examples were found of learners making humorous comments on internet content. In the following extract, for example, when Zein was talking about the bad effect of listening to loud music on the hearing abilities of teenagers, he made fun of the new generation as in being weaker than their ancestors:

Extract 6.50

126 Zein: the most significant way that people are affected
127 by noise is through hearing loss.
128 Fares: hearing?
129 TR: hearing loss?
130 Zein: yes. it is known today that young people experience
131 hearing loss at early age because of the loud
132 music they listen to while wearing headphones.
133 T: aha.
134 Z: yes and attending concerts. that is why our parents and may
135 be grandparents have ((laughs)) better hearing than us ((laugh)).

(Extract from interaction transcript, 10.12.2009)

6.2.3.3. Enjoying working with internet materials

Pekrun et al. (2007) claim that if the activity is ‘valued positively, *enjoyment* is instigated’ (2007: 21). In class, while working with internet materials, learners used phrases like ‘it was fun’, ‘I loved it’, ‘it was nice’ to express their enjoyment of the work. However, when technical problems were experienced learners were frustrated.

According to Pekrun et al, 'if the activity is valued, but there is no sufficient control and obstacles inherent in the activity cannot be handled successfully, *frustration* will be experienced' (ibid.). The obstacles experienced were technical. Therefore, developing appropriate internet methodology was important to cope with technical conditions so that learners who valued internet activities would not experience frustration because of technical problems.

The following extract was taken from the first cycle. No technical problems were experienced. Learners expressed their enjoyment on *lines 147, 150, and 151* as they were checking the right answers of the quiz provided online by clicking on the 'submit for evaluation' button:

Extract 6.51

- 140 Ziad: the first is correct. the second.
141 Tarek: the third.
142 Rose: "every"
143 Ziad: four
144 Tarek: five, yes.
145 Sami: yes.
146 Ziad: six.
147 Sami: we are clever ((laugh))
148 TR: did you do it?
149 Sami: yes.
150 Ziad: and it was fun.
151 Sami: so much fun.

(Extract from interaction transcript 03.08.2009)

In the second cycle and as technical problems were not experienced, learners' enjoyment as well as the teachers' was experienced at a deeper level. Teachers and learners would sometimes forget themselves in class and experience flow (Egbert, 2003) while discussing internet materials. In his diary, Zein wrote about his experience of discussing environmental problems. He used phrases such as 'did not

notice that class time was over', 'enjoyed the discussion so much', 'talk and talk nonstop' which all indicated high levels of enjoyment:

Extract 6.52

I really did not notice that class time was over. I enjoyed the discussion so much. I wish we could do this every class, talk and talk nonstop about things we like.

(Extract translated from Zein's diary, 10.12.2009)

Even the co-teacher reported how much she enjoyed the internet activities especially the ones about up-to-date topics. In her post-course interview, she compared the discussions of internet materials with conversations that people would normally have over a cup of tea:

Extract 6.53

113 T: and as you remember, it was like a discussion you have with
114 somebody when you have a cup of tea.
115 TR: yeah.
116 T: what I mean is, it was something very natural.

(Extract from the co-teacher's post-course interview, 24.12.2009)

In the activity about Michael Jackson, learners were supposed to bring information about his personal life and career. Zein brought lyrics for three of Michael's songs (*Music and Me*, *One Day in Your Life*, and *You are Not Alone*). He was very enthusiastic. He copied the three songs on a CD and played *One Day in Your Life* in class. Learners were not the only ones who were excited. The teachers were, too:

Extract 6.54

005 T: wow! Do you have the CD with you?
006 Zein: yes.
007 T: wow! Just a minute, we have the songs and we have
008 the lyrics, wow!
009 TR: this is really nice.
010 Zein: may I? (asking for permission to use the tape-recorder)

(Extract from interaction transcript, 09.11.2009)

Zein distributed photocopies of the lyrics among learners and gave two copies to the teachers. He asked us to read through the lyrics while listening to the song. Then, he played the song.

After listening to the song, a conversation developed naturally. This kind of conversations indicated learners' enjoyment during and after the activity and they were very common in the second cycle data. Learners used to start with the internet materials and do the internet activity, but while and after doing the activity they used to have conversations with the teachers based on personal experiences and background knowledge. The following extract is one example:

Extract 6.55

- 142 (Michael Jackson's song 'One Day in Your Life' was played)
143 T: did you buy the CD or did you?
144 Zein: I have the songs on my computer, just copied on the CD.
145 Kamal: it is really beautiful.
146 TR: it really is.
147 Fares: beautiful lyrics.
148 TR: you liked it?
149 Fares: yes, very much. thank you, Zein.
150 Zein: my pleasure.
151 T: a very nice song, yes, thank you, Zein.
152 Lina: slow and nice. I thought he only sing noisy music.
153 Zein: oh no! he has wonderful songs, if you just listen to
'Music and Me' you will forget the world.
154
155 Kamal: he is a famous phenomenon in our world but I
156 don't like his shape.
157 Fares: yes, I like some of his music, but not his shape.
158 we may share with him the meanings of his songs
159 not the movements on stage, or shape he appears in.
160 Kamal: if I watch him singing for example one hour, I will be ill
161 all the day.
162 Fares: I think if you listen to him, if you're fond of him,
163 you have to listen to him on radio, not to watch him, just
164 like we did today.
165 Zein: of course I agree, his way of wearing clothes is weird.
166 but I need to enjoy his music and voice, I don't need to
167 care about his clothes.
168 Fares: but you have to watch him sometimes.
210 Kamal: well, close your eyes and listen to him ((laugh))

(Extract from interaction transcript, 09.11.2009)

It is obvious from the extract above that learners were talking about Michael Jackson in a very natural way. They were jumping from one thing to another. For example, Lina and Zein were talking about Michael's music when Kamal and Fares started commenting on his eccentric look and behaviours. They made humorous comments and shared their views and all that indicated their enjoyment.

6.2.3.4. Feeling confident when discussing internet materials

As a source of information, the internet made learners feel confident when discussing internet materials. In her post-course interview, the co-teacher explained why she thought that was the case:

Extract 6.56

- 178 T: I mean, they used to come with all the information about
179 these topics, so they got something to depend on, to use
180 actually in class, and that itself was very helpful for them.
181 TR: mm.
182 T: you know, because when students are well-prepared,
183 they feel that what they are saying is right, and that
184 everybody else is benefiting from them, so they become more
185 confident about the things they say in class.

(Extract from the co-teacher's post-course interview, 24.12.2009)

Also, the internet as a source of up-to-date materials introduced learners to current words in the target language and that would not have been possible without the internet. Smith and Baber claim that the internet 'provides access to up-to-date material on every imaginable topic' (2005: 11). Conacher and Royall (1998) argue that the internet has a great potential for foreign language learners who may not find as up-to-date materials in their coursebooks. On *line 038* of the following extract, Kamal referred to how the internet helped him learn current words such as 'swine flu' in English and how that encouraged him to speak and made him feel confident:

Extract 6.57

033 Kamal: It encouraged us to speak. We did not before. I mean,
034 we spoke but very little. It was all grammar, fill in the
035 gaps. Sometimes, you have something to say, but when
036 you want to say it, you discover that you don't have the
037 words to say what you want to say, and that was my problem,
038 but with the internet, with the few words I got from the internet
039 I could speak for hours. Imagine I want to talk about swine flu,
040 how could I say a thing if I don't know what swine flu means in
041 English. But, when I went to the internet, I got the term. I got
042 the information, like symptoms and so on. I got them all
043 in English, and that made me feel confident when I was talking
044 about it here.

(Extract translated from a post-class informal interview with Kamal, 15.10.2009)

In his research, Lee (1998) also reported that having access to online materials helped participant students acquire current lexical items of the target language. As a source of information and current lexical items, the internet helped Lina become less afraid and more confident of taking a part in the discussion:

Extract 6.58

010 Lina: I feel afraid of speaking, afraid of participating. yes,
011 I am advanced but yet cannot speak fluently in English. it
012 is really psychological. I feel afraid of making mistakes in front
013 of everybody but when we started using the internet, I knew
014 that what I was going to say was right. so, I felt less afraid
015 of committing mistakes.

(Extract translated from Lina's post-course interview, 22.12.2009)

Similarly, in his post-course interview, Fares highlighted the importance of using the internet as a source of information in reducing fear of speaking and improving participation. He talked about fear of making mistakes and how knowing about the topic of discussion and the words he was going to use made him feel confident:

Extract 6.59

023 Fares: it made me feel confident when I spoke. sometimes,
024 you feel afraid of making mistakes, you may even
025 feel bad if you don't know how to express yourself
026 or if you don't know how to say something. I mean,
027 I remember when I was talking about the financial
028 crisis, I was so confident because I knew what I was
029 going to say.

(Extract translated from Fares's post-course interview, 22.12.2009)

In my diary, the phrase ‘I felt very confident today’ was repeatedly found as I used to write about and summarise the small conversations we had in Arabic when we were leaving the classroom together and walking down the corridor with the audio-recorder off.

6.2.3.5. Feeling proud of using internet materials in class

Crookes's and Schmidt's (1991) L2 Motivation Framework includes the feeling of satisfaction and that concerns ‘intrinsic rewards such as enjoyment and pride’ (cited in Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010: 50). Because learners were using English (rather than Arabic) websites and because the internet was still not very widely used and depended on, this theme emerged. Lina, for example, wrote in her diary about sharing some of her internet experiences in class with her work colleagues.

Extract 6.60

I showed them the website and we all looked for Italy and other countries, too. I really feel very proud of what we are doing in this Course.

(Extract translated from Lina's diary, 27.10.2009)

Other learners also told me many times in our informal talks outside the classroom that they were proud of the experience. The main reasons they reported for feeling proud were first because using the internet consistently throughout the whole Course was a novel thing to do and second because they were using English (rather

than Arabic) websites and that increased their confidence in their English as well as their pride of being able to do all that in a foreign language:

Extract 6.61

Kamal told me today that he was very happy with what we were doing in this Course. Fares said the same but also added that he was even proud of that. He told me that he graduated from university in the early nineties when computers were still unheard of among students. He never thought he would be able to use it for other reasons than checking the news and chatting to friends in Arabic but to use it and in English made him feel very confident and proud of his internet and language skills.

(Extract translated from the teacher-researcher's diary, 10.12.2009)

Being proud of the experience was a very positive affective reaction to using internet materials. It was very rewarding for me as a teacher-teacher who first thought that because of the bad internet's conditions in the context, it would be impossible to have a successful experience and intervention. The appropriate use of internet materials, however, succeeded in generating all these positive feelings.

6.2.4. Types of Social Engagement with Internet Materials

Social engagement transcends the individual's behaviour, affect, and cognition to the social interaction between individuals in a social setting such as the language classroom. Nystrand and Gamoran argue that 'student engagement involves more than individual students: more precisely, it involves the interaction of students and teachers' (1991: 269). Social Engagement is 'essentially linked to interaction and to learners' initiation and maintenance (or not) of it' (Svalberg, 2009: 252). 'Socially, the Engaged individual is interactive and initiating' (Svalberg, 2009: 247). Because social engagement is interactive, I will first present three long extracts to illustrate the co-construction of social interaction. Then, I will use these extracts to illustrate the different types of social engagement that emerged from learners' discussions of internet materials.

Extract One was selected from a transcript of ninety minutes of discussion around the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in 2009.

Extract Two was taken from the interaction transcript of the discussion on learners' favourite countries.

Extract Three was selected from a long discussion of serious problems in our modern life.

Extract One

240 Kamal: yes, may be the summit in Copenhagen this time.
241 T: yeah, this is what they are talking about.
242 Kamal: will change our world role ((laughs)) may be!
243 TR: may be.
244 Kamal: but Americans don't want to stop destroying nature.
245 T: simply because the people who have the biggest
246 companies are the people in the position of deciding
247 or making decisions in America, so nothing will
248 change.
249 Lina: like the Bush family, they're the owners of the
250 biggest factories.
251 Kamal: we criticize Bush! here in Latakia, you can go to
252 the big river (name of the river given) and
253 you can see the blue water.
254 Zein: yes.
255 Kamal: blue water, mixture of oil in the big river here,
256 all, all these people here don't think about,
257 about their children.
258 T: and the point is, I think, here in Syria, they
259 don't put restrictions like they do in Europe or the
260 United States, but the good news is that the
261 business is not that really huge here ((everyone laughs)).
262 this is why the problem is not getting more horrible.
263 Fares: my colleague from (name of hospital given) Hospital.
264 TR: yes.
265 Fares: told me that ill people of cancer more than ill people
266 of other normal diseases.
267 TR: really?
268 Fares: yes, Syria has the most eh:
269 Kamal: what is causing cancer raise in our region?
270 Fares: well, all of this, may be drinking water.
271 Kamal: yes, of course.
272 Fares: from (name of river given) River.
273 T: it's not one hundred percent good for the human
274 usage.
275 Kamal: it's very difficult because here no restrictions,
276 we don't know what we eat, what we drink,
277 but in Europe, they know what water they have
278 but here you can't know what you have in the
279 supermarket.
280 Zein: horrible.
281 Kamal: unfortunately.
282 Zein: we, we, in this topic, I saw a sad thing in
283 our faces, so for the next topic, I hope ((laughs))
284 will be about something happy.
285 T: but when you have a cancer case in the family,
286 my uncle died, and he is my father-in-law, died
287 this year because of cancer, this was really, really
288 sad. I saw him dying.
289 Kamal: sorry. but you know eight percent die in Syria because of cancer.
290 Zein: before ten years, I think yes, but in these days?
291 Kamal: may be more.
292 Zein: death from accidents, may be more.
293 Kamal: well, yes, this is bill we pay for having cars.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 07.12.2009)

Extract Two

037 Lina: India is terrific.
038 TR: okay, so you choose India?
039 Lina: mm no. Afghanistan, I would like to know about Afghanistan.
040 TR: Afghanistan!
041 Lina: yes, yes.
042 TR: I think it is on the website.
043 K: yes, yes.
044 Lina: I saved it. Afghanistan because I was in Afghanistan.
045 Fares: “Afghanistan, language, culture”, all here.
046 Lina: “genders, mixing genders”, yes, I want to read about this.
047 Fares: okay.
048 Lina: “free mixing genders only takes place within families
049 or in professional situations such as businesses or at
050 universities”. so only in universities and work.
051 Zein: yes.
052 Lina: “foreign women should follow the rules and
053 live by them”
054 Kamal: mm
055 Lina: “if a man speaks to you directly in a social context,
056 he is dishonouring”?
057 Kamal: “dishonouring you”.
058 Fares: “dishonouring”.
059 Lina: “you should avoid looking men in the eyes.
060 keep your eyes lower when you walk down the street
061 to maintain your reputation”. I am interested in their
062 culture because it is strange.
063 Kamal: mm.
064 Lina: this is at the surface but strange things happen
065 under the table (more like whispering).
066 Fares: what do you mean?
067 Lina: I don’t respect this because I think the relationships
068 are not good in their society.
069 Kamal: no, we have to respect all cultures in our world.
070 Lina: I know but. I don’t want to change anything, I am just
071 not sure about these rules, who put these rules?
072 two days ago, I want to tell you what I watched on TV
073 about Afghanistan and why I am concerned about this.
074 TR: yeah.
075 Lina: on CNN, I watched a report about boy dancers.
076 these boys about eight to twelve years age, they
077 dance between men and this in public places!
078 T: oh!
079 Kamal: you mean familiar?
080 Lina: yes, it wasn’t strange at all, like normal.
081 Fares: very strange.
082 Lina: I watched this on TV, on CNN, and they give
083 a report and interview with boys who dance for
084 these men to make money and they consider it as a work.
085 Kamal: see Americans and Afghanistan?
086 Lina: I know but it is a report, it is good to open your eyes
087 on bad things in society.
088 Zein: well, in India also, they sell women.
089 Lina: India, India, poverty there, they sell their mothers
090 and daughters, is this fair?
091 Zein: no but bad things happen everywhere.
092 Lina: in Syria I think we are more open society.

093 Fares: not, not mm
094 Lina: we are Moslems, we have traditions but not in this way.
095 Kamal: we can't generalize anything in TV about society,
096 you can't generalise, may be in Syria you can see many
097 things like you have in America, in Europe, in Afghanistan.
098 Fares: in all societies.
099 Lina: please think with me for human rights, where the human
100 rights in this case, in selling women or boy dancers?
101 Fares: in history these cases always happen.
102 Lina: yes but to improve our societies to make them more I don't know.
103 Fares: I think these things are in the US, in Syria, in Afghanistan,
104 there are good and bad things and these are bad things of course.
105 we feel sad about them. many years ago I read article about illness
106 of women and the treatments of doctors to women, horrible.
107 doctors can't see the woman if she is sick. He can talk
108 with her only from behind wall, in the other side of
109 the wall, horrible. you can't see the sick you are treating,
110 although the women there are good women and clever women,
111 there was a journalist from Germany who met a lot of them
112 and she said good things about them but the traditions are so,
113 are so difficult.
114 Lina: strict.
115 Fares: yes strict, very strict.

(Extract from classroom transcript, 27.10.2009)

Extract Three

001 Zein: I brought some information about noise and change of climate.
002 TR: great.
003 Zein: I prepared them because I find them serious problems
004 especially affecting us.
005 TR: yeah.
006 Zein: first, I will talk about reasons. Traffic, this noise
007 affects everyone so “it comes from traffic, airports,
008 industries, factories, large crowds. US environmental
009 agency recommends a safe noise level of no more
010 than fifty-five decibels. Decibels are units that
011 help in sound measurements”.
012 T: yeah.
013 Zein: sounds that are loud enough to damage your, our
014 hearing are one hundred and fifty decibels.
015 Fares: what is the natural level?
016 Lina: fifty.
017 Fares: fifteen?
018 T: fifty?
019 Zein: fifty, fifty five.
020 T: what about sounds that we don't hear?
021 Zein: no, no, we can hear it, the natural fifty five,
022 above it, it starts to affect us.
023 Lina: mm.
024 T: but at certain levels there are certain sounds less than?
025 Zein: yes, but very low decibels or sound measurements.
026 T: yeah.
027 Lina: in the US, 67 is the allowed in local areas.
028 Zein: yeah, because “noise affects sleeping habits, mood,
029 concentration, and body functions such as heart rates”.
030 TR: yeah.
031 Zein: why? because loud noise cause “stress, increasing respiration,
032 and heart rates then the body starts releasing hormones such as
033 adrenaline” (information read from a paper).
034 TR: aha.
035 T: ah.
036 Zein: which prepares us to fight and (inaudible).
037 T: fight and?
038 Lina: yeah fight.
039 T: fight and?
040 Zein: fight and frighten. for example, if you woke at night and
041 suddenly someone appears in front of you, your heart beating
042 become, eh increase so that hormones like adrenaline, mm.
043 Kamal: mm, released.
044 Zein: release and you feel stress.
045 T: and nervous.
046 Zein: yes, so noise is one of the reasons for stress.
047 T: yeah, is it why in parties when we have very loud music,
048 sometimes people fight? Is it because of the music?
049 Zein: ((laughs)) may be, I don't know.
050 Kamal: no, because of other things ((laughs)).
051 ((laugh)).
052 Zein: loud sounds release adrenaline so you feel you are
053 stressed and almost want to fight with someone.
054 T: yeah.

(Extract from interaction transcript, 10.12.2009)

6.2.4.1. Initiating and leading the discussions of internet materials

In internet materials discussions, it was found out that the internet information holder (rather than the teacher) was the one who would initiate and lead the discussion (Kamal in the first extract, Lina in the second, and Zein in the third). In the second extract, for example, Lina chose to talk about Afghanistan. She even chose what she wanted to read and discuss in class about Afghanistan. She was the one in control.

Extract 6.62

- 044 Lina: I saved it. Afghanistan because I was in Afghanistan.
045 Fares: “Afghanistan, language, culture”, all here.
046 Lina: “genders, mixing genders”, yes, I want to read about this.
047 Fares: okay.

She started reading the materials. She was the one who decided to stop and raise the point she was interested in highlighting (lines 061 and 062). On *lines 064* and *065*, she was using a very low tone of her voice and that raised other learners' interests. Fares, for example, who was sitting next to her, was the first one to negotiate meaning on *line 066* when he asked ‘what do you mean?’ What she meant was made clear on *lines 067* and *068*.

Extract 6.63

- 059 Lina: “you should avoid looking men in the eyes.
060 keep your eyes lower when you walk down the street
061 to maintain your reputation”. I am interested in their
062 culture because it is strange.
063 Kamal: mm.
064 Lina: this is at the surface but strange things happen
065 under the table (more like whispering)
066 Fares: what do you mean?
067 Lina: I don't respect this because I think the relationships
068 are not good in their society.

Obviously, she was the one who decided how much to read, what to discuss, and when to start the discussion.

6.2.4.2. Sustaining discussions of internet materials

A very interesting finding that emerged from the discussions of internet materials was that learners used to build on each other's turns to keep the conversation going.

In Extract Two, for example, instead of merely listening to what Lina was saying, Kamal disagreed with her on lines 085 and 095. Zein, on line 088, compared the case of boy dancers in Afghanistan with selling women in India. Also, Fares contributed to the conversation and drew on his background knowledge from lines 103 to 113 and that all indicated learners' sustained discussions of internet materials.

In Extract One, it was also obvious how teachers and learners were all active participants in the discussions of internet materials when the materials met their personal interests. Examples of sustained interactions were fewer and less interactive when the internet was used to support coursebook materials as the aim was only to solve the coursebook activity. In her post-course interview, the co-teacher confirmed that:

Extract 6.64

058 T: I think they were also very effective, simply because
059 if you remember, we used to spend the ninety minutes
060 talking about, without being able to stop the students from
061 talking about what they wanted to talk about.
062 TR: yeah.
063 T: they, they found that the extra subject was more interesting
064 than what they had in the coursebook, so I think that was
065 very effective.
066 TR: mm. you think the extra topics were more interesting for
067 the students?
068 T: yes, I think so.
069 TR: why do you think that was the case?
070 T: well, first because they chose these topics, right?
071 TR: yeah.
072 T: and this is very important because as you know, students,
073 they don't usually get the opportunity to talk about things they
074 like, and that was the main thing in this course.

6.2.4.3. Teachers as learners, Learners as Teachers

A very important condition for learners' engagement in discussions is to change the traditional participant structure of teachers asking questions, learners answering, and then teachers providing feedback on that. 'Designing successful interventions to engage students is difficult because it is a very common practice for teachers to talk for much of the time during classes' (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 433). 'Changing typical patterns of interaction in which the teacher asks a student a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates that response is necessary to encourage student involvement' (*ibid.*). According to Herrenkohl and Guerra,

Although this change is crucial to the facilitation of student engagement, it is not easy or straightforward to instantiate. Reorganizing the "participant structure" (Phillips, 1972) that has traditionally defined educational environments to include a high standard of student participation requires changing the roles and responsibilities given to teachers and students...This model suggests that a *balance between the contributions of the teacher, the curriculum, and the ideas and interests of the students is crucial* (Emphasis added, *ibid.*).

In the current research, the change of roles emerged because of learners' use of internet materials. In Extract Three, it was obvious how the co-teacher kept asking authentic questions to Zein to which she had no answers. In her post-course interview, she emphasised this point:

Extract 6.65

288 T: it's not only
289 them, I myself felt like a learner in this course, and
290 I think that helped me a lot as a teacher.
291 TR: aha, how?
292 T: well ((laughs)) I remember when they were talking about
293 things like swine flu, I was telling myself this is something
294 good for me to know about. it's like you learn from your
295 students and that felt so nice, like you are improving, not
296 only your students, but you, you as a teacher are benefiting
297 from that as well.

In this chapter, I presented the themes and sub-themes related to the types of learners' engagement with internet materials. The next chapter is devoted to discuss engagement as a multidimensional construct that was facilitated by the appropriate use of the internet as a source of materials.

Chapter Seven Discussion

Although engagement ... may seem an easy task, it is indeed an achievement ...

Yair (2000: 248)

7.1. Introduction

As stated earlier in Chapter One, this research investigated the appropriateness and the effectiveness of using the internet as a source of materials. The appropriate use of the internet as a source of materials was found to be supportive of learners' engagement. This chapter aims to relate what was found to the relevant literature.

7.2. The Appropriate Use of the Internet as a Source of Materials

In this research, the internet was used by the teacher-researcher and other EFL teachers in the THLI as a source of materials. Because the internet conditions in the context were far from ideal, it was necessary to develop appropriate methodology. Throughout the action research process, I could develop models that helped me in identifying appropriate ways for using the internet in the context (see figures 5-1 and 5-2). When used appropriately (both pedagogically and practically), the internet was found to be supportive of learners' engagement.

7.2.1. Pedagogically-Appropriate Internet Methodology

In order for the internet to be engaging, its use should be pedagogically appropriate for the context. Language teachers (also learners) need to choose the appropriate internet tools and applications for their pedagogical aims. Snyder and Alperer-Tath

emphasise the importance of ‘aligning the use of technology with task purposes’ (2007: 356).

In this research, I decided to use the internet as a source of supplementary materials to address the pedagogical problem of global coursebooks which are pre-determined for learners. Gray ‘questions the continued viability of the global coursebook, an artefact which is predicted on the questionable assumption that “one size fits all” – regardless of the social, geographical and educational context of use’ (2010: 3). Unlike the coursebook, ‘the Internet gives L2 learners immediate access to such a wide range of L2 Web content ... that it would be surprising indeed if they were unable to engage their own real interests and identities via this medium at some level’ (Ushioda, 2011: 207).

In the current research, the internet was used as a supplementary source of materials to better meet learners’ personal interests in the context. It was used to supplement coursebooks with interesting, personalised and up-to-date materials that promoted learners’ interaction, increased their motivation and encouraged autonomous learning. IALL research shows that the internet could be used to promote learners’ interaction (e.g. Jeon-Ellis et al., 2005; Schrooten, 2006), empower their sense of autonomy (e.g. Yumuk, 2002; Bhattacharya and Chauhan, 2010), increase their motivation for language learning (e.g., Kramarski and Feldman, 2000; Son, 2008; Chang, 2010; Vinther, 2010), and also raise their awareness and understanding of the target culture (e.g. Lee, 1998).

For all these reasons, the internet was found to be supportive of learners' engagement. The literature makes clear links between these areas and engagement. Guthrie and Cox (2001), for example, identify interesting texts as conditions for engagement in reading. Guo argues that 'all motivation components boost motivation for engagement' (2010: 13). 'Building motivation concepts such as relevance, completeness, authenticity, satisfaction and immediacy into materials would encourage students to persevere and succeed in language learning' (*ibid.*). As for autonomy and engagement, Dörnyei and Ushioda argue that 'a key argument in linking autonomy and motivation is that both are centrally concerned with the learner's active engagement with and involvement in the learning process' (2010: 58).

7.2.2. Practically-Appropriate Internet Methodology

Although the internet has so many applications and tools, they cannot be exploited in all contexts. Cilesiz argues that 'computer use is so embedded in and constrained by its social and cultural contexts that to construe such behavior as independent would be misleading' (2009: 232-3). Conacher and Royall (1998) develop what they call 'practical' criteria that need to be considered when using the internet either as a source of content or as a medium of communication. 'Access, use and reliability might be termed practical criteria ... such criteria may prove particularly useful when considering, firstly, the contribution of the Internet as a resource or as a medium for language learning' (Conacher and Royall, 1998: 39).

The technical problems experienced in accessing and using the internet within the

THLI necessitated the development of appropriate methodology. The main problem was that the internet was not provided for learners at the THLI. Accessing the internet in the Teachers' Computer Room proved to be very problematic. The most appropriate option was to make use of outside computers. Linder argues that in contexts where the internet conditions are less-than-ideal, learners can 'conduct research on the Web using outside computers, and bring into the classroom authentic data for specific class projects or specific topics being studied in class' (2004: 12). However, asking learners to access the internet at internet cafes, for example, can be a financial burden. That was why voluntary internet work was identified as an appropriate way of using the internet in the context. Also, the amount of internet work required from learners needed to be reasonable. Learners needed to be 'on board' or instrumental in recommending the use of internet materials. They needed to be involved and in agreement in order for the internet materials to be effective in this context. In the second cycle (as the internet was accessed via outside computers), I made sure that the amount of the internet work was reasonable.

With regard to the problem of slow internet connection, I had to make sure that the materials I asked for were all text-based (e.g. articles, lyrics, news reports). Accessing flash-based web-pages and downloading larger packages of information such as videos and sound files would have been extremely difficult with the slow and unstable internet connection in the context.

Based on my analysis of the data, I came up with a list of pedagogical and practical criteria that helped me in developing appropriate internet methodology for the

context (see Table 5-2). The developed appropriate methodology facilitated learners' engagement with internet materials. This was one of the significant contributions of this research to the area of Internet-Assisted Language Learning. Linder argues that:

Many publications cater to the needs of teachers who work in such ideal environments ... Yet many teachers work in situations where computer availability, and lab access to the internet, are less than ideal (2004: 10).

7.3. Types of Learners' engagement with Internet Materials

Learners' engagement is a multi-dimensional construct. However, 'defining how engagement can be conceptualized and identified within classrooms remains a major concern' (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 439). Yang claims that learners' 'engagement involves three interrelated dimensions – behavioural engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement' (2011: 182). But, it also has 'an interpersonal component' (Handelsman et al, 2005: 185) that is usually referred to as 'social engagement' (Svalberg, 2009). In this research, it was defined and investigated as a multidimensional construct of behavioural, cognitive, affective, and social components. Based on the literature and the data, I have developed my analytical framework (see Table 6-1) to answer the following research questions:

What types of learners' engagement with internet materials were identified?

- a. What types of learners' behavioural engagement?
- b. What types of learners' cognitive engagement?
- c. What types of learners' affective engagement?
- d. What types of learners' social engagement?

7.3.1. Behavioural Engagement with Internet Materials

There are learners' behaviours that indicate learners' engagement. 'Behavioral domain attributes consist of observable behaviors' (Caulfield, 2010: 3). In this section, I discuss the findings related to learners' behavioural engagement with internet materials that were directly observed and also indirectly assessed through self-reports and interaction transcripts.

One basic behavioural indicator of learners' engagement with internet materials was their access of the internet to bring materials even though it was optional and voluntary. Singh et al (2002) claims that doing homework and coming prepared for classes reflect learners' engagement. Another behavioural indicator of learners' engagement was their active participation in the discussions of internet materials. Active participation is identified in the literature as an indicator of learners' behavioural engagement (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008; Caulfield, 2010). In the current research, some learners were observed to be more active than others in using the internet as a source of materials. Individual differences especially in relation to internet access played a major role in this regard.

Learners asked for more use of internet materials. They also did their best to make the internet experience work in spite of the less-than-ideal internet conditions. (bringing laptops, using usbs in internet cafes). They started to take the initiative in using the internet (in the second cycle) whenever they needed or liked even without

being asked to. All these behaviours indicated learners' engagement with the internet materials.

7.3.2. Cognitive Engagement with Internet Materials

As a mental activity, cognitive engagement is very difficult to investigate especially when the researcher is also the teacher. Asking learners about their cognitive strategies while and after doing activities was neither possible for me as teacher nor desirable. It would have negatively affected learners' cognitive engagement in future activities. Alternatively, I depended on classroom audio-recordings and analysed the interaction transcripts for evidence of learners' cognitive engagement. Herrenkohl and Guerra claim that their 'study contributes to a deeper understanding of engagement by redefining it as a set of discourse practices and *by examining cognitive tools and classroom participant structures and their relation to student engagement*' (Emphasis added, 1998: 433). 'These practices will define engagement in students' speech and activity in whole class settings. They provide a new way of capturing student involvement and active participation in processes that facilitate learning' (ibid., 441). Zhu (2006) also develops his analytical framework for analysing cognitive engagement in discussion and uses classroom transcripts as the basis for his analysis (See table 3-3).

In the current research, I could identify a number of indicators of learners' cognitive engagement with the internet materials. Drawing on personal experiences and background knowledge is one example. Learners who 'are allowed to choose find it easier to select topics and activities they are familiar with, and therefore better able

to become actively engaged in the activity' (Schrew et al. 2001: 216). According to Schrew et al, 'prior knowledge increases engagement and understanding' (*ibid.*). As learners were given the opportunity to make their own choices about topics and materials, they used to choose what they liked and what they were familiar with. McQuillan and Conde (1996) claim that 'readers are best at determining their own reading level' and therefore 'should be instrumental in the choice of reading materials in their classrooms' (cited in Egbert, 2003: 505).

Being selective of important and interesting materials indicated learners' critical thinking of the materials and, therefore, their cognitive engagement. Learners used to chose which materials to bring to class although bringing the internet materials with lines highlighted or in the form of summaries indicated more cognitive engagement with the materials than just choosing what to print out and then read it aloud in class. 'A qualitative distinction is made between deep and surface-level strategy use. Students who use deep strategies are more cognitively engaged; they exert more mental effort, create more connection among ideas, and achieve greater understanding of ideas' (Fredricks et al, 2004: 64). Reading the materials word by word from the screen or from a printout was found to generate very little interaction. That is why learners should be encouraged to select and summarise internet materials rather than read them word by word.

'The learning literature defines cognitive engagement in terms of being strategic' (Fredricks et al, 2004: 64). Strategic learners 'use learning strategies such as rehearsal, summarizing, and elaboration to remember, organize, and *understand the*

material' (Emphasis added, ibid.). In the current research, learners used a number of strategies to understand internet materials and that indicated their cognitive engagement. For instance, they made use of illustrations. They also used to translate difficult words into Arabic or ask for the Arabic translation. When learners accessed the materials in class, they used dictionaries. When the internet was accessed at home, learners used to come prepared to class with the difficult words translated. Using the internet at home, therefore, was not only technically but also pedagogically appropriate as it saved the time that might be lost going backward and forward to dictionaries (which sometimes cut down chances for sustained interaction).

Schrew et al (2001) suggest that teachers can use vivid texts to engage learners. According to Schrew et al. vivid texts 'contain rich imagery, suspense, provocative information that *surprises the reader*, and engaging themes' (Emphasis added, 2001: 220). In this research, the internet was used by learners as a source of vivid texts about their favourite topics. Many examples were found of learners being surprised with the information they got from the internet. Although some of the websites used were not authentic (e.g. Dave's ESL Café), learners were surprised with some of information they found there and therefore were able to engage with online quizzes. Miceli considers 'authenticity as not only about material from the "real" world but "a personal process of engagement" for learners, linked to "self-determination and commitment to understanding" (2010: 322). Learners were not the only ones who were found to be surprised with internet content, teachers were found to be surprised too.

In fact, teachers' surprise with what learners used to bring from the internet was a very important achievement of this intervention as it challenged the traditional role of teachers as the only sources of knowledge. 'Changing typical patterns of interaction in which the teacher asks a student a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates that response is necessary to encourage student involvement' (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 433).

Many evaluative statements and comments were found in the interaction transcripts. They indicated learners' cognitive engagement with the internet materials. This finding seems to be compatible with Zhu's (2006). In his analytical framework for cognitive engagement in discussion, Zhu considers statements that offer 'evaluative or judgemental opinions of key points in the discussion/related readings' (2006: 458) as indicators of learners' cognitive engagement.

7.3.3. Affective Engagement with Internet Materials

Affective or emotional engagement 'refers to students' affective reactions in the classroom' (Fredricks et al, 2004: 63). While there is an agreement that emotional engagement is related to affective reactions, 'the definitions in the engagement literature tend to be general and not differentiated by domain or activity' (*ibid.*). The same applies to the research on affective engagement that has not made it 'clear whether students' positive emotions are directed toward academic content, their friends, or the teacher' (Fredricks et al, 2004: 63). This research does as it investigates affective engagement directed toward internet materials.

One of the main indicators of learners' affective engagement is happiness (Fredricks et al, 2004). In this research, learners' happiness when working on internet materials was one of the main findings that shaped and directed my focus to learners' engagement. I could not by merely focusing on interaction account for tens of fieldnotes about learners' smiling and telling me at the end of almost every class 'I really felt happy today', 'I am glad', 'it was amazing, thank you'. That was when I realized that engagement as a multi-dimensional construct would be the best framework to present these data. The main reason identified for learners' happiness was that the internet as a source of materials provided learners with the necessary information to learn about their favourite topics and to talk about the things that they really liked.

Humour was another affective indicator of learners' engagement. Learners were observed to be in a humorous mood when working with internet materials except when technical problems were experienced. Enjoyment was also identified as an indicator of learners' affective engagement. Pekrun et al. (2007) claim that if the activity is 'valued positively, *enjoyment* is instigated' (2007: 21). In class, while working with internet materials, learners used phrases like 'it was fun', 'I loved it', 'it was nice' to express their enjoyment of the work. However, when technical problems were experienced learners were frustrated. According to Pekrun et al, 'if the activity is valued, but there is no sufficient control and obstacles inherent in the activity cannot be handled successfully, *frustration* will be experienced' (*ibid.*). The obstacles experienced were technical. Therefore, developing appropriate internet methodology was important to cope with technical conditions so that learners who

valued internet activities would not experience frustration because of technical problems. In the second cycle and as technical problems were not experienced, learners' enjoyment as well as the teachers' was experienced at a deeper level. Teachers and learners would sometimes forget themselves in class and experience flow (Egbert, 2003) while discussing internet materials.

As a source of information, the internet made learners feel confident when discussing internet materials. As a source of up-to-date materials, the internet introduced learners to current words in the target language and that helped them feel confident while talking about up-to-date topics. Smith and Baber claim that the internet 'provides access to up-to-date material on every imaginable topic' (2005: 11). Conacher and Royall (1998) argue that the internet has a great potential for foreign language learners who may not find as up-to-date materials in their coursebooks. In his research, Lee (1998) also reported that having access to online materials helped participant students acquire current lexical items of the target language. As a source of information and current lexical items, the internet helped learners become less afraid and more confident of taking a part in the discussion.

Crookes's and Schmidt's (1991) L2 Motivation Framework includes the feeling of satisfaction and that concerns 'intrinsic rewards such as enjoyment and pride' (cited in Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010: 50). Because learners were using English (rather than Arabic) websites and because the internet was still not very widely used and depended on, this theme emerged. Being proud of the experience was a very positive

affective reaction to using internet materials. It was very rewarding for me as a teacher-teacher who first thought that because of the bad internet's conditions in the context, it would be impossible to have a successful experience and intervention. The appropriate use of internet materials, however, succeeded in generating all these positive feelings.

7.3.4. Social Engagement with Internet Materials

Social engagement transcends the individual's behaviour, affect, and cognition to the social interaction between individuals in a social setting such as the language classroom. Nystrand and Gamoran argue that 'student engagement involves more than individual students: more precisely, it involves the interaction of students and teachers' (1991: 269). Social Engagement is 'essentially linked to interaction and to learners' initiation and maintenance (or not) of it' (Svalberg, 2009: 252). 'Socially, the Engaged individual is interactive and initiating' (Svalberg, 2009: 247).

In internet materials discussions, it was found out that the internet information holder (rather than the teacher) was the one who initiated and led the discussion. A very important condition for learners' engagement in discussions is to change the traditional participant structure of teachers asking questions, learners answering, and then teachers providing feedback on that. 'Designing successful interventions to engage students is difficult because it is a very common practice for teachers to talk for much of the time during classes' (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 433). 'Changing typical patterns of interaction in which the teacher asks a student a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates that response is necessary to encourage

student involvement' (ibid.). According to Herrenkohl and Guerra,

Although this change is crucial to the facilitation of student engagement, it is not easy or straightforward to instantiate. Reorganizing the "participant structure" (Phillips, 1972) that has traditionally defined educational environments to include a high standard of student participation requires changing the roles and responsibilities given to teachers and students...This model suggests that a *balance between the contributions of the teacher, the curriculum, and the ideas and interests of the students is crucial* (Emphasis added, ibid.).

In the current research, the change of roles emerged because of learners' use of internet materials.

Another interesting finding that emerged from the discussions of internet materials was that learners used to build on each other's turns to keep the conversation going. Examples of sustained interactions were fewer and less interactive when the internet was used to support coursebook materials as the aim was only to solve the coursebook activity.

7.4. Intervening with the Internet to Support Engagement

Although not research-based, Svalberg's (2009) approach to engagement is inspiring for researchers who are interested in doing interventions to support learners' engagement. Svalberg identifies factors that could facilitate or impede learners' engagement and also characteristics of learners' engagement. The only problem is that the factors she identifies are too general (see table 3-5). What I did in this research was to focus on the engaging role of the internet and the types of engagement with its materials (see table 6-1, My Analytical Framework of Learners' Engagement with Internet Materials).

The only study I could find that intervened with the internet to engage EFL learners and investigated their engagement as a construct was by Yang (2011). According to Yang, ‘one of the most significant challenges facing English as a foreign language (EFL) education is how to enhance students’ engagement in the target language (L2 or English) for meaningful purposes in and out of the classroom’ (2011: 181). He claims that ‘in Taiwan, the big class sizes of 50–60 students in college have resulted in an academic disengagement, since students have fewer opportunities in these contexts to communicate with the teacher in the L2’ (*ibid.*). In order to engage EFL students in the context of a big class, Yang ‘developed a system, which is an online situated language learning environment, to support the students, the teachers, and the teaching assistants (TAs) to communicate synchronously and asynchronously in and after class’ (*ibid.*). The internet was used as a medium of communication to support learners’ engagement through creating extra opportunities for teacher-learner interactions. Rather than using the internet as an engaging medium of communication to create extra opportunities for teacher-learner interactions, the current research used the internet as an engaging source of materials to address learners’ personal needs and interests in the context. The different types of learners’ behavioural, cognitive, affective **and** social engagement were facilitated not only through intervening with internet materials but also through a continuous *action research* process of developing appropriate internet methodology that continuously sought to improve the conditions for learners’ engagement.

Chapter Eight Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

‘Action research is ‘chameleon-like’. It is difficult to make firm plans in advance about the underlying questions or steps in the approach, because the process must vary according to how the research resonates with changes and improvements in practice’ (Burns, 2009: 127). In this final chapter, I provide a summary of the research, its limitations, pedagogical implications and future research directions.

8.2. Summary of the Research

This action research aimed to get EFL learners live access the internet in the THLI to get materials that could better meet their personal interests. My idealistic views about using internet-connected computers in the THLI came up against a number of contextual constraints that made the original plan impossible to achieve and meant that I had to develop appropriate internet methodology (Holliday, 1994). Instead of adopting a top-down approach to implement the intervention, I realised that the aim should be to start from where people actually were if using the internet was to be effective. After conducting nine sessions in the THLI Computer Room, I decided to interview teachers who had previous experiences in using the internet for their EFL classes in the THLI. The aim was to learn from their experiences and to better understand the context and its constraints. Based on these interviews, I could identify contextually-appropriate criteria for using the internet as a source of supplementary materials. When used appropriately, internet materials were found to be supportive of learners’ engagement. Yair argues that ‘although engagement with instruction

may seem an easy task, it is indeed an achievement' (2000: 248). In the case of this research, it was achieved through the appropriate use of internet materials.

8.3. The Research Limitations

The uncertainty that I experienced as an action researcher with regard to the effectiveness of using supplementary internet material is considered to be a limitation of this research. Throughout the action research process, I was not exactly sure of my focus on engagement. That negatively affected my questions to the participants. I did not probe into the details of what could have elicited more data about learners' behavioural, cognitive, affective and social engagement. The research was exploratory in nature. However, it would have elicited much more focused data if I knew what learners' reactions were all about. The other limitation in this regard was that I could not, as a sponsored student, go back for more data collection when the focus became clear. Richards criticises action research descriptions and models which may suggest 'an eternal cycle spiralling through a professional life, but in practice there will be limits to what is possible or desirable' (2003: 25).

In terms of my approach to data collection, the limitation is that this research is completely qualitative and does not include any quantitative questionnaire data. Generalisation is not possible. According to Edge and Richards, 'naturalistic inquiry will not deliver a generalization which can be abstracted and 'applied', instead it seeks to produce understandings of one situation which someone with knowledge of another situation may well be able to make use of' (1998: 345).

8.4. Pedagogical Implications

The implications of this action research speak directly to teacher-researchers who are interested in creating better conditions to support learners' engagement in their EFL classrooms. The main implication is that engagement is very context-specific. The engaging conditions differ for every group of learners. For the internet to be engaging, it should be recommended by the learners and used in ways that are pedagogically and practically appropriate.

The other implication I would like to talk about here is that teacher-researchers should be very flexible when dealing with contextual constraints. Action research is a very flexible methodology and works in reflexive way to the development of context-appropriate methodology. The very nature of action research is that it functions as an ongoing process for change and improvement (Burns, 2010a). Choosing action research as a methodological framework enabled me to use, evaluate, change, and improve my ongoing practitioner methodology for appropriate use of internet materials that eventually facilitated learners' engagement.

Teacher-researchers should also be open-minded when the data open up new directions. In the current research, the process led me to a destination that I never thought I would reach when I first started the project. Engagement emerged from the participants' perceptions and experiences of using the internet as a supplementary source of materials. Even the 'unsuccessful' stories of learners' disengagement were

very important for developing more appropriate methodology that could improve the conditions for learners' engagement.

8.5. Future Research Directions

In this action research, the internet's engaging role and the types of engagement with its materials were both investigated. The teacher-researcher intervened with internet materials that could better meet the personal interests of EFL learners in the context. The development of appropriate methodology for using supplementary internet materials improved the conditions for and facilitated learners' engagement. Sun and Rueda point out that 'work to date has not examined distinct components of engagement' (2011: 4). This research not only examined the distinct components of engagement but also intervened to support them. Few 'educational interventions have been designed to define, encourage, *and* examine engagement processes' (Herrenkohl and Guerra, 1998: 432) and therefore more research in this area is needed. Future research can intervene with different internet applications and tools that are appropriate for the social context to support and improve the conditions for learners' engagement. Types of teachers' engagement with internet materials can be also looked at. Finally, 'current measures do not tap qualitative differences in the level of engagement, making it difficult to distinguish the degree of behavioral, emotional, or cognitive investment or commitment' (Fredricks et al, 2004: 69). The current research adopted a qualitative approach that allowed investigating the differences in learners' engagement with internet materials and the reasons behind that. More qualitative research is needed to investigate engagement as a situated phenomenon and the factors that affect it in other social contexts.

8.6. Concluding Remarks

In spite of the confusion that was experienced throughout the process, I recommend doing action research for personal and professional teacher development. Action research enabled me to see the pearls in our classroom stories. As an action researcher, the lesson I learned was that teaching is not only about what we teach but also about how we teach what we teach. Learners' reactions to our teaching tell so much about the effectiveness of our teaching and should be considered when developing teaching methods:

Traditional teaching models often design instruction before the makeup of the class is even realized. A more inclusive pedagogy requires teachers to apply instructional design methods that include the learner in the design of instruction. The instructional design should consider not only what students learn, but the best ways for them to do so. This means the design should be student centered, placing the student at the center of the learning process, and instruction should be designed to include the cultural identities of students in the classroom (Grassi and Barker, 2010: 196-197).

The power of action research is in flexibility as a research methodology to be adapted to different contexts and to different teaching styles. It helps teacher-researchers develop teaching practices that are appropriate to their contexts. Although the findings cannot be directly transferred to other contexts, the action research processes can be inspiring for other teachers who have similar teaching problems and conditions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Definitions of Internet-Related Terms

The following definitions are chosen from Smith's and Baber's glossary (2005: 158-175).

Internet: An international network of computers. The internet enables users to display and visit websites, send and receive emails, transfer files and more.

World Wide Web (WWW) The set of documents and files accessible via the HTTP protocol on the internet.

Blended Learning: A model which combines some face-to-face teaching with online learning.

Blog: Short for weblog. A website which is created using web-based software. Blogs are often used as online journals or news resources. They tend to be easy to set up and maintain, allowing the blog author to post regular updates.

Chat: A mechanism which allows online users (usually in different geographical areas) to communicate with each other live via text.

Discussion forum: A web-based system that allows users to write messages which stay on the forum permanently, or until actively removed. Other users can read previously posted messages and reply. Discussion forums are often organised around specific themes.

Email: Short for electronic mail. A system which allows one internet user to send a message and/or files to one or more other users.

Video-conferencing: A system which makes use of a high-speed connection for high-quality video and sound communication between users in different locations.

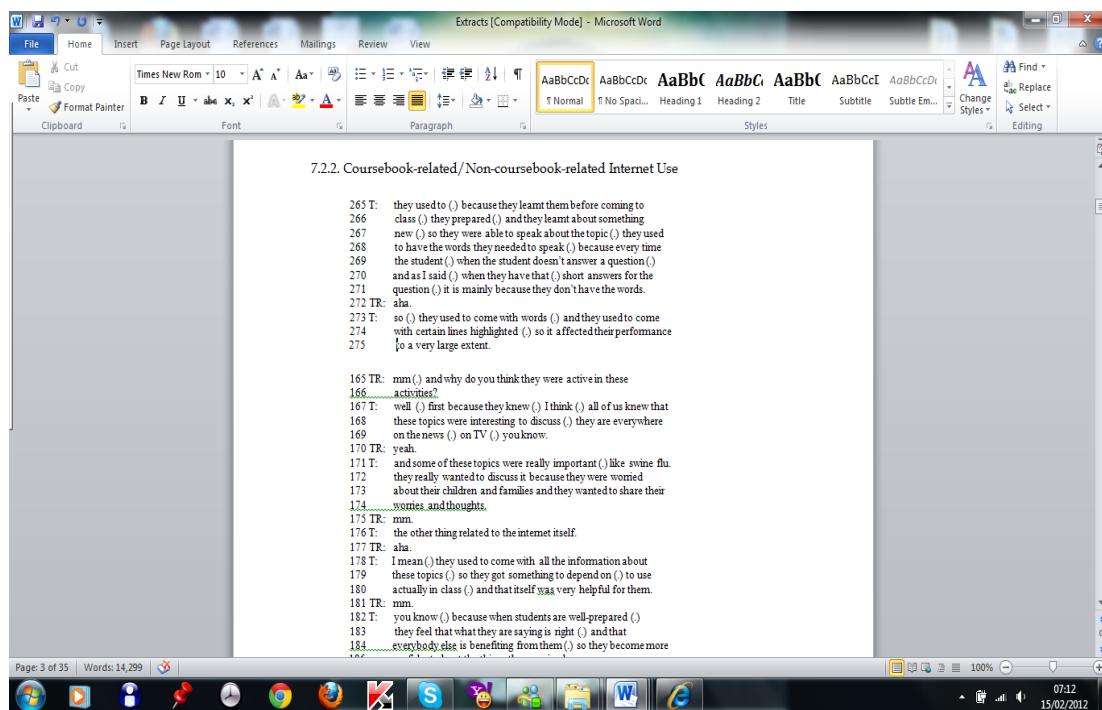
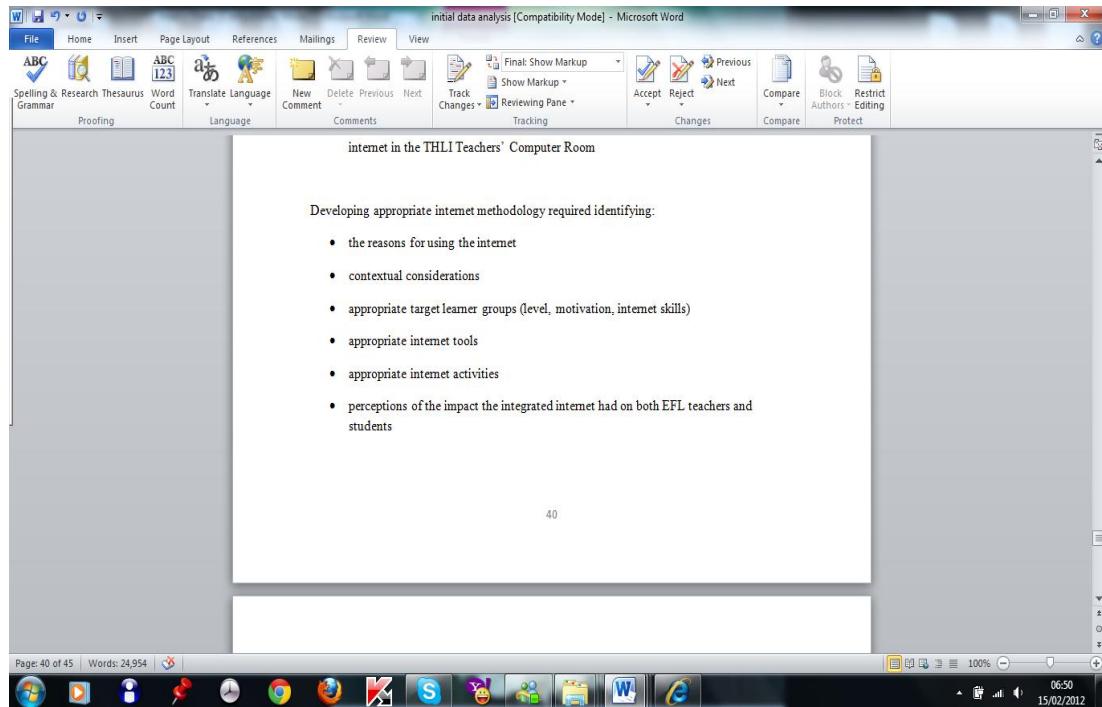
Website: A collection of web pages (written in HTML) put together by a company, institution or individual. A website may promote an individual, a product or a company; offer information of some sort; contain activities of various kinds, and much more.

Webquest: An activity in which one or more users (e.g. learners) gather information from the internet according to criteria/guidelines set by e.g. an instructor.

Note

In relation to the World Wide Web, Smith and Baber argue that contrary to popular belief, the world wide web is 'not synonymous with the internet. The web is a part of the internet and consists of websites, which in turn consist of web pages' (bold in original, 2005: 13). This distinction between the internet and the web becomes very important as in Internet-assisted Language Learning literature, terms like Web-based or Web-assisted Language Learning exist. They are usually used to refer to certain internet applications in language learning; i.e. the web. So, it could be said that the use of these different terms is actually significant.

Appendix 2 Initial Data Analysis of Appropriate Methodology



Appendix 3 Initial Data Analysis of Learners' Engagement

initial data analysis [Compatibility Mode] - Microsoft Word

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Font Paragraph Styles

034 or something like this () try to collect () to surf the internet
035 to bring some ideas for a presentation () this is what I do
036 TR: are the ideas related to the coursebook units or?
037 T2: sometimes yes () it's related () to the course () to the course
and the materials () but sometimes it is related to their
specialization.
039
040 TR: aha
041 T2: because my students () mm () have different specializations ()
042 so it depends () and sometimes I try to () to make them eh: ()
043 to make the topics related to () to the things they like () the
044 things that are interesting for them () just to get them motivated ()
045 to make them more motivated.
046 TR: mm
047 T2: okay? try to () to find the things that you like () to speak about
048 and let's try to discuss it in class.
049 TR: mm () you said things that are related to their specialization?
050 T2: yeah () for example () I have some students who are doctors
or physicians.
051
052 TR: aha.
053 T2: so () some of them () I remember () tried to bring something
about diets () because () and not only about their
specialization () but the thing that all the students might be
interested in () and involved () to get them all involved ().
056
057 TR: mm
058 T2: so one of them () I think () eh: () brought something about
diets () and how to: () to keep fit () and things like this.
059
060 TR: was it all in English?
061 T2: yeah() yeah() all in English () and the topic was
062 very () very interesting () so all the students got
063 motivated () got involved () tried to participate ()
064 ask questions at the end () it was interesting for me.
065 and for them also.
066 TR: mm () and how about the internet access?

Comment [p51]: (1) as a source for personalised content

Comment [p52]: (3) discussion

Comment [p53]: (5) involvement-engagement

Comment [p54]: (5 & 6) Ls' motivation -active participation -teacher was also interested.

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