

# **Postgraduate Iranian Students' Attitudes toward the Use of ICTs in EFL Learning**

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Submitted to the  
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
English Language Teaching

Eastern Mediterranean University  
January 2019  
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

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## **ABSTRACT**

The use of Information Communication Technology ICT tools in language learning has been a very important aspect of the twenty first century, which is considered to be the beginning of technology revolution era. The wide use of Information Communication Technology ICTs, such as computers, mobile applications, films, blogs, etc. has helped a lot of learners to improve their English. This, also, has helped in promoting learner autonomy, where the learners depend on themselves to learn.

This study examines the attitudes of Iranian postgraduates at Eastern Mediterranean University towards using Information Communication Technology ICTs in learning English. As EMU adopts English-medium of instruction approach, in which foreign language learners learn in English, the researcher found that there is a need to examine the role of Information Communication Technology ICTs and the learners' attitudes towards them. As the Iranian students who study in majors other than English language teaching ELT - such as engineering, business, and IT - don't study in English in Iran, most of the studies examined the role of Information Communication Technology ICTs in language learning for Iranians in ELT department, or in language institutes. Therefore, this study covers this gap by targeting this group and examining their attitudes towards the use of ICTs in Learning English.

The researcher used the mixed method, which contains qualitative and quantitative methods. First, the questionnaire was distributed to 150 Iranian postgraduates at EMU. The questionnaire asked the learners about their attitudes towards Information Communication Technology ICT tools in learning. Then, ten participants were chosen

for the interview. The researcher analyzed the questionnaire using SPSS 23<sup>rd</sup> Edition. This included descriptive analysis, frequencies, 'T' test, and Pearson Correlation. Regarding the interviews, the responses of the interviewees were analyzed and themed to come up with a model that represents the participants' attitudes towards the use of Information Communication Technology ICTs.

The results show that ICTs positively affect the learners' language skills, and it has fostered learner autonomy. This study was also proved by the qualitative results, which showed that there most of the participants support the use of Information Communication Technology ICTs to improve their learning skills, language skills, and learner autonomy. A small number of the participants, however, cast doubts about the effectiveness of Information Communication Technology ICTs.

**Keywords:** Information and Communication Technology ICT, Learner Autonomy, English as a Foreign Language EFL

## ÖZ

Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT araçlarının dil öğreniminde kullanımı, teknoloji devrimi döneminin başlangıcı olarak kabul edilen yirmi birinci yüzyılın çok önemli bir yönü olmuştur. Bilgisayarlar, mobil uygulamalar, filmler, bloglar, gibi Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT'lerin yaygın kullanımı, çok sayıda öğrencinin İngilizcelerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olmuştur. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin kendileri öğrendiği yerlerde otonom öğrenmeyi desteklemede yardımcı olmuştur.

Bu çalışma, Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi'ndeki İranlı lisansüstü öğrencilerin, İngilizce öğrenmede Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT kullanmaya yönelik tutumlarını incelemektedir. DAÜ; yabancı dil öğrenen öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrendiği İngilizce tabanlı öğretim yaklaşımını benimsediğinden, araştırmacı Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT'in rolünü ve öğrencilerin kendilerine karşı tutumlarını incelemeye ihtiyaç olduğunu tespit etmiştir. İngilizce öğretmenliği bölümlerde öğrenim gören İranlı öğrenciler dışında, mühendislik, işletme ve BT gibi; İranlı öğrenciler, İran'da İngilizce eğitimi almadığından, çalışmaların çoğu İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümlerinde veya dil enstitülerinde, İranlılar için dil öğreniminde Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT'in rolünü inceledi. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma bu grubu hedef alarak ve İngilizce Öğrenmede Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BIT kullanımına yönelik tutumlarını inceleyerek bu açığı kapatmaktadır.

Araştırmacı, nitel ve nicel yöntemler içeren karma yöntemi kullanmıştır. İlk olarak, anket DAÜ'de 150 İranlı yüksek lisans öğrencisine uygulandı. Anket, öğrencilerin dil öğreniminde Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT araçlarına yönelik tutumlarını sorguladı.

Ardında, görüşme için on katılımcı seçilmiştir. Araştırmacı, SPSS 23.sürüm kullanarak anketi analiz etti. Bu analiz; tanımlayıcı analiz, frekanslar, 'T' testi ve Pearson Korelasyonu içermektedir. Görüşmelerde, görüşülen kişilerin cevapları analiz edildi ve bu cevaplar, katılımcıların Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT kullanımına yönelik tutumlarını temsil eden bir model ortaya çıkarmak için temalara göre düzenlendi.

Sonuçlar, Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT'lerin öğrencilerin dil becerilerini olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermektedir ve çalışma örneklemelerinin teşvik etmiştir. Bu çalışma, katılımcıların çoğunun öğrenme becerilerini, dil becerilerini ve otonom öğrenmelerini geliştirmek için Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi BİT kullanımını desteklediğini gösteren nitel sonuçlarla da kanıtlanmıştır. Ancak, katılımcıların az bir kısmı, BİT'lerin etkinliği konusunda şüpheler duymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bilgi İletişim Teknolojisi, Otonom Öğrenme, Yabancı Dil  
Olarak İngilizce

**TO MY FAMILY**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

To my dear supervisor, Assoc. Prof Dr. Naciye Kunt, her great support to make my thesis meets the highest standards is unforgettable. I am deeply grateful for her support, encouragement and advice over the last two years. I especially thank her as she has always motivated me regarding proceeding with my thesis and subsequently making me submit my chapters on time.

I would like also to thank the defense jury members: Asst. Prof. Dr. Ilkay Gilanlioglu, Prof.Dr. Javanshir Shibliyev, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oytun Sozudogru for their efforts in accomplishing my thesis. Their feedback was really great for me, and it put me on the right track of academic research.

A special thank also goes to my teachers in my MA program who helped me a lot to reach the level I am in now. From each of you, I learned something that assisted me in this adventure. Honestly speaking, your advice greatly enhanced not only my education, but also my personality.

To my parents and my brother, my words really can't express my feelings towards your support. I am very grateful for your patience and kindness. And now I would like to show you my hard work, discipline and dedication by finishing this dissertation as a gift to you. I hope you will be proud of me by completing it.

I also would like to express my warmest gratitude to all the Iranian students in post graduated program studying at EMU University in North Cyprus who patiently participated in my research and helped me a lot in data collection phase to be able to



conduct this research. Moreover, the participants generously shared their time and helped me with their answers, comments and suggestions; I would have failed to complete my master thesis without their interest and support. I would express my great gratitude, sincerity, and appreciation to the many individuals who have supported me in my studies for Master Program in English Language Teaching and they have made it possible to expand my knowledge and my professional development.

To my best classmate and friend, Sima. We did it!

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Presentation

This chapter is an introductory one to the whole dissertation. It presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and the significance of the study.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

The abbreviation ICT stands for information communication technology. With the development of technology in the second part of the last century and the beginning of this century, technology has become one of the most important skills of the twenty first century in many different aspects of life. This huge development has touched everyone's life and affected all the different aspects of life, including language learning. Using ICT for EFL learning seems to be an indispensable part of English learning nowadays. The use of technology can positively influence the learners (McDougald, 2018). Agrawal and Mittal (2018) suggest that technology is indispensable for learning.

Moreover, technology has always been known as a tool to improve the process of language learning. "Technology comes across to be highly influential all throughout the process of acquiring a second or foreign language" (Chapelle 2003). Similarly, the study of Buga, Căpenea-Gă, Chirasnel, and Popa (2013) stated that utilization of ICT

in various means could come in handy in improving teaching foreign language. This makes ICTs very important in foreign language learning in the twenty first century.

One of the most important issues toward application of ICT is learners' attitudes. As Simsek (2008) mentioned, the participants of the study were highly satisfied with use of ICT and they believed using ICT leads to their improvement in EFL learning. The significance of attitudes of ICT was investigated in another study and in that study students and teachers consider technology application greatly convenient, time and labor saving, and improving the learners' engagement. The result of study revealed that the advantages significantly outweigh the drawbacks of the use of technology (Harmandaoğlu Baz , 2016).

As the nature of study is about Iranian students attitudes toward the use of ICT in EFL learning, Iranian scholars Abbasi, Sadeghi, and Delkordi (2008) carried out a research which is titled as 'A review of ICT status and development strategic plan in Iran'. The results show that Iran, as a developing country, does have the potentiality to be part of the world development in terms of implementing technology to go in line with the rapid changes of the twenty first century. This, however, can't be done without taking many steps towards providing more training opportunities for both teachers and learners in order to habilitate them for the use of ICTs in the pedagogical process.

The effectiveness of ICT tools on different language skills has been considered as a crucial issue in the process of language teaching and learning. ICT tools can afford the language learners more chances to practice and improve their speaking and reading (Drigas &Charami, 2014). The use of ICT tools can help the learners speak English



fluently and accurately. In fact, ICTs have influential impacts on oral skills (Toumi, 2015).

Finally, ICT can provide opportunities to improve all the four skills. Noori Karim (2017) did a research on the importance of using ICT for learning and teaching different skills. He states that using ICTs helped the learners get high scores in English writing rather than others skills such as speaking, reading, and listening.

Regarding the relationship between the learners' ICT attitudes and their autonomy, it is quite important to state the definition of autonomy by Littlewood (1996), who defined autonomy as one's independent capacity to manage his/her own actions. This independent capacity heavily depends on two main elements: ability and willingness. With respect to the relationship, it has been proved by the study of Pere Fernandez (2010) that using the ICT tools can facilitate language acquisition, and the learners don't heavily depend on their teachers. Rather, they use the ICTs to improve their own language. This is a proof of the importance of ICTs in improving the learner autonomy. In other words, the teachers are not the only source of knowledge any more. Rather, their role has changed to be a facilitator and monitor. Thus, the learners depend on themselves to learn outside the classroom.

The other study claimed that all learners should be familiar with the identity of the term autonomy, they should be equipped with it, and they should consider the important steps such as "the ability, knowledge, and skills to plan, organize, monitor and evaluate their own learning" (Kaur and Kaur Sidhu, 2010).

There are many studies about the effects of gender on language learning. Based on Wong and Hanafi (2007) study, males are more confident than females when using

computers. The other study that conducted in Iran confirms that females are more able to acquire learning strategies. Moreover, females were in favor of using "social/affective strategies rather than males" (Zeinali, 2012).

### **1.3 Statement of Problem**

The present study was conducted to examine the attitudes of postgraduate Iranian students toward ICT in EFL learning. In fact, the recent literature has little research on the attitudes of non-ELT Iranian learners who study in a university that uses English-medium of Instruction approach. Most of the studies conducted about the Iranian contexts were in Iran itself, where English is only taught for the English majors. Therefore, this study aims to find out the attitudes of the Iranian learners out Iran.

Another important gap that is targeted in the present study is that there is no enough evidence about the relationship between ICT learners' attitudes with their autonomy as language learners. In other words, so far a number of studies have considered only students' attitudes toward ICT and there is no doubt that previous studies shed the light on the using ICT tools by students. Yet, the learners' attitudes in relation with the learner autonomy have not been targeted in the Iranian context. Therefore, this study set out to examine the attitudes of 150 postgraduate Iranian non-ELT students at EMU University in Cyprus.

### **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The study aims to find out the attitudes of Iranian EFL students about the potential use of ICT tools and to find out possible correlations between students' attitudes and their autonomy. This study aims to identify what forms of technology are common among Iranian students in North Cyprus. Besides, it studies different skills and their improvement on the presence of technology. Then, the study will find out whether gender plays any role in the use of ICTs in EFL learning or not.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

In congruence with the purpose stated above, this study will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. Which information and communication tools can improve students' performance during learning a foreign language?
2. Which English skills do students think could be developed by technological tools better?
3. Is there any relationship between learners' ICT attitudes and their autonomy in Learning EFL?
4. What is the effect of gender on the use of ICTs in EFL learning among Iranian students?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in the fact that little research has been carried out on the same purposes. Iran, as one of the countries which has many EFL learners, requires more scholars to do the research in field of Information Communication Technology so as to discover the most effective ways to use it. Clearly, a deep understanding of learners' attitudes toward ICT tools can contribute to the process of integrating it into the learning process and teaching curriculum. In addition, the results of this study may offer very useful suggestions for further studies to be conducted in the future in this field.

This study will reveal the utilization of technological tool among EFL Iranian students and the investigation of this study is expected to offer useful information about students' attitudes regarding using technology in EFL learning. It is essential to point out that despite a number of researches have been conducted on ICT, this study is

distinctive in itself because it examines the correlation between the learners' ICT attitudes and their autonomy in learning the EFL and the effect of gender on the use of ICTs in EFL learning is also regarded.

## **1.7 Definition of Key Terms**

The researcher defines here some of the key words in the study to make it clearer as these terms will be used throughout the study.

- **English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learner:** It refers to the learners who are learning the English language while living in a community in which English is not spoken as a first language (Tanveer, 2007).
- **ICT:** Stands for "Information and Communication Technologies." ICT refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. It is similar to Information Technology (IT), but it primarily focuses on communication technologies. This includes the Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and other communication mediums.
- **Learner autonomy:** Holec (1981) states that autonomy is a term that is used when the learners themselves decide on the content, methods, and techniques to be used in the process of learning. They need to take charge of their own learning. They also intend to observe and evaluate the process of their own learning. It is also claimed that learners need to be willing and take interest in self-observing and self-evaluating the procedure of their own acquiring.
- **English Medium of Instruction:** It refers to the context where English is used in teaching, while it is not the first language of the learners who study it. This includes teaching all the subjects in English, such as math, science, history, etc.

- **Teacher Centered Class:** It refers to the teaching approach in which the teacher is considered as the main authority of the class, and the main source of knowledge. The learners, on the other hand, receive learning from the teacher and take it for granted without any negotiation of the meaning or addition for the information.
- **Student Centered Class:** It refers to the approach in which the learner is considered as the center of the language learning. The teacher, on the other hand, is considered as one source of knowledge, rather than the only source. The teacher becomes a monitor, facilitator, and director of the teaching process in class.
- **Postgraduates:** This term refers to the participants who participated in the study. They all either do their MA or PhD at EMU. All the participants are in different departments other than English Language Teaching ELT. This is because the ELT students are expected to have more experience in English rather than the non-ELT learners.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Presentation**

In this chapter, a brief background about the history of the present study which is titled as Iranian students' attitudes toward the use of ICTs in EFL learning will be offered.

#### **2.2 The Application of ICT on Students' Performance in Learning EFL**

A recent study conducted by Akpabio et. al., (2017) indicates that ICT can make teaching and learning progress more interactive, but its implementation depends on some factor. Firstly, it requires financial support by the governments. In other words, the governments must invest on providing modern ICT tools for both teachers and learners so as to facilitate teaching and learning process. Secondly, teachers should improve their ICT skills and competency. Undoubtedly, teachers should be trained on using ICT applications and tools for different lessons, and this measurement can help them have more confidence during using ICT tools in the EFL classrooms. So, it is very important that teachers have enough skills toward using technology in order to integrate it to their pedagogical principles much easier. Thirdly, libraries should offer more ICT books to teachers in its collection. Clearly, it can contribute to teachers to have more access to the variety of books in terms of ICT and technology. Therefore, they have a great chance to improve their ICT knowledge.

The significance of communication in a tacit agreement among thinkers and educators spread all around the globe; moreover, the act of communication does not seem practical without knowing a foreign language. That was time, people started to think of tracing a connection between enhancing the quality of the process of learning EFL/ESL by applying the means of communication. Conspicuously, there are various means of communication which can be significant noteworthy in improving the quality of language learning. There are also numerous studies rotating around the aforementioned topic among them we can refer to the one which was undertaken by Alsulami (2016).

Mcdougald (2018) found that information and communication technologies (ICTs) play a significant role in many contemporary communities. ICTs can provide many different educational programs for teachers, and let them set their teaching goals more conveniently in the EFL classrooms. Fortunately, the advent of technology also can contribute to teachers to have access to more up-to-date and diversity programs and sources. There is no doubt that this issue can give great opportunities to learners for practicing different English skills much easier, and making the English classrooms more interesting for them (Abdullahi, 2013; Jimoyiannis & Komis, 2007; Manaouchers, Tabatabaei,Gui, 2011; McDougald, 2018; Player-Koro, 2012).

### **2.3 The Implementation of ICT in EFL and ESL Classrooms**

Agrawal and Mittal (2018) conducted a study about the role of ICT in higher education. The study considers that ICT is a very effective and essential tool in the 21st century learning, and implementing it in the higher education has become a demand rather than a prestige. The researchers consider that there are many advantages and disadvantages of using ICT in higher education for all the departments, such as

saving time, sharing ideas better, finding more resources, and saving the environment as there is no need to print papers that can be sent electronically. On the other hand, Agrawal and Mittal (2018) consider that there are some challenges for implementing ICT in higher education in India. These challenges include teachers' resistance to change, the general purposes of ICTs, which don't give specific facilities for a certain major.

Alsulami (2016) carried out a study on the effects of technology on learning English as a foreign language among female EFL students at Effat College; the study was regarded as an exploratory study. Technology has been always known as a tool to improve the process of acquiring a second or foreign language. As Chapelle (2003) mentioned, technology comes across to be highly influential all throughout the process of acquiring a second or foreign language. Alsulami prepared two sets of questionnaires which were given to thirty-six participants. The first part of the questionnaire was devoted to two general questions about the age and educational level of the participants. The second part comprised four different questions rotating around the effect of technology on improving the level and the quality of learning a foreign language which was decided on to be English in the above-mentioned study. The findings of the study were in parallel with the Chapelle's saying. It was revealed that computer software, social networking websites, online videos, audio tools (i.e., YouTube, Skype, MP3 players), and smartphone and tablet apps are found to be improving the learners' communicative skills.

Ungar and Amir (2018) have done a research about the development of a teacher questionnaire on the use of ICT tools to teach first language writing. The results show that there are two noticeable barriers to implement ICT in the teaching curriculum.



First barrier is environment. Environmental barriers can be in the form of internet access, teachers' knowledge of technology, and end-user problem. It is obvious that teachers' mastery in ICT tools can release these barriers considerably. As a result, teachers should improve their knowledge about ICT applications in order to be properly used in the ELT classrooms. The second barrier is the human. Human's beliefs and attitudes toward ICT tools can have profound impacts on utilizing ICT. It proved that individuals' technological and pedagogical knowledge can be an effective solution for Implementing ICT much more easily in the ELT classrooms.

Proshkin, Glushak, and Mazur, (2018) conducted a study about ICT usage in future career for language teachers. The study is based on a training that prepares the teachers to have the computing competences to be able to use them in their classrooms. The importance of these competences comes from the need for developing the teaching tools to give the lesson with the twenty first century spirit. These competences are informatics, informational, organizational, and methodological competences. The study states that training teachers for ICTs is important for the future career as they will be essential in the teaching curriculum.

Another study on the significance of technology in improving communicative skills and in plain English in acquiring the second or foreign language was carried out by Buga, CăpeneaĜă, Chirasnel, and Popa (2013). They conducted a study titled as Facebook in foreign language teaching – a tool to improve communication competences. Facebook as a means of communication is wide worldly used by both adults and children. Buga undertook the study on two groups of participants, the first group was French and the second one was English. All the participants of the study were recommended to own a Facebook account on which they were going to share

their homework assignment. The research provided the teachers with this great opportunity to reach their students much more conveniently. It was also indicated that the students who were formerly reluctant to write any piece of composition started to share their homework assignment on Facebook. It was wrapped up that the utilization of Facebook has progressed the true identity of genuine communication. The research also brought a considerable achievement for teachers as well, the teachers found teaching appealing, in their point of view, and teaching was more than a formal covering textbook. The research suggested that applying the other ICT means could come in handy in improving teaching foreign language.

Other means of ICT were also scrutinized by thinkers, among them we can refer to Hsu, Wang and Comac (2008). Their study rotated around the use of audio blogs on improving the instruction in the process of learning the second language. In the aforementioned study, the instructors utilized audio blogs to assign audio assignments. The learners were obliged to do their oral assignments and submit them on an individual audio blog. In this way, each learner was provided with a unique opportunity to meet his/her personal needs. The study reached the conclusion that audio blogs are offering a considerably worthy opportunity for both learner and instructors to interact one another and express their needs. It was also concluded that audio blogs help the instructors to evaluate the performance of the learners much more efficiently.

The other means of communication was also looked into in order to discover their potentials in improving the process of second/ foreign language acquisition. Skype as another means of communication was scrutinized by Robert (2005). In the study conducted by Robert, the usefulness of Skype was investigated by the researcher. It

was wrapped up that Skype is also highly influential when it comes to communication skills on account of the fact that Skype could create opportunities for oral communication which is the bottom line of any single communication. Robert also concluded that Skype could benefit instructors as well in the process of second/foreign language teaching.

Mahdi (2014) conducted a study on the impact of computer-mediated communication environments on foreign language learning: A Review of the Literature. Mahdi looked into different studies which were based on CMC (computer-mediated communication). Different studies about different means of communication were concisely investigated. Different means of communication including Wiki, Skype, Facebook, and YouTube were exhaustively considered. Mahdi concluded that there are supposed to be more studies on the significance of implementation of CMC in the process of second/ foreign language learning. This conclusion was also reached that there is a desperate need in conducting more studies on the required principles of implementing CMC in language learning.

A recent study carried out to consider teachers' acceptance of Computer-Assisted Language Learning 2.0 in the People's Republic of China (Mei, Brown & TEO, 2017). The results indicated that most teachers expressed positive attitudes toward using CALL; however, they were concerned about some possible problems. The first problem is that CALL can bring about increasing workload. Obviously, additional workloads needs more time and energy, and for some teachers are very difficult to take the responsibility of heavy and long-term workload by working CALL. The second problem is the lack of enough training. Based on these findings, teachers should be trained for using CALL during their teaching process. Clearly, this can contribute them

to raise their knowledge to select the most practical software and hardware for the EFL learners. In addition to it, they can be more creative and provide more educational opportunities for learning a foreign language for the EFL learners.

## **2.4 The Learners' Attitudes toward the Implementation of ICT**

As it has been mentioned formerly, ICT is believed to be significantly influential in the process of language learning. Consequently, the implementation of it sounds to be fundamentally paramount; however, the learners' attitude toward its use is another important issue which needs to be taken into account. The learners' attitudes toward the application of ICT were previously investigated by Levine and Donitsa-Schmidt (1998). They conducted a study in which they concluded that the learners of non-vocational schools in Israel were perfectly willing to be exposed to the computerized educational environment.

Simsek (2008) conducted a study on students' attitudes towards integration of ICTs in a reading course. The study was undergone in Turkey. Although the heart of the study was based on reading skill, we mainly focus on the part of the result of the study which is mainly about learners' attitude on the use of ICT. Simsek carried out the study at Middle East Technical University, Ankara, in Turkey. There were thirty first-year students decided on to participate in the study. The participants were provided with a four-week component of ICTs-integrated reading skills course. At the end of the course, the questionnaire was handed out to participants to examine their attitude toward the application of ICT. It was concluded that the participants depicted positive attitude to the use of ICT. It is also worth pointing out that they faced some obstacle; however, they were highly satisfied with the reading course.

Amir (2018) found that there is a wide range of ICT tools which can improve listening skill. These tools consist of interactive whiteboard, multimedia, computer assisted language learning and online resources (documentaries, music files, news, broadcasts and etc.). Evidence show that all these sources offer learners number of activities for practicing English skills. As regards to the Interactive whiteboard, there are some Icons on the interactive whiteboard for listening, watching and sounds parts. In addition to it, it has a part to show short video clips to learners for understanding concepts more conveniently and presenting a particular student's work to the learners in the other class. These entire features can help EFL learners to practice the listening skill. As for the Multimedia, it helps learners to realize the sounds of other languages. In other words, EFL learners are able to familiar with different patterns of stress, rhythm, and intonation. Also, they see facial expression of characters, their sounds and utterances. It is clear that it can help them to distinguish different speech styles, rates, and performance errors much easier. As regards to the computer assisted language learning (CALL), the Computer as a technological tool plays a key role in the ELT classroom. It allows learners to practice grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in any of the four language skills. Findings show that CALL can promote student autonomy and EFL can better manage their learning style. Fortunately, there are many programs, such as digital stories, Mp3 recordings, or podcasts, which encourage learners to become active listener. With respect to the online resources, there are great numbers of online resources which allow learners to practice the listening skill. These sources consist of the internet communication tools like Skype, podcasts, conferences and etc. By using these applications, EFL learners can have access to variety of listening activities. These activities can find in the BBC News, The BBC World Service Learning English, and Monthly News Digest Online websites, and the EFL

learners can promote their English knowledge in terms of vocabulary, grammar, idioms and slang words.

As to the significance of the learners' attitudes, Harmandaoğlu (2016) carried out a study about the attitudes of Turkish EFL student teachers towards technology use. In that study, the tendencies and attitudes, which are considered to be "good indicator" to implement technology in language classrooms, of student teachers were investigated (Harmandaoğlu, 2016). The study was undertaken in a state university Turkey where English is the foreign language. The result of the study revealed this fact that student teachers were highly positive toward the use of technology in both teaching and learning process owing to the fact that they consider technology application greatly convenient, time and labor saving, and improving the learners' engagement. The result of the study also depicted that use of technology in language classrooms has some drawbacks including "as high learner expectations, future school anxiety, making lazy, addiction, abuse by the learners, and technical problems". It is also worth pointing out that the advantages significantly outweigh the drawbacks of the use of technology.

Rosa (2016) looked into experiences, perceptions, and attitudes on ICT integration: a case study among novice and experienced language teachers in the Philippines. The application of ICT in language teaching is found to be highly impactful. The main aim of the study was about investigating a comparative analysis between attitudes, experience, and perceptions of both novice and experienced teachers. It was depicted that experienced teachers were more engaged in the use of ICT. It was also concluded that novice teachers were heavily dependent on text-book related materials. On the other hand, both experienced and novice teachers demonstrated positive attitudes

toward the use of ICT in language learning classrooms. The researchers also wrapped up that there are some drawbacks in the application of ICT which need to be addressed in further studies.

There is another study on learners' and teachers' attitudes toward the application of ICT. Tummons, Fournier, Kits, and MacLeod (2016) investigated Teaching without a blackboard and chalk: conflicting attitudes towards using ICTs in higher education teaching and learning. One of the results of their study is that the use of technology does not straightforwardly lead to improvements in teaching and/or learning. What technology can be seen as doing in the context of this DME curriculum is providing new affordances or opportunities for learning.

Regarding the nature of the study which is about Iranian students' attitudes toward the use of ICTs in EFL learning, there is a severe need in considering the studies rotating around the use of ICT among Iranian students who are believed to be acquiring English as a foreign language. Abbasi, Sadeghi, and Delkordi (2008) undertook a research which is titled as a review of ICT status and development strategic plan in Iran. Abbasi, Sadeghi, and Delkordi (2008) pointed out that Iran needs to base its national information and communication technology strategy on a much greater consideration of local cultural and social issues. The government has a major role to play if the country wants to stand in the information arena. It is believed that hard technological determinism can only be countered by very real and well thought out national strategies. The national IT strategy will need to address the issues of resistance to change due to cultural, personal and infrastructural factors. These are viewed as culturally sensitive and will need to be constructed as evolving, and learning system. It is important for every developing country to have a national IT strategy as a

foundation whereby the great potential of IT can be realized, promote development, exploit technology and alleviate communication problems. The government must play an important role, not only as a major user but also through its other role as regulator, promoter, and diffuser. It was concluded that Iran as a developing country has this potentiality to be immersed in the international technology. It was also claimed that the big named need to feel obliged to take some certain steps toward presenting more opportunities and diversity of computer education programs to train both students and instructors.

There are many issues to be considered. The government should invest in the infrastructure development, by providing the necessary resources and training to the population. Despite the obstacles, the internet is expanding in Iran. The government in its Forth Five Year Development Plan should show its support by allocating resources to this growing sector. (Abbasi, Sadeghi, & Delkordi, 2008)

## **2.5 The Effect of ICT on Different Language Skills**

As it has been discussed in the earlier sections, the use of ICT has been found to be considerable impactful in the process of language teaching and learning for both teachers and learners. In the following part, different language skills will be scrutinized in terms of the effect of ICT. Drigas and Charami (2014) conducted a study about ICTs in language learning and teaching. Initially, the usefulness of ICT has been regarded as a unanimous and unspoken agreement among thinkers. Drigas and Charami pointed out that ICT offers a lot of great opportunities for both teachers and learners. It was also concluded that ICT could benefit teachers seeing that it present teachers with two roles “to hold a double role; the role of the educator and that of the facilitator, while having to cope with complex situations which include lack of training or lack of



equipment in the language classroom” (p. 4). ICT has been found to be viable for learners a well due to the fact that they will be offered with great opportunities to enhance their vocabulary. This conclusion was also reached that ICT could help learners to improve their speaking and reading skills. Apart from the achievements of ICT, the researchers came to his conclusion that ICT could well help learners broaden their horizon and realize the international world.

As to the enhancement of different language skills, Ahlem (2015) carried out a study which is titled as the use of ICTS to enhance EFL learners’ oral language proficiency: the case of first-year LMD students at Tlemcen University. Ahlem pointed out that technology is undoubtedly impactful in the modern world we live in; therefore, the process of learning and teaching are also included in this world. It has been proved that technology could well enhance students’ involvement and interest in the learning process. Ahlem conducted the study at Abou Bekr Belkaid –Tlemcen University in the Department of English. The aim of the study was to reveal the fact that whether ICT is viable in the process of in improving students’ oral language proficiency. The findings of the study demonstrated that both teachers and students were positive toward the implementation of ICT. The researcher applied both interview and question, the former was for teachers and the latter was designed for students. It was also wrapped up that:

"EFL teachers should teach by not only traditional ways but also through the use of ICTs inside the classroom. Then, it will access to increase the language activities and develop the students’ participation during the oral production lectures which give them the opportunity to be in touch with native speakers out of Algeria. Therefore, the integration of ICTs in the classroom is a necessity and EFL teachers of oral expression

are supposed to be aware of the use of these techniques to achieve successful teaching. Through this work, the researcher hopes to give more ideas and suggestions for everyone interested in the subject matter." (Ahlem, 2015, pp. 63-64)

Another study on the significance of ICT on language learning skills was the one conducted by Toumi (2015). The study which was a master's thesis was about Integrating ICTs to Improve EFL Learners' Speaking Skill. The researcher claimed that use of ICT might well create a less anxious environment to help students speak English more accurately and fluently. On account of the fact, ICTs are found to be extensively helpful in the process of learning largely oral skills, learners need to be provided with opportunities to be greatly exposed to the more comfortable atmosphere which is integrated with ICT.

Toumi (2015) conducted an interview with teachers. The findings show that the most common technological devices applied by teachers in the study were computers and projectors. It was easily justified due to the teachers' needs and lack of advanced technological devices. There was a considerable difference between experienced teachers and novice ones. The former demonstrated proficiency in controlling the las as well as the material; however, the latter teachers found many obstacles in controlling their classes and the material. On the other hand, some students were found to have difficulties in dealing with ICT; moreover, there were some other students who were less motivated in applying ICT while the majority of the students were motivated in the process, plus they reacted positively toward the process.

The spread of technology has not left any parts untouched. Karim (2017) carried out a study as a master's thesis which is about the importance of using information

communication technology for learning and teaching the English language in Kurdistan of Iraq. The application of ICT. The researcher applied different ICT devices including Figures, Images, Charts, Google Forms, Google Docs and Google Sheets, Emails, Facebook Messenger accounts, and Snipping Tools software to look into the impact of ICT on different learning skills. There were two different surveys, one from the students and one from the teacher. Findings obtained from the students' survey demonstrated that the lion share of the students was greatly interested in using ICT both inside and outside the classrooms. It was also concluded that the writing skill was improved owing to the fact that the students were supposed to write blogs, posts, and texts. As to the reading skill, the students of the study found ICT incredibly useful since they could enhance their reading and pronounce skill by having to be offered talking books. Regarding the listening skill, the teachers played some audio files in the class, and then the students were supposed to listen to the audio files to improve the pronunciation, tones, and intonation. It is also worth mentioning that this skill enhanced yet not considered. Last but not least, the students' speaking skill was proportionally improved. The researcher concluded that

It is clear that using ICTs for improving writing scored the highest percentage. That might belong to the reason that students use applications or technological devices such as cell phones for writing tasks such as texting, writing posts on social media networks more than for other tasks such as speaking, reading, listening in English. Another benefit or reason that the participants use ICTs is for improving grammar skills in the English language. (Karim, 2017, pp. 75-76)

## **2.6 Learners' ICT Attitudes and Their Autonomy in Learning EFL**

We formerly discussed the learners' and teachers' attitudes toward ICT, and it was concluded that both the learners and the teachers were significantly positive. In this part of the study, the relationship between the learners' ICT attitudes and their autonomy will be narrowed down. At the very beginning, it is highly advisable to provide a rigid framework for the term learners' autonomy.

### 2.6.1 Learners Autonomy

The term autonomy has been differently defined by different thinkers and researchers. Holec (1981) defined autonomy as the learners themselves decide on the content, methods, and techniques to be used in the process of learning. They need to take charge of their own learning. They also intend to observe and evaluate the process of their own learning. It is also claimed that learners need to be willing and take interest in self-observing and self-evaluating the procedure of their own acquiring.

Littlewood (1996) conducted an exhaustive study on the term autonomy and its framework. Autonomy can be defined as one's independent capacity to manage his/her own actions. This independent capacity heavily depends on two important elements: ability and willingness. Littlewood pointed out these two both are desperately needed when it comes to gaining autonomy. Ability is principally about the knowledge which is possessed, and the willingness is largely about one's motivation plus confidence. Regarding language teaching, Littlewood introduced the term *levels of autonomy*. According to Littlewood (1996), these levels distinguish different levels from the least to the most independent levels:

- Learners are able to make their own choices in grammar and vocabulary (e.g. in controlled role-plays and simple tasks involving information exchange). This is the initial step towards “autonomous communication”.
- Learners choose the meanings they want to express and the communication strategies they will use in order to achieve their communicative goals.
- Learners are able to make more far-reaching decisions about goals, meanings and strategies (e.g. in creative role-playing, problem-solving and discussion).

- Learners begin to choose and shape their own learning contexts, e.g. in self-directed learning and project work.
- Learners become able to make decisions in domains which have traditionally belonged to the teacher, e.g. about materials and learning tasks.
- Learners participate in determining the nature and progression of their own syllabus (cf. Budd and Wright, 1992 as cited in Littlewood, 1996, pp.429-430).
- Learners are able to use language (for communication and learning) independently in situations of their choice outside the classroom. (Littlewood, 1996, pp.429-430)

Littlewood also claimed that seeing that all educational programs are designed to make learners think and actively, there is a desperate need for developing autonomy. Littlewood (1996) illustrated the framework for autonomy in foreign language learning. In order to build autonomy, one needs motivation, confidence, skill, and knowledge. Types of autonomy could be categorized into three different sections: autonomy as a person, autonomy as a communicator, autonomy as a learner. Littlewood pointed out that linguistic creativity is most obviously associated with a person's autonomy as a communicator. However, since it facilitates the expression of personal meanings, it also contributes directly to his or her autonomy as a person. Littlewood also considers that communication strategies are most obviously associated with a person's autonomy as a communicator. However, since they enable a student to deal more independently with texts and social situations, they also contribute to their autonomy as learners.

Another point stated by Littlewood's framework (1996) is that learning strategies are most obviously associated with a person's autonomy as a learner. However, since they

enable learners to extend their communicative repertoire, they also contribute to their autonomy as communicators. The last point of the framework considers that independent work includes the creation of personal learning contexts, e.g. obtaining foreign newspapers or joining groups of native-speakers, and thus contributes to a student's autonomy as a person. (Littlewood, 1996, pp. 431-432)

Dam (1995) provided a different definition of autonomy; Dam pointed out that on account of the fact that all learners are all aware of their own needs and purposes; therefore, they are of their own free will to take charge of their own learning. Learning autonomy also involves learners acting as a responsible person who may also work as a team member which means to voluntarily collaborate with different members of a group.

Neupane (2010) carried out a study on learners' autonomy: its concept and considerations. It was pointed out that autonomy is considered a key element in the modern world of education. Neupane claimed that all learners need to be provided with this opportunity to learn things autonomously. It was also mentioned that learners are not the only ones who need to be armed with autonomous learning. At the first place, there is a severe need for teachers,

Teachers should themselves be provided with a certain level of autonomy in the selection of methodology, content, and so on. At the same time, teachers should be provided with the opportunity for the firsthand experience of the autonomy in their own training and professional development (Neupane, 2010, pp. 119-120).

Learners' autonomy does not mean teachers are free from any responsibilities.

Teachers are obliged to teach autonomy to learners:

They should be more responsible to promote autonomy in learners. Since teacher autonomy and learner autonomy are closely related, the teacher should also be provided with the opportunity to practice autonomy within the given direction. Teacher education or training should provide teachers with the opportunity to have firsthand experience of autonomy. A teacher who practices autonomy in his/her professional development can better promote learner autonomy. (Neupane, 2010, pp 120)

Neupane (2010) wrapped up that when it comes to acquiring English both optionally or compulsory, learners need to set their own goals of learning English. In plain English, learners should be given this golden opportunity to analyze their own needs and then the process of designing the content and market would be gone through.

Regarding the importance of autonomy in the process of language acquisition, sometimes autonomy is misunderstood with the term self-instruction. In other words, autonomy does not discharge teacher from all responsibilities. Autonomy must be taught both by teachers and students. Little (1990) considered autonomy as it "is not a synonym for self-instruction; in other words, autonomy is not limited to learning without a teacher. In the classroom context, autonomy does not entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher; it is not a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best they can. On the other hand, autonomy is not something that teachers do to learners; that is, it is not another teaching method. Furthermore, Little (1990) considered that autonomy is not a single, easily described behavior, nor a steady state achieved by learners.

When it comes to learners' autonomy, Finch's classifications (2011) of various interpretations of learners' autonomy emerge. These classifications are a following:

- Situations in which learners study entirely on their own;
- A set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;

- An inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;
- The exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning;
- The right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning (as cited in Woodman & Kourtis-Kazoullis, 2009, pp 385).

As to the nature of the study which is rotating around Iranian EFL students, another study titled as Learner Autonomy: Investigating Iranian English Teachers' Beliefs will be exhaustively gone through. The study was carried out by Salimi and Ansari (2015). The bottom line of the study was mostly about Iranian teachers' beliefs about the identity of autonomy and its implementation in their classrooms.

Salimi and Ansari (2015) provided the selected teachers with a set of questions about the usefulness of autonomy. The teachers claimed that autonomy is essential in the process of teaching. It was also stated that learners' autonomy must be taught to teachers during teacher training courses. Teachers are also recommended not to be resistant to the new methods in order to provide students with opportunities to take charge of their own learning. It was pointed out that teachers feel obliged to introduce the concept autonomy to their students (Salimi & Ansari, 2015).

## **2.7 The Relationship between Learners' Autonomy and the Use of ICT**

As for the relationship between learners' autonomy which has been extensively described above and the significance of ICT, many studies have been conducted to discover the relationship between these two items. Among them, we can refer to the one which was carried out by Fernandez (2010). The study titled as Learner Autonomy and ICT: A Web-based Course of English for Psychology set out to discover the



impacts of technology on not only the content but also on teaching and learning procedure. The study depicted that in classrooms in which the students are provided with technology as authentic material for the study of English in the field of psychology could become more proficient and capable of acquiring more related lexicons. Fernandez (2010) also wrapped up that use of ICT could facilitate the process of acquisition; therefore, the learners do not heavily depend upon teachers. All these mean that learners gain autonomy seeing that teachers are solely considered as supervisors or coordinators.

Referring to Hobrom (2004), the application of ICT in classrooms could make them more engaging and appealing. It was also claimed that due to the interesting atmosphere of the classrooms and the autonomy which was fully gained by students, they were also less stressed and feeling more comfortable in front of their instructor and classmates. The participants of the study were exhaustively interviewed about the implementation of ICT in their classrooms and autonomy. Hobom (2004) found that the participants pointed out that they gain more autonomy which helped them to self-evaluate their own process of learning. They were also capable of taking more responsibilities of their own learning process. The study even concluded that the participants were satisfied owing to the fact that they interactively improved their speaking and listening skills. Furthermore, the participants reported that the process of learning was less stressful and more productive.

As to the relationship between learners' autonomy and the application of ICT, Woodman, and Kourtis-Kazoullis (2009) carried out a study revolving around this issue which is titled as Cyber-Self-Reflection: Developing learner autonomy in online programs. As it was concluded in that study, key factors in promoting learners

autonomy in online education have been identified. Participants of the study also mentioned that learners' choice and their engagement were considered to be key elements in online education. It was also reached that “‘ICT’ is not seen to inherently develop autonomy, but rather the ‘Learner-context’ needs to be carefully constructed and overseen” (Woodman & Kourtis-Kazoullis, 2009, pp 395).

There is another study which on the same wavelength with the former one which is conducted by Kaur and Kaur Sidhu (2010). The study is about Learner autonomy via Asynchronous Online Interactions: A Malaysian perspective. The study indicated that language learners might gain autonomy on an online education, however, they formerly need to be exposed to the compatible tools to take steps toward their own learning, and then they will be given the opportunity to be put in an online education program. Some preliminary steps need to be taken, these steps are as “the ability, knowledge, and skills to plan, organize, monitor and evaluate their own learning” (Kaur and Kaur Sidhu, 2010, pp. 97). The study also concluded that all learners need to be familiarized with the identity of the term autonomy. The second, they are equipped with it, they are ready to be exposed to any type of educational program (Kaur & Kaur Sidhu, 2010).

## **2.8 The Effect of Gender on the Use of ICTs in EFL Learning**

The issue of gender in language learning has been always a debated matter among researchers and thinkers; therefore, many studies have been conducted. The effect of gender in language learning and in the presence of ICT is another crucial factor. This topic had been always appealing to many thinkers. Referring to numerous studies conducted in the early 1980s, it came to light that female learners were less willing to be exposed to technological educational programs (Dambrot, et. al., 1985; Koohang,

1987). There are some other studies which confirm the findings of the earlier studies, Shashaani and Khalili (2001) also claimed that female learners were less confident in using computers (as cited in Wong & Hanafi, 2001).

Wong and Hanafi (2001) undertook a study about the different attitudes of different genders toward the implementation of ICT; the study is titled as Gender Differences in Attitudes towards Information Technology among Malaysian Student Teachers: A Case Study at University Putra Malaysia. The study was undergone in Malesia at University Putra Malaysia. There were 73 female teachers a 29 male teacher. The participants were presented with two sets of questionnaires; one before and one after the IT course. The questionnaires were based on three important factors: usefulness on IT, confidence in using it, and aversion to it. The researchers drew this conclusion that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers toward using IT on both pre and post questionnaires. There has been an interesting finding of the aversion factor which revealed this fact that both female and male teachers have turned into advocates of IT at the end of the study. It is also worth noting that they used to dislike it before taking part in IT course.

As it has been formerly stated, the issue as a crucial factor has been exhaustively taken into account by many researchers. The effect gender on EFL learners' learning strategy has been looked into by Zeinali (2012). Zeinali focused on Iranian learners and the differences between male and female learners in acquiring the learning strategies. Approximately a total number of 149 participants attended the study in Tabriz in Iran; both male and female learners participated in the study. It was concluded that there was a significant difference between male and female participants. Female learners were more willing toward acquiring the learning strategies than male participants. It

was also depicted that female learners tend to use more “social/affective strategies” (Zeinali, 2012, pp. 1614).

The studies stated above show that most of them support males to be in favor of using ICTs more than females. The males' use of technology makes them in favor of learning English as a foreign language using technology more than females.

## **2.9 Related Empirical Studies**

The current study has set out to investigate the Iranian students' attitudes toward the use of ICTs in EFL learning. There are three important factors which have been thoroughly looked into by the researcher in this chapter. There are few studies which are on the same wavelength of the present study owing to the fact that this topic is still virgin and is considered in its infancy (Mozaffari & Wray, 2010). Mozaffari and Wray (2010) carried out a study on Iranian EFL Teachers' perspectives on their use of ICT in their Teaching practices: A Multiple Case Study. They intended to investigate the Iranian teachers' attitudes and perspectives toward the application of ICT in their classrooms. The study was also an attempt to discover the other socio-cultural elements which are impactful or intervening in the process of teaching and learning. The study recommended that there are different key factors which can influence the implementation of ICT. The teachers' role and their knowledge of technological could be fundamentally crucial in the process of application of ICT.

Another study on the use of ICT among Iranian EFL classrooms is the one conducted by Shahamat and Riazi (2009). The study was designed to look at the use of technology in both Iranian schools and language institutes. There were approximately 700 participants in the study, 391 of them were 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade public students, and 309 of them

were from private language schools. All participants were interviewed based on a questionnaire. The results of the study demonstrated the fact that the use of educational technology in private language schools outweighs the public schools (Shahamat & Riazi, 2009).

The application of technology in language classrooms sound to be greatly crucial on account of the fact that we are moving toward a modern world; therefore, we need to keep the pace with it. Sedghipoor (2015) claimed that all conventional schools need to be equipped with technological devices; however, we need to scrutinize the situation thoroughly. It was also mentioned that separation of new technologies could lead to failure in teaching and learning (Sedghipoor, 2015).

## **2.10 Summary**

The previous studies prove that there is a positive effect of ICT tools in improving the language learning, especially English. The revised literature shows that there is a need for more teacher training on using ICTs. The studies even call for implementation for the use of ICTs in order to foster learning. There is also a great evidence in the literature about the role of ICTs in promoting learner autonomy as the learners have to depend on themselves to learn.

Regarding the gender difference, the revised studies show that there is no difference between males and females in using ICTs, except for Zeinali (2012) who shows that females are better than males in learning strategies. Thus, there is no proof, up to our knowledge, of any difference between males and females in using ICTs to foster learner autonomy. To put it in a nutshell, the studies conducted about the Iranian learners' use of ICTs to improve language learning and learner autonomy only cover

those who study in Iran, which teaches in Persian for the postgraduates in departments other than ELT. This is the gap that needs to be targeted by the researcher in the present study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Presentation**

This chapter is designed to present the design and methodology of the research. It is, then, followed with the research questions, research setting and participants, data collection instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures.

#### **3.2 Overview of Methodology**

With regard to physical setting, the research is carried out at Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, in North Cyprus. A total number of 150 Iranian students (78 males and 72 females) in graduate programs except for ELT program are included in the study.

All the participants signed the consent form that states their information and signature. They also had an idea in it about the study and its aim. To fulfill the ethical concerns, the participants in this research are fully anonymous, and they were informed about the aims of the study, and they were ensured that their participations are of voluntary basis (Appendix C & D).

This study draws on both qualitative and quantitative research methods so as to obtain concrete outcomes from participants. The questionnaire was used in the present study contained four sections. Following this, the researcher interviewed 10 participants. The interviews contained 6 questions (Appendix A).

### **3.3 Research Design**

This non-experimental study was designed as a mixed methods type, which included both qualitative and quantitative methods, using a two phase sequential explanatory research method. Firstly the quantitative data was collected through the use of the questionnaire. This research method examines the greater number of subjects which is structured and can be represented based on numerical descriptions (Tracy, 2012). Usually, quantitative method research is concerned with clarifying research questions which guide the process of data collection as well as data analysis. The questionnaire was followed, then, with interviews, which were as a means to collect qualitative data for this study. Qualitative research method emphasizes on holistic, descriptive, and natural data. It considers an issue in particular contexts (Mason, 2002). The definition of Denzin and Lincoln (2005) about qualitative research method is summed up in the following quote:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

The reason for this type of study is the fact that it is believed that the mixed mode strategy tends to return a good response rate because it cares about the differences in respondents' attitudes toward technology and strategic thinking (Meckel, Walters, & Baugh, 2005). Mixed method research is one of the common approaches among the researchers. This can improve the validity of multi-level analysis of complex issues. In addition, this method can contribute to researchers in order to enhance strength points and reduce weak points of their study (Dörnyei, 2007).



### **3.4 Research Questions**

This study will go deep into the issue of ICT in EFL learning, and it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Which information and communication tools can improve students' performance during learning a foreign language?
2. Which English skills do students think could be developed by technological tools better?
3. Is there any relationship between learners' ICT attitudes and their autonomy in EFL learning?
4. What is the effect of gender on the use of ICTs in EFL learning among Iranian students?

### **3.5 Research Context**

The study was conducted at Eastern Mediterranean University, within the different departments with MA and PhD students, most importantly not ELT major. EMU is an international university where many Iranian students receive academic education. Many Iranian graduate from EMU university, and they are able to use English as a foreign language in their study and work. In fact, most Iranian students have enough knowledge of English before they enter their departments to study. In other words some of them have IELTS or TOEFEL degree, while the others have passed the English courses in a School called "School of Foreign Languages (SFL)". Those who fail to pass the English proficiency exam at the School of Foreign Languages should study English for one year, till they reach the level of English that enables them to learn in English as a medium of instruction.

### 3.6 Participants

The study targeted postgraduate Iranian EFL learners at Eastern Mediterranean University. The participants were in different majors, such as engineering, IT, tourism, business administration, economy, etc. The study involved 150 EFL students and the number of male and female students for gathering quantitative research is not equal, with 78 males and 72 females (Table 3.1). 104 students were master while 46 were PhD students. They are between 22 and 50 years old at MA and PhD level of education and their average age is 28.89 (Table 3.2).

Table 3.1. Gender of the Participants.

	Frequency	Percent
Female	72	48
Male	78	52
Total	150	100

Table 3.2. Age of Participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	150	22	50	28.89	5.31

Ten volunteering participants were chosen for conducting semi-structured interviews. They are both male (n=5) and female (n=5) with equal respect to gender, and they are between 28 and 37 years old. The participants were informed about the voluntary participation, and they were informed in the questionnaire form and interview part that their answers will be kept confidential.

### 3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The study collected both quantitative and qualitative data through a questionnaire and interview. Generally, there are fifty questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was replicated from the work of other scholars and it consists of four sections. The first section was about demographic information and consists of 7 questions. The second section has 20 questions on participants' ICT attitudes in EFL learning, which were replicated from the web-based survey developed by the European Commission and Ellinogermaniki Agogi (2007). In the third section, there are twenty questions on learner autonomy, also selected from Littlewood's (1999) and adapted from Zhang and Li's (2004). The researcher added a fourth section to the questionnaire, which includes three open-ended questions.

The researcher used the interview protocol as a qualitative instrument, including 6 questions, to gather data from the participants. As the study has two phased sequential explanatory research design, the quantitative data about the Iranian postgraduates' attitudes towards the use of ICTs in language learning should be analyzed first. Based on the quantitative analysis, the interview questions were justified. As stated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2010), the qualitative data collection of the two-phase sequential explanatory research was to assist in interpreting quantitative results in more depth.

### **3.7.1 Questionnaire**

One of the major methods for gathering data is by means of a questionnaire. Questionnaires are usually utilized to collect data about attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a large group of participants about a certain issue. In the present study, the researcher used the questionnaire that was constructed from existing surveys developed by:

- 1) the European Commission and Ellinogermaniki Agogi (ECEA, 2007) on the impact of ICT and new media on language learning,
- 2) Littlewood (1999) and Zhang and Li (2004) on learner autonomy (Appendix A).

Regarding reliability and validity, the questionnaire was tested for its internal consistency using the data of the previous study. The updated Cronbach's Alpha is 0.79 for 'ICT attitudes' and 72 for 'learner autonomy'.

Apart from the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, an internal consistency among survey questions construct (attitude) was investigated. Fortunately, the reliability coefficients of each item in the questionnaire was confirmed by the previous study that alpha is 0.75. In this part, the participants were expected to select one of these items (degree of agreement, disagreement, or neutrality) which is near their standpoints. There are four sections in the questionnaire of this study with a total of 50 questions. The first section consists of 7 questions asking the participants about their gender, age, major, technology usage for English learning purposes, and academic level.

The second and third sections were based on the five-point Likert scale, with '1' indicating maximum disagreement and '5' representing maximum agreement. The second section examines the attitude of participants toward their use of ICT in English language learning. The section includes 20 questions.

### **3.7.1.1 Reliability and Validity**

For the validity of the questionnaire (Appendix A), expert judgement was obtained: one SLA expert, one statistician, and one educational scientist in order to reach a consensus about the validity of the questionnaire. As the questionnaire was not

designed by the researcher, there was a need to know whether it is appropriate for the study or not. Therefore, the researcher tested the alpha of the questionnaire using the SPSS 23<sup>rd</sup> edition. As it is known, the questionnaire is reliable if the alpha is more than .65. The results show that the alpha of this questionnaire is .89, which makes it a reliable one (Table 3.3). This high level of reliability is higher than the original study of the questionnaire. The alpha of each item in the original study was: 0.75.

Table 3.3. Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.89	40

### 3.7.1.2 Open-Ended Questions

The third section has 20 questions that investigate the participants' autonomy as English language learners. Moreover, the researcher added a fourth section, which includes three open-ended questions. The aim of this question is to give some space for the participants to comment on the questions they responded to and add some more ideas they might like to express.

1. What else would you like to add to the above items about using ICT tools?
2. What do you think of using ICT tools inside the classroom?
3. What do you think of using ICT tools outside the classroom?

### 3.7.2 Student Interview

Ten Iranian postgraduates participated in the interviews part, five males and five females (Table 3.4). One of the common methods for collecting qualitative data is interview. This way enables the researchers to get information about attitudes, experiences, perspectives, and opinions of individuals (Saldaña, Leavy, & Beretvas,

2011). The researcher used the interview protocol as a qualitative instrument to gather data from interviewees. All Iranian postgraduate participants are assumed that they are able to read, listen to, and understand all the related information in English as they are graduated from programs taught using English as a medium of instruction. The interview part was modified based on the quantitative data result (Appendix B). Furthermore, the questions were designed to elucidate quantitative findings with regard to the attitude of research participants toward the use of ICTs in EFL learning.

Table 3.4. The Interviewees' Information

Code	Age	Level of Education	Gender	Major
P1	37	PhD	Male	Business Administration
P2	32	Master	Male	IT
P3	29	Master	Female	Communication
P4	30	Master	Male	Industrial Engineering
P5	29	Master	Male	Mechanical Engineering
P6	35	PhD	Female	Business Administration
P7	28	Master	Female	IT
P8	34	PhD	Female	Architecture
P9	30	PhD	Male	Banking and Finance
P10	28	Mater	Female	Psychology

### 3.8 Data Collection Producers

The data of this study were collected by administering the questionnaire to 150 participants using a mixed mode strategy, followed by one-on-one interviews with ten interested volunteer participants. The paper-based questionnaire was distributed among the Iranian postgraduate students in different departments of EMU. It took the participants around 20 minutes to respond to the questionnaire. Other participants were

reached through the snowball method, in which the researcher asked the participants to call their Iranian colleagues who are doing their MA or PhD at EMU.

Regarding the qualitative part, semi structured interviews were conducted for ten participants who were interested in this research. The researcher, therefore, contacted them to take part in the interview. The interviews took between 30 and 40 minutes. In this way the researcher could elicit the data in-depth. The participants in the present study were informed that participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw at any time. To reach the best possible outcome, the researcher took into consideration that the interviewees need to feel comfortable when being interviewed, to be able to discuss their views. Therefore, the interviews were organized according to the participants' free time, at their own place (home, office, café etc.) All the interviews were conducted in English, audio recorded, and transcribed for data analysis. Regarding the interviews, the permission of the interviewees was elicited before recording to address the ethical considerations of the research.

### **3.9 Data Analysis Procedures**

The participants' responses to the questionnaire were considered quantitatively; they were examined by the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. This software can analyze data statistically and give researchers concrete frequencies and percentages. Furthermore, the 'T' test was used to measure the correlation between the participants' attitudes about the use of ICTs and learning autonomy. This tool also helped the researcher in finding the gender difference in the attitudes towards using ICTs. Moreover, the responses of the participants to the last part of the questionnaire, open-ended questions, were categorized.

Furthermore, the recorded responses of the interviewees were qualitatively processed; they were analyzed using the deductive approach. The analysis would show whether the participants have or don't have any reasons for using ICTs during their learning process and to which functions, if any, the reasons can be related. In this procedure, interview data were divided into different segments to examine and interpret them in themes relevant to the research questions. The names of the students' participants were coded with numbers such as P1, P2, P3, etc. to keep the confidentiality of the students' identity.



## **Chapter 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Presentation**

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected in the present study from different resources. The study presents the quantitative results first, and then shows the qualitative results from the interviews conducted with the Iranian postgraduate students at EMU.

#### **4.2 Quantitative Results**

The questionnaire was divided into four main parts. The first part is about the demographic information of the participants that showed number of participants, gender, level of education, and department. The second part is concerned with the most used information communication tools ICTs used by the Iranian postgraduate students at EMU. This part examines the attitudes of the learners towards the use of ICTs to improve their language abilities. The questionnaire tried to find out the best reported tools that can improve the learners' foreign language learning skills. It also tries to show the learners' feelings and opinions about the use of ICTs, which reflects the real effect of technology in language learning. The third part is related to the learner autonomy. The researcher, in this part, aimed to find out the role of ICTs in improving the learner autonomy. Therefore, the students responded to questions where they expressed their feelings and thoughts about the use of ICTs in enhancing their chances of having learner autonomy. The last part was devoted for the open-ended questions

that tried to give the participants a chance to express their opinions about the use of ICTs and learner autonomy.

#### 4.2.1 Attitudes towards ICT Use

In this part of the questionnaire, the students responded to 20 questions divided into three main sections. In the first section, the students evaluated some tools of technology that help them learn English the best. The second section was devoted for the skill that improves the most when using ICTs. The last section was for the learners' feelings and thoughts about the role of technology in English language learning.

##### 4.2.1.1 The Role of Tools of Technology in Language Learning

Table 4.1 summarizes the percentages of the responses of the participants about the first part of the questionnaire "the role of tools of technology in language learning.

Table 4.1. The roles of tools of technology in language learning.

Table 4.1. The Role of Technology Tools in Language Learning.

Item	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
I think that computer helps me learn English better.	4	2	9.3	36.7	48	4.22	0.98
I think that music on digital media would help me learn English.	2.7	6	16.7	42.7	32	3.95	0.98
I think that films would help me learn English	3.3	2	6.7	36.7	51.3	4.3	0.93
I think that online dictionaries and grammars help me learn English better.	2	9.3	15.3	35.3	38	3.98	1.04
I think that TV and radio help me learn English better.	4	4.7	18.1	48.3	24.8	3.85	0.98
I think that videoconferencing programs help me learn English better.	7.4	13.5	35.1	26.4	17.6	3.33	1.13
I think that voice over the internet programs help me learn English better.	6.1	14.2	35.1	31.8	12.8	3.31	1.06
I think blogs help me learn English better.	2	12.2	34	40.1	11.6	3.46	0.92
I think social networks would help me learn English better.	2.1	13	22.6	32.2	30.1	3.75	1.08

1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3 Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree  
M: Medium S.D: Standard Deviation

In the first item, the participants responded to the following question: "I think computer helps me learn English better", 84.7% of the learners agreed or strongly agreed with it, while only 10% strongly disagreed or disagreed. In fact, the learners' responses placed 'computer' on the top of the tools used to improve the learners' English.

The second tool was music and digital media, such as CD and MP3s. The results show that 74.7 % agreed or strongly agreed with this tool, while only 8.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Despite this high result, it is noticed that those who agreed were more than those who disagreed with the tool. This shows that it is still an important tool, but it is not one of the best.

The third tool was films. This tool has proved to be the most effective among all the other tools. 88% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with this tool. Furthermore, those who disagreed with the importance of this tool in learning English was only 5.3%. Another tool for learning English was online dictionaries and grammars. Despite of the importance of online dictionaries in giving immediate translation that helps in learning, it was not on the top of the learners' preference list; 73.3% of the learners agreed or strongly agreed with it, while 11.3% disagreed and 15.3% were neutral about it.

Another tool in this section was TV and Radio. The students' main response was 'agree' which had 48.3% and 24.8% for strongly agree. Nevertheless, 18.1% were neutral about the use of such tools in learning English. The videoconferencing tool was the most controversial among the other ICTs. Here, the students' responses were mainly neutral (35.1%). Furthermore, 20.9 % of the responses disagreed or strongly disagreed

using videoconferencing as a tool of learning English, while only 44 % agreed and strongly agreed on it. This places this tool to be at the bottom of the ICTs presented in the study.

The next tool, voice over the internet, greatly supports the previous result. The results show that using voice programs online is not a main source of English learning for the Iranian postgraduates at EMU. In fact, 35.1% were neutral about using this tool, and 20.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In the previous tool, Skype was suggested as a videoconferencing tool, and in this tool it was suggested as a voice tool. Yet, the learners seem not to prioritize it as a tool of language learning.

Blogs were also among the less favored tools for the participants. 34% were neutral and 40.1% agreed on using it for learning English. This shows that using blogs in the university programs (like Moodle) may not serve as a tool of language learning for a good proportion of the participants. Another result comes from the use of social media in learning English. Although it is a very famous tool for communication among the new generation, the social media networks are not on the top of the participants' favored list of ICTs. 22.6% were neutral, 15.1% disagreed, while 62.3% agreed. In fact, the agreeing percentage is high. Nevertheless, it was expected to be higher than this due to the importance of social networks in the twenty first century.

#### **4.2.1.2 Language Skills Improved by Technology**

In this section, the participants expressed their opinions about the effect of technology in every skill of English language. Here, the researcher aimed to find out the skills affected by technology the most (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Language Skills Improved by Technology

Item	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
I think technology helps me to speak English better	5.3	3.3	12	38	41.3	1.07	1.15
I think technology helps me with reading in English.	2.7	6	18.8	45	27.5	0.96	0.94
I think technology helps me to improve my listening skills.	4.7	1.3	6.7	29.5	57.7	1.0	1.01
I think technology helps me with writing in English.	2.7	10.8	25.7	35.1	25.7	3.70	1.05
I think technology helps me to plan and organize my own studies better.	4	6	28.7	37.3	24	1.02	1.05
I think technology helps me to take greater control of my own English learning.	2	6.1	26.5	41.5	23.8	0.94	0.89

1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3 Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree  
M: Medium S.D: Standard Deviation

In the first question of this section, the participants expressed their opinions about the role of technology in speaking English better. 79.3% of the students agreed while only 8.6% disagreed. Reading skill is also placed among the skills that can be learnt through technology. The results show that 72.5% of the participants agree with this idea, while only 9.7% disagreed with it. Listening was the skill that has been learnt the most by the participants when using technology. In detail, 86.6% agreed on this point, while only 6% disagreed. This shows the great effect of technology in improving the listening skill that is a very important input of English. Writing was the least learnt skill among the others. 60.8% of the participants considered that ICTs can help them improve their writing skill in English. 13.5%, on the other hand, disagreed with this point and 25.7% were neutral in their view about this variable.

Regarding planning and organizing the participants' studies better, 28.7% were neutral in their answers, while 61.3% agreed and 10% disagreed. The last point in this section

was about taking control over English learning. Technology has proved to give the participants a good command over learning English. 65.3% agreed with this point, while 8.1% disagreed and 26.5% were neutral.

#### 4.2.1.3 The Role of Technologies in Language Learning

In this section, the participants expressed their thoughts about the role of technology in language learning. This section included five questions which cover authenticity, motivation, usage, accessibility, and future (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. The Roles of Technologies in Language Learning

Item	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
I feel technologies give learners access to more authentic (real life) English use	4	4	16.1	39.6	36.2	1.02	1.05
I feel using technologies can motivate me more to learn English	2.7	7.3	19.3	43.3	27.3	0.99	0.98
I feel using technologies to learn English can help me integrate better in the world in which I live	1.6	6	14.7	49.3	28.7	0.89	0.79
I feel technologies can make learning and education more accessible and less threatening to me	2	4.7	12.8	49.7	30.9	0.9	0.81
I feel technologies in English/language learning will increase in the future	2	3.3	7.3	36.7	50.7	0.89	0.8

1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3 Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree M: Medium S.D: Standard Deviation

The table shows the results of the sixteenth question in which the participants expressed their opinions about the role of technology in making language learning more authentic. 75.8% of the participants agreed with this point, while 8% disagreed and 16.1% were neutral. Regarding the role of technologies in motivating English language learning, 70.6% agreed, while 10% disagreed and 19.3% were neutral. The table also shows the results of using technology as a factor of better integration in the world the participants live in. As the participants are students at university, which

adopts English-medium of instruction strategy, there is a need for learning English to integrate better in the university society. The results show that 78% agreed with this point, while only 7.3% disagreed and 14.7% were neutral.

As learning English is considered to be controversial, there is a need for tools that facilitate learning and make it more accessible. In item 19 " I feel technologies can make learning and education more accessible and less threatening to me", the results show that 80.6% agreed, while only 6.7% disagreed and 12.8% were neutral. The last question of this section was about the future of technology in language learning. The researcher wants to know the beliefs of the participants about the increase of the role of technology in the future; 87.4% of the participants agreed with the idea of the increase of the technology in the future, while only 5.3% disagreed and 7.3% were neutral.

#### **4.2.2 Learner Autonomy**

In this section, the researcher aimed to find out the role of technology in learner autonomy. As using technology depends on the learners themselves, it improves their autonomy in language learning. Thus, the researcher gave the participants twenty questions to find out the learners' thoughts and feelings about learning English by themselves, as technology provides them with tools that can help them do so (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Learner Autonomy

Item	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
I like activities where I am part of a group which is working towards common goals	3.3	8.7	12.7	53.3	22	0.98	0.96
I like to take part in activities which involve discussion within a group	4	7.3	19.3	44.7	24.7	1.027	1.05
When I am working in a group ,I like to help maintain a sense of harmony in the group	2.7	5.4	14.9	52.7	24.3	0.92	0.84
In the open classroom, I often feel hesitant to stand out by voicing my opinions and questions.	8.8	14.3	28.6	37.4	10.9	1.11	1.24
In the classroom I see the teachers an authority figure.	2.7	12.7	25.3	46.7	12.7	0.95	0.92
I tend to see knowledge as something to be transmitted by the teacher rather than discovered by me as a learner.	4.1	16.3	38.8	29.9	10.9	0.99	0.99
I expect the teacher (rather than myself) to be responsible for evaluating how much I have learnt.	4.7	22.8	26.2	30.9	15.4	1.12	1.26
I feel strongly motivated to follow through learning tasks of which I perceive the practical value	2	1.3	28	50.7	18	0.81	0.66
I feel more motivated to work when my own success contributes to the goals or prestige of significant groups(e.g. family, other students)	1.3	4	17.3	47.3	30	0.87	0.75
In the classroom I feel very concerned to perform well and correctly in what I do	3.3	6.7	26	46.7	17.3	0.95	0.90



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When asked to use technologies that I haven't used before, I feel worried but try to learn them anyway.	6.7	14.8	18.1	40.9	19.5	1.16	1.34
I preview materials before the class. (I come prepared for class.)	5.3	10	33.3	34	17.3	1.06	1.12
I find I can finish my task in time	2.7	8.8	21.8	51	15.6	0.93	0.87
I attend out class activities(e.g. English speaking club)to practice and learn English	6	10	24	46	14	1.04	1.09
I do not choose books, exercises which suit me, neither too difficult nor too easy	8	24.7	35.3	25.3	6.7	1.04	1.09
When I make mistakes in study, I usually let them be.	15.3	28	24	26	6.7	1.17	1.39
I do not use good of my free time in English study	9.4	28.2	24.2	26.8	11.4	1.17	1.39
I keep a record of my study, such as keeping a diary, writing a review ,etc.	13.3	20	18	37.3	11.3	1.24	1.55
I do not make self-exam with exam papers chosen by myself	10	31.3	26	26.7	6	1.10	1.21
Students should not design the teaching plan together with teachers.	18.7	26.7	27.3	19.3	8	1.20	1.45

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1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3 Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree  
M: Medium S.D: Standard Deviation

In the first question, the participants stated whether they like group work activities that aim to achieve common goals. The results were positive and 75.3% agreed with it, while 12% disagreed and 12.7% were neutral. In the second question, the researcher

asked the participants about their opinions of participating in group activities that have discussions. 69.4% agreed, while 11.3% disagreed and 19.3% were neutral.

As harmony is considered to be a very effective component in group work, the researcher asked the participants about their opinions about group-work that has harmony. The results show that 77% of the participants agree with it, while 8.1% disagreed and 14.9% were neutral in their opinions about this point. A very crucial point comes in the next question in which the participants responded to the following statement: "In the open classroom, I often feel hesitant to stand out by voicing my opinions and questions." The results show the participants problem in this point. 48.3% agreed, while 28.6% were neutral in their answer and only 23.1% disagreed.

To know whether the learners follow the Student Centered Approach - which supports learner autonomy - or the Teacher Centered Approach, the following item was included in the questionnaire: "In the classroom, I see the teachers an authority figure". In fact, the results have shown that 59.4% of the participants still consider the teacher as a source of authority, while 15.4% disagreed and 25.3% were neutral about this point.

Another item of this questionnaire was about the participants' view whether knowledge is transmitted by the teacher or discovered by the learner. In fact, the results suggest that the learners' belief of learner autonomy is still weak. Only 20.4% disagreed with this point and supported learner autonomy, while 40.8% agreed with this item supporting the teacher centered classroom. At the same time, 38.8% of the participants were not sure of their answers and chose neutral.

Regarding deciding on the source of evaluating the learners' achievement in performance, the students' responses varied. 46.3% agreed with the teacher to be the source of evaluation, while 27.5% disagreed and 26.2% were neutral.

The participants responded to the following item which represents practicality in language learning: "I feel strongly motivated to follow through learning tasks of which I perceive the practical value." 68.7% agreed, while only 3.3% disagreed and 28% were neutral. The researcher asked whether the participants are motivated to succeed for prestigious purposes, 77.3% agreed, 4.3% disagreed, and 17.3% were neutral.

In the next item, the participants expressed their feelings while performing correctly in class. 64% were concerned about their performance, while 26% were neutral and 10% were not concerned. Using new kinds of technology has been one of the most important concerns for the learners. Yet, the learners try to learn them anyway due to their importance. In the following item of the questionnaire, 60.4% agreed with it, while 21.5% disagreed and 18.1% were neutral in their responses.

In the item "I preview materials before the class (I come prepared for class.)", 51.3% agreed, while 15.3% disagreed and 33.3% were neutral. Self confidence in completing any task is one of the most important aspects of autonomous learning. Therefore, the following item "I find I can finish my task in time" showed that 66.6% do have this self-confidence when completing their tasks. On the other hand, 11.5% were hesitant and disagreed with the item. 21.8% were neutral about the issue stated in the item.

As English language is a very important subject for the participants due to their majors that are taught in English, they might need extra practice out of the class to improve

their performance, such as extra lessons, tutorials, or speaking clubs. In table 34, the participants responded to this point, and the results show that 60% agreed with this point which means they take extra practice out of their classes, while 16% disagreed and 24% were neutral in their responses.

Choosing exercises and books have always been a crossroad point for differentiating between teacher centered classroom and learner autonomy or student centered classroom. The students responded to the following item, which states: "I do not choose books or exercises which suit me, neither too difficult nor too easy. The great proportion of the responses was for the neutral response, while 32.7% disagreed and 32% agreed. This shows that the topic is a controversial one, and there is no one main decision for this case.

Being afraid of doing mistakes is a milestone in language learning. The learners might be demotivated, which makes them unable to proceed in learning. In this questionnaire, the responses of the participants about "When I make mistakes in study, I usually let them be", 32.7% agreed, 43.3% disagreed, and 24% were neutral.

Studying English alone is one of the most important signs of learner autonomy. In fact, 38.2% stated that they don't use their time to study English, while 37.6% stated that they do make use of their free time and 24.2% were neutral in their responses. In the item "I keep a record of my study, such as keeping a diary, writing a review, etc." 48.6% agreed, 33.3% disagreed, and 18% were neutral.

In the following item, the learners expressed their views about not having self-exams chosen by the learners. The results show that 41% disagreed with this point, which

means they do take self-exams, while 32.7% agreed with the statement which means they don't take any self-exams. 26% of the participants were neutral in their responses.

In the last item of this part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked about their views of involving the students in designing the teaching plans or not. The results show that 45.4% disagreed with the item, which means that they do want to be part of the teaching plan design. On the other hand, 27.3% agreed with the statement in the item, which means they don't think they should be part of the teaching plan. 27.3% of the participants preferred to be neutral in their responses to this point.

### **4.2.3 Gender Difference**

To answer question four in the research questions "What is the effect of gender on the use of ICTs in EFL learning among Iranian students?" the researcher analyzed the mean of gender difference using the 'T' Test using SPSS program. The researcher compared the gender difference of the attitudes towards ICTs as well as the attitudes towards autonomous learning.

#### **4.2.3.1 Gender Difference in Attitudes towards ICTs**

Regarding the gender difference in response to the second part of the questionnaire "Attitudes towards ICTs", the mean of Males was 3.85, while it was 3.88 for females. When taking into consideration that 5 represents strongly agree, the females were in favor of using the ICTs for language learning more than the males. The standard deviation proves this point when we find that it was 0.60 for males and .69 for females. Thus, there is a gender difference, and it is for the favor of females (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Gender Difference between Males and Females.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	78	3.85	0.60	0.06
Female	72	3.88	0.69	0.08

#### 4.2.3.2 Gender Differences in Attitudes towards Learner Autonomy

Regarding gender difference regarding the learners' attitudes towards learner autonomy, the females were more in favor of learner autonomy more than males, means are 3.46 and 3.31 respectively. The standard deviation of males was 0.43 for males and 0.45 for females (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Gender Difference for Attitudes towards Learner Autonomy.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	78	3.31	0.43	0.04
Female	72	3.46	0.45	0.05

#### 4.2.4 Correlation between ICT Attitudes and Learner Autonomy

As the study aims to examine if there is any correlation between attitudes towards the use of ICT and learner autonomy for the participants, the researcher examined the correlation between the variables between the second part (Attitudes towards ICTs) and the third part (Learner Autonomy) after finding the mean of every part. The researcher used the Pearson Correlation on SPSS for this purpose. The correlation is positive if it is between zero and 1. The closer the correlation to 1 it is, the stronger it is. The results show that there is a strong correlation between ICT attitudes and learner autonomy; the correlation reached 0.49 (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Correlation between ICT Attitudes and Learner Autonomy.

		ICT Attitudes	Learner Autonomy
ICT Attitudes	Pearson Correlation	1	0.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	150	150
Learner Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	0.496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	150	150

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.2.4 Open-Ended Questions

At the end of the questionnaire, the researcher asked the participants three open-ended questions. The aim of these questions is to enable the learners give any further comments about the use of ICTs in English language learning. The three questions are:

1. What else would you like to add to the above items about using ICT tools?
2. What do you think of using ICT tools inside the classroom?
3. What do you think of using ICT tools outside the classroom?

Many of the students responded to these questions. In total, 109 participants responded to the open-ended questions, which means 72.6% of the participants. As this research is committed to the ethics of research, which were stated in chapter 3, the researcher didn't oblige them to do it when they refused to do so. The results were clustered in every questions to get out the major themes which the users of ICTs believe in.

#### **4.2.4.1 Comments about ICT Tools**

The 88% of the responses to this question "What else would you like to add to the above items about using ICT tools?" were talking about the role of ICTs in improving their language skills. Most of the responses considered that ICT tools help them improve their communication skills. The participants considered that the ICT tools are "the language of 21<sup>st</sup> century" that we do have to take into consideration in all aspects of life including language learning.

61% of the participants believed that ICTs are the future of learning. When reviewing the responses, many of the answers included this idea, such as "ICTs will continue to improve in the future", "this century is for technology", "I don't know what else might happen in the future via technology but it will be exciting." This proves the concept that ICTs will not lose their role in future. Rather, they will have an effective developing role.

Another idea supported by 6% of the participants is that they considered the use of ICTs as a supportive role rather than a major one. One participant said that "I use my mobile to check the words that I don't know during the lesson. I even use the Google Translate Application to have faster translation for longer passages. I think such things are more common than learning the language as a whole". According to this participant, the role of ICTs is important, but it can't be a substitution to the teacher. Rather, they can help in making learning easier.

#### **4.2.4.2 Using ICT Tools inside the Classroom**

The second question was answered by 84% of the participants. When they responded to the second question "What do you think of using ICT Tools inside the classroom?" All the participants' responses fell in one of the following themes. The first theme is



that using ICTs by both the teacher and the learners help them a lot in becoming productive in language learning (48%). The participants believe that the use of ICTs are important for the productive skills, speaking and writing.

The second theme states that using ICTs inside the classroom motivates the learners to improve their performance (52%). The learners consider that allowing them to use the ICT tools, especially mobiles, can help them find unknown words, phrases, and ideas. Furthermore, the use of PowerPoint by the teachers make more motivated in language learning as well as their majors.

#### **4.2.4.3 Using ICT Tools outside the Classroom**

In the last question, only 66% of the participants answered it. The question was "What do you think of using ICT tools outside the classroom?" The responses fell into one of the following two main themes. The first theme shows that using ICT tools outside the classroom is used more than inside the classroom, such as MALL (67%). This is because there are many applications, programs, and tools they can use to learn. Unfortunately, their teachers refuse to use such ICTs as a part of the syllabus despite its importance as the students reported. The participants consider that using the ICTs is important in motivating and improving their language learning as they can use them without any time or place restrictions.

The second theme of this question was a negative one; the use of ICT tools is related to the availability and quality of the internet connection, which might be poor or unavailable (33%). This makes the use of ICTs useless in certain cases for some students.

### **4.3 Qualitative Results**

In this part, the researcher interviewed ten participants who volunteered to join it. All the interviewees responded to the questionnaire, and know the topic of the study. The researcher informed the interviewees about the ethics of the research, informing them that they can stop the interview any time they want. The interviews lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. The interview was conducted in English.

The interviews were audio-recorded using the mobile phone and the laptop to make sure that the information is clear during the scripting stage. The researcher analyzed the interview responses through theming them using the grounded theory. Then, the researcher came up with a model about the learners' views about the use of ICTs in learning English in English-medium of instruction context for the Iranian postgraduates.

#### **4.3.1 ICT Tools Used for English Language Learning**

Responding to the first question of the interviews "What are the ICT tools you use for English language learning?" the responses of the participants talked about their favorite technological tools they use in order to learn English. This question shows that ICTs do have a role in language learning due to the positive responses of the participants. In fact, the responses of the participants were mainly focused on two tools: computer and mobile applications.

*P2: "Well, at the moment I use computer as a common tool and for sure many software and applications."*

According to participant 2, there are many different kinds of ICTs that he uses to learn English. However, the current tool he uses is computer. This could be due to the

availability of computer. It could also be because of the need of the skill to be learnt. In fact, this participant shows an openness towards using all kinds of ICTs in order to learn English, which indicates the positivity he has in using ICTs towards learning English.

*P4: "Up to now I have used a lot of ICT tools for the purpose of EFL learning enthusiastically, the most common are computer, cellphone, you tube and English teaching websites."*

Participant 4 also uses a wide variety of ICT tools to learn English. When he says the word "enthusiastically", he shows that ICTs have not only a teaching role, but they also make him learn enthusiastically. This shows that the participant is not only positive, but also eager to learn English due to the availability of ICTs. Furthermore, this desire to learn English through technology is reflected on the varied kinds of ICTs he uses, such as computer, mobile phone, and websites.

*P6: "Well, I used Duolingo for learning a foreign language. This application offered me enough exercise to practice writing, reading and listening. Also, it provided some activities to improve vocabulary and grammar structures."*

Participant 6 was more specific in answering this question. She specified the program she uses in learning English. In detail, she uses Duolingo application, which is very wide-spreading in all over the world and teaches many different languages. The application seems to be appealing for her as it gives her an access to practice different kinds of skills in English, such as reading, writing, listening, grammar, and vocabulary.

*P8: "Um I couldn't care less about using computer, blogs and social networking sites for EFL learning."*

As for participant 8, the use of computers to get an access to blogs and social networks is the best tool to learn English as a foreign language. This could be due to the fact that having a computer to learn English makes the learner sits for longer hours than the mobile phones that may be used anywhere for few minutes.

#### **4.3.2 Attitudes toward Using ICTs for English Language Learning**

The second question of the interview "Would you please elaborate your attitudes toward the use of ICTs for English language learning?" consists of four main sub-questions:

- a. What are the reasons for supporting the use of ICTs in English language learning?
- b. Would you please share your thoughts on why you take an attitude of neutrality toward the use of some communication and social networking technologies for English-language learning?
- c. Would you please share your thoughts on why you have negative attitudes toward the use of some communication and social networking technologies for English-language learning?
- d. What has driven you to think that ICTs are not useful affordances for the improvement of the expressive aspect of English language (Speaking and Writing skills)?

Thus, when asked about their attitudes towards the use of ICTs in English language learning, the participants were expected to have three main attitudes: supporting, neutral, negative, or not useful. In fact, 80% of the interviewees were supporting the

use of ICTs in English language learning. The remaining 20% thought that the use of ICTs is not useful while no one was negative or neutral.

#### **4.3.2.1 Supporting ICTs**

The responses of the participants have shown that the use of ICTs is very wide-spreading among the Iranian postgraduates at EMU. This is due to many different reasons as the participants reported. First, the use of ICTs help the participants as well as their teachers in promoting learning.

**P5:** *“ I mostly use ICT in EMU for my study and I think Using ICT tools in classroom has a lot of effects on teachers and students in order to promote learning.”*

Participant 5 does understand the ideas of their lessons better when ICTs are used. In other words, the use of PowerPoint, for example, help the learners grasp the ideas better than writing on the board. Instead of writing everything mentioned by the teacher, they concentrate on the lesson and take notes about the important points stated in the lesson, and they take the presentation from their teachers to study it later.

**P1:** *“I always use online dictionaries and Google translation for my English language learning and to tell you the truth I would like to use social media to communicate with other people to work on my speaking and writing more. For example I always follow native speakers on Instagram and Facebook, to be able to communicate and learn English better”*

Another reason for using ICTs is learning English language. Here, participant 1 considers that learning English as both: an end and a mean for better understanding the content in his majors. In fact, this point is important as the learners achieve two

goals at the same time when using ICTs for language learning. When using online dictionaries, such as Google Translate, it is to understand the meaning of new words that might appear in his classes. On the other hand, the use of Instagram and Facebook help him listen and repeat the language spoken by native speakers.

**P9:** *"Using various online dictionaries, website with related subject in my major (civil engineering) and office package as software were practical and useful for my study during the time that I'm in university"*

On one hand, participant 9 prefers ICTs in order to know better about his major and improve his language skills that are important in his study. Here, it is noticed that the participant is more concerned about the new expressions he needs to learn in order to better understand the language of the content in his classes.

**P2:** *"I don't know what you may call it but whenever I used ICT tools, I think that it helps me to think critically, it's really encouraging and creative when I use them in the class room especially in writing activities, it helps me to improve my performance and in cooperative leaning style"*

Participant 2, on the other hand, went further in the use of ICTs. He says that the use of technologies to improve his critical thinking and learning style. This idea expressed by the participant shows that ICTs reached a point that it affects the way the learners learn and express themselves in a way that makes them follow the latest models to improve his learning.

#### **4.3.2.2 Uselessness of ICTs**

As stated above, 20% of the participants had negative attitudes towards the use of ICTs in English language learning. In detail, these two learners were not against the use of ICTs because they believe ICTs have a negative effect. Rather, they only cast their doubts about the efficacy of the use of technology in improving their language learning. The participants believed that ICTs are useless and don't really affect in language learning.

*P7: “The reality is that the students use social networking technology to make new virtual friends, play computer games, share personal stuffs with others and to chat with friends. As I see it around myself they use them for other things than school work or improving English skills.”*

P 7 was suspicious about the seriousness of the learners in using ICT tools to learn English. For her, the learners pretend to use the social media, for example, to say they learn English. However, they have a different purpose. As the use of mobile is very common among the young generation, they have to justify their overuse of mobile applications via different reasons. One of these justifications is learning English through technology.

*P9: “Actually I don’t want to support this idea completely because I think students always want to use technology for every single thing that they want to do and I’m not positive about this. We have to admit that technology has changed everything even the way we study but it’s not all in a positive way. Nowadays students can do anything by their cellphone they don’t like to study and read books traditionally that they used to do by taking books in their hands and study so when they use cellphone or computer*

*it's a kind of distraction because they always go and check the other stuffs as well that cause them get tired easily. ”*

Participant 9 also considers that the use of ICTs is not good because it makes the learners far away from the traditional way of reading books and learning. Using mobile phones for the sake of learning is just a justification that makes the people don't blame themselves for wasting their time on their mobiles. Participant 9 also considers that despite of the important role of technology, it can't be a substitution for the traditional way of learning, reading books. In other words, using technology is there in our lives, and we can't avoid it. Yet, it plays a minor role in the learning process while the traditional way of teaching keeps to be the major way of learning, where the learners attend classes and read from their books.

#### **4.3.3 Experiences in Using ICTs at EMU**

Responding to the fourth question of the interview, the participants talked about their experiences in using ICT tools at EMU. The responses of the participants were all positive. In other words, they all use at least one kind of ICT tools while learning at EMU. This point shows the widespread of the ICTs among the learners at EMU. In the interviews, the purposes of using ICTs varied from a student to another.

**P6:** *“The internet and other electronical tools are my choices for my presentations at Emu University. I found several articles by the internet for each presentation. I used PowerPoint to make my presentation more interesting. So, I had good experience by using ICT during my study.”*

Participant 6 considers that using ICTs is important for them to improve their understanding and learning in their courses, which are taught in English. The learners



use ICTs as an essential tool in their learning. Thus, the use of ICTs is for the content purpose, and both the content and ICTs are in English.

**P3:** *"Honestly whenever I use it inside the classroom I can control my learning more because I can do activities at my own pace despite this I feel more comfortable using tools rather than asking questions for every now and then to the teacher or my friends."*

Another support for the idea of better learning in general using ICTs comes from participant 3. For her, ICTs can be used instead of asking the other students or the teacher for every word. This, of course, helped her a lot in avoiding the embarrassment she might have when asking frequently. At this point, the learner found a way to avoid the anxiety that might result from the frequent request for translation from their peers or their teachers. On one hand, they will not interrupt the lesson to get the keywords needed to understand the topic. On the other hand, the learner will not have this negative image that he/she doesn't understand the topic being taught, especially in the EMI context, where even the good speakers of English need to know the specialized vocabulary in their majors.

**P10:** *" Well, I use some forms of technology such as the Internet, mobile phone ,presentation software, video recording, e-books, and audio and video tools(podcast and you tube) in EMU university and let's say they were practical in some cases"*

Even though participant 10 has doubts about the role of ICTs, she confessed using ICTs in one way or another to check the meanings of some words or so. This shows that ICTs are considered to be main tools of learning for learners, including those who have negative attitudes towards ICTs. When teachers give PowerPoint Presentations,

the learners deal with them despite the fact that they prefer the traditional way of learning through the books and notes. The same applies for checking the meanings of words from the online dictionaries, which saves time.

#### **4.3.4 Autonomous Learning**

Regarding the participants' views about the role of ICT tools in improving their autonomous learning, the responses were divided into two main opinions. Some participants believe that ICTs do have a positive role in improving their self-learning. Others, on the other hand, were negative and suspicious about the efficacy of ICTs in promoting autonomous learning.

**P4:** *"I think it's the best way for learning by myself I wonder if you would agree but when I use ICT tools. I mean I have a private teacher next to me that in some cases it's more knowable than real teacher. It can teach me basic fact and knowledge. I go along with the idea that by using ICT, learning will be more flexible and the best part is that I can learn whenever and wherever I like at my own pace. "*

P4 believes that ICTs can help her learn by herself without any need for teachers. This independence of teachers is a very important remark for autonomous learning, where the learner mainly depends on himself/herself. Another important point aroused by participant 4 is the comfortability she feels when learning without the time and place limits of the class. When learning is available anytime and anywhere, she feels much eager to learn English. She feels less anxious and more confident about learning and answering questions in English.

**P2:** *"EFL learners don't need to learn a language by taking part in a class. They can easily find useful materials on the net to practice many languages in their own space."*

Learner autonomy can be promoted through using ICT tools. However, the ICTs depend on the availability of a good access to the internet as well as the electronic devices. Participants five and two consider that when there is internet and computer, the learner doesn't need a teacher to learn English.

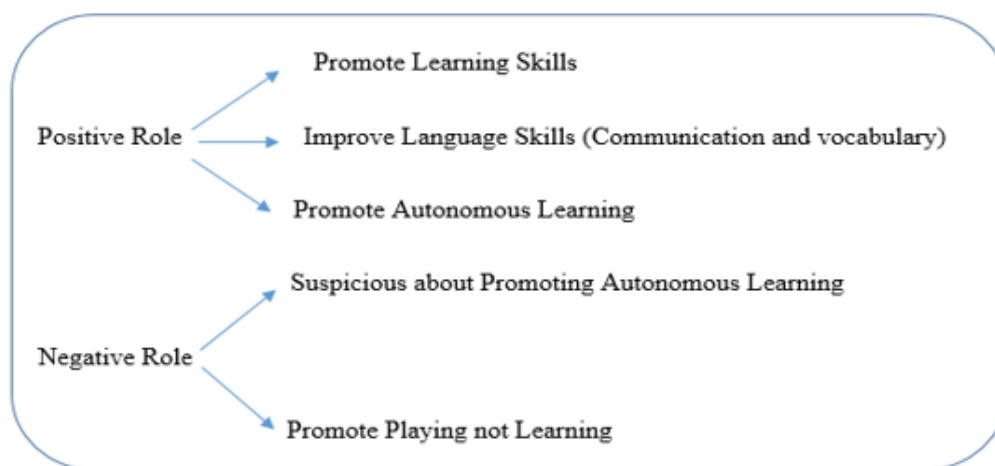
**P7:** *“Well, maybe it can help us to learn by ourselves. I am not that much sure but I think if we take time to study with a knowledgeable teacher, it would be more useful because in this case there is no distraction and wasting of time using other stuffs.”*

The second view of this theme, in which the interviewees are suspicious about the use of ICTs, is the uncertainty in the ability of ICTs in promoting autonomous learning. For this interviewee, having a traditional lesson, where the teacher is the source of knowledge, is a more effective way of language learning more than using ICTs. This perspective of language learning is completely opposite to autonomous learning.

#### **4.3.5 Learners' Views about the Roles of ICTs**

Based on the previous points extracted from the interviewees' thoughts about the role of ICTs in language learning, the researcher came up with the following framework (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Learners' Views about ICTs



The responses of the participants in the interviews reveal many different points, which are important in the study. The interviewees' views about the use of ICTs in language learning were divided into two main parts: the first one is the positive role, in which the learners believe that ICTs can greatly help them in improving their learning skills, improve develop their language skills, and enhance their autonomous learning.

On the other hand, the interviewees who believed that ICTs have a negative role in language learning had two main reasons. First, they believe that ICTs can't promote autonomous learning. Learners can't learn by themselves. The second reason given by the interviewees is that ICTs users play rather than learn. They just use it as a tool to waste time and convince themselves that they were learning.

#### **4.4 Summary**

The results shown in this chapter represent the quantitative and qualitative methods. The questionnaire mainly supports the use of ICTs in language learning and promoting autonomous learning. The interviews, on the other hand, comes with two different views about the use of ICTs in language learning. The first totally supports it because of its role in improving learning skills, communication and vocabulary skills, and

autonomous learning. The second view doubts the role of ICTs in language learning and promoting autonomous learning.

## **Chapter 5**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Presentation**

This chapter presents the results of the study. The chapter starts with discussing the majors of the findings in a response to the research questions. Then, the chapter discusses the relation of the findings to the theory, conclusion, limitations of the study, implications for practice, and finally recommendations for future research.

#### **5.2 Review of Major Findings**

The results collected from the qualitative and quantitative research methods came up with the following results:

##### **5.2.1 Quantitative Data Findings**

ICTs are important for postgraduate Iranian students at EMU in learning English. The results show that around 90% of the participants use at least one of the tools stated in the questionnaire to learn and improve their English language skills.

Films were the best ICT tool to learn English for the learners (88%), followed by computers (84.7%). Then, digital media, online dictionaries, and TV & Radio (74.7%, 73.3%, and 73.1% respectively)

The study results show that there is a positive effect of ICTs in improving all the language skills of the participants: 87.2% for listening, 79.3% for speaking, 72.5 for reading, and 60.8% for writing.

This study shows that there is a positive role of ICTs in improving the participants' language skills (65.3%). It also has a positive effect in making the participants' study more organized (61.3%) and motivating their learning (60.6%).

The 87.4% of the participants believe that the role of technology in learning will increase in the future.

The participants of this study do agree having group work activities (75.3%) and discussions (69.4%).

Speaking in public is still a source of anxiety for many of the learners (48.3%), while 28.6% were unsure of their opinion about this.

Most of the participants still believe that the teacher is the authority (69.4%), the source of knowledge (50.8%), and the one responsible for evaluation (46.3%).

The out-class activities are still important for the learners to improve their English (60%).

This study has shown that there is a gender difference in the attitudes towards using ICTs. The females were in favor of using ICTs for learning English more than males.

This study has shown that there is a gender difference in the attitudes towards using ICTs. The females were more supportive to learner autonomy more than males.

There is a correlation between using ICTs and learner autonomy. ICTs were found to foster learning autonomy.

The quantitative results show that the ICT tools do have an effective role in guiding the language learning for the Iranian postgraduates at EMU. The use of technologies, such as films, music, social media, and others help the learners a lot in improving their language learning. Furthermore, the ICTs have proved to increase the learners' autonomous learning. In other words, the learners do have an opinion of sharing the teacher with choosing the curriculum and evaluating the learners' performance. Nevertheless, the percentage of the learners who completely adopt this view represents around the third of the participants. The second third preferred to be neutral in their answers, while the last third refused such a view. However, speaking is still the skill that the learners suffer from and feel the anxiety resulted from speaking in public. One more finding of this study is the gender difference in the study, in which the females use ICTs more than males.

### **5.2.2 Qualitative Data Findings**

The qualitative data came with two major findings that form a framework for the role of ICTs in language learning.

There are two major views about using ICTs to promote learner autonomy; the first is supportive, while the other is suspicious about its role in promoting self-learning.

The participants have three reasons for using ICTs in language learning: improving learning skills, communication and vocabulary skills, and promoting autonomous learning.



The final framework resulted from the interviews of the participants show that there is a positive role for ICTs in improving their language learning as well as improving their autonomous learning. The interviewees who were not in favor of using the ICTs, however, didn't oppose it saying that it has a negative effect on language learning. Rather, they cast doubts about the role of ICTs in improving language learning or autonomous learning.

### **5.3 Discussion**

The findings stated above are going to be discussed according to the research questions of the present study.

#### **5.3.1 Research Question 1: Best ICTs for Foreign Language Learning**

Responding to the first research question "Which information and communication tools can improve students' performance during learning a foreign language?" the 96% of the participants do use ICTs in learning English. This is justified as we are living in the twenty first century, which has technology as one of its distinctive features (Agrawal & Mittal, 2018). However, these tools varied in their usage. Here, we can divide the ICTs into two groups according to the participants' responses. The first group of ICTs is the ones mostly preferred by most of the participants. This includes Films (88%), computer (84.7%), music (74.7%), online dictionaries and grammars (73.3%), and TV & Radio (73.1%). This group is preferred by most of the participants which indicates their importance in improving the learners' language skills and help them improve their learning. This coincides with the findings in the recent literature that consider ICTs to be important in improving the learning skills of English language learners (Alsulami, 2016; Buga, CăpeneaGă, Chirasnel, & Popa, 2013; Chapelle, 2003)

The second group, on the other hand, includes social media (62.3%), blogs (51.7%), online voice programs (44.6%), and video conferencing (44%). These tools are the same ones preferred in the literature (Chapelle, 2003). This proves that these tools still have the same role in improving the learners' level of English as a foreign language. Nevertheless, the second group includes two main tools that are expected to be more effective than the others. The blogs, for example, are used at EMU (Moodle). However, it shows that it is not on the top priorities of the learners' sources for learning English. This doesn't match with the result of Hsu, Wang and Comac (2008) which recommends blogs to be important in second language learning.

Although it is a very wide-spreading tool among the participants, the social media programs were not on the top of the priorities of the participants to learn English (62.3%). This could be due to the lack of communication in English through these programs for the university purposes. This result here is not the same as the ones in the literature about the importance of social media in improving language learning. The study of Buga, Căpenea-Ţă, Chirasnel, and Popa (2013) shows, for example, that the use of Facebook is a very important tool of promoting communication in second language learning. Yet, the results in this don't avoid the role of social media. Rather, it only doesn't place them on the top tools to be used for language learning.

While the studies in the literature covered many Iranian contexts in examining the role of ICTs in language learning (Abbasi, Sadeghi, & Delkordi, 2008; Abdullahi, 2013; Amir, 2018; Alsulami, 2016; Manaouchers, Tabatabaei, Gui, 2011), the studies about the attitudes of ICTs in English-medium of instruction context are not available. Therefore, this study has added to the literature in the Iranian postgraduates who study

in an EMI context. This is considered to be an addition to the recent studies about ICTs.

### **5.3.2 Research Question 2: English Skills Improved by ICTs**

Regarding the second research question "Which English skills do students think could be developed by technological tools better?" this study shows the importance of ICTs in improving the English language skills for the participants. This effect is important as nearly 80% of the participants reported improving their four skills due to the use of ICTs. This is in parallel with the latest studies in the literature about the importance of ICTs in improving language learning (Mcdougald, 2018; Noori Karim, 2017)

However, having writing at the bottom of the skills requires more efforts from the university to make use of the ICT tools to improve the learners' writing, especially if we know that writing is considered to be one of the main difficulties faced by students who study at universities that adopt English-medium of Instruction policy (Bitchener et.al., 2010).

ICTs have a very effective role for most of the participants in improving their English language skills as well as their plans and organization for their studies. This means that the learners do use the ICTs in their learning, and it proved to give good results for the participants. ICTs are found to be motivating the students (60.6%) and letting them access to real life (80.6%). However, these results may be more if the use of ICTs is used more by the university. In other words, when implementing more ICT tools in teaching, the students' language skills are expected to improve more.

Group work has been important for the participants who prefer to do activities and discussions with other members of the group. The participants assured the importance

of the harmony within the group as an essential factor for better results of the group work. This means that the activities and assignments given to a group may improve the learners' autonomy as they have to depend on themselves in brainstorming, researching, and finding results for the activities given to them. The importance of harmony indicates that the learners do care about working in groups provided that it doesn't become a source of anxiety for them.

On the other hand, speaking in public is still a major factor for anxiety for the participants. However, it shows improvement as less than the half of the participants considers it to make them hesitant.

### **5.3.3 Research Question 3: Relationship between ICTs and Autonomous Learning**

In answering the third research question "Is there any relationship between learners' ICT attitudes and their autonomy in Learning EFL?" the results show that there is a great relationship between ICTs and learner autonomy. The attitudes of the participants that use ICTs in language learning were in favor of autonomous learning. In other words, the more ICTs the learners' use, the more autonomous learners they are. This, however, is not the case for the role of teacher for the students.

59.4% of the participants believe that the teacher is the source of authority, which is opposite to the learner autonomy approach. The participants still believe that the teacher is the main source of knowledge and the one responsible for evaluation. In fact, this is normal as transiting from Teacher-Centered Approach to Learner-Centered needs time. Furthermore, the learner autonomy doesn't terminate the role of the teacher in the classroom. Rather, the teacher is one of the main sources of knowledge. Learner autonomy calls for making the learners take part in decisions of kinds of

curriculum to be taught, teaching methodologies to be used (Littlewood, 1996), and the nature of progression in their syllabus (Budd & Wright, 1992).

The participants in the interviews had two main opinions about the role of ICTs. On one hand, a group that represents most of the participants think that ICTs have a positive role because they promote learning skills, language skills, and autonomous learning. The second group, on the other hand, were suspicious about the role of ICTs in promoting learning or even autonomous learning. This is in line with the results found in the literature (Neupane, 2010; Hobrom, 2004; Perez & Fernandez, 2010).

Another result in the present study that can be added to the literature is that none of the participants refused the role of ICTs; the negative role was in the form of casting doubts rather than refusing the ICTs. In other words, those who don't agree with the use of ICTs in promoting autonomous learning only have their doubts about the effectiveness, but they have no proofs to completely refuse the idea that it is not effective at all. This shows that ICTs are considered to be important in promoting learning, language learning, and autonomous learning.

#### **5.3.4 Research Question 4: Gender Difference**

Regarding the last research question in the present study "What is the effect of gender on the use of ICTs in EFL learning among Iranian students?" the study has shown a gender difference in the use of ICTs in EFL learning. The results have demonstrated that females are in favor of using ICT tools to learn English more than males.

Although the difference between their means is not that high, the difference proves that females are more likely to use ICT tools, which consequently promotes better learning and autonomous learning. This finding is unique compared to the findings in

the recent literature that considers that males are much better than females in using ICT tools and technologies (Dambrot, Watkins-Malek, Silling, Marshall & Garver, 1985; Khalili, 2001).

Although the difference between the males and females' use of ICTs for language learning is not significant, this study can be considered among the few studies in the literature that consider females are better at using ICTs more than or similar to males (Hanafi, 2001; Zeinali, 2012)

## **5.4 Conclusion**

This study examined the attitudes of postgraduate Iranian students at EMU towards the use of ICTs in EFL learning. The study is the first in the literature that examines the attitudes of Iranian learners in an English-medium of instruction context, where they study their majors - such as engineering, business, architecture, etc.- in English. The study states that the learners' attitudes are positive, and they do help the learners in improving their English language. The study reports that the use of technology is wide-spreading among the Iranian postgraduates at EMU. Films, computers, and music are among the tools used the most by the participants to learn English. This shows the importance of ICTs in language learning as essential tools to improve their language skills.

The study examined the skills that improve the most via using technologies. In fact, all the four skills of language were improved via the use of ICTs. This is a positive indicator of the important role of ICTs in improving the language skills of the learners. Nevertheless, the writing skill was the least to be improved among the other skills. This could be due to the fact that the top ICT tools used by the learners are more of

listening and speaking rather than reading and writing. Watching movies and listening to music are at the top of the preferred tools to learn English. If the social media programs are implemented to chatting, writing could improve better.

This study reports that there is a significant relationship between the learners' attitudes towards ICTs and learner autonomy. The results indicate that the more the ICTs are used, the more the autonomous learning the learners adopt.

The study even found that females were in favor of using ICTs more than males, unlike the major studies in the literature. Although the difference is not significant, this study adds to the current literature that females do use ICTs in English language learning.

### **5.5 Implications of the Study**

This study is among a series of studies conducted about the ICT use by Iranian learners. It examines the attitudes of the Iranian postgraduate learners who study in English-medium of instruction context.

Instructors should implement other ICT tools to improve the learners' English language skills. This may include films, computer programs. In detail, institutions should play a role in improving the learners' abilities of English language through promoting more programs and videos in English that report the university incidents that are important for the learners. For instance, the university announcements may be made in videos spoken in English and spread among students through their portals. This can improve the learners' language skills through using English as a tool to convey the university notes.

Different departments may initiate groups on the social media programs that can help the learners practice their writing in English and communicate about their courses. Yet, these groups should have very strict rules to avoid any change in the goal of the group to make it a fun group.

ICT tools may be implemented in the university curricula in an organized way to get better results for the students. This is important for improving the language skills for the non-ELT students as ICTs have proved to be motivating and authentic for the participants.

The teachers may increase the learner autonomy via getting some feedback from the learners about the curriculum, assessment, and teaching methods implemented in the class.

The university may support the learners with other activities for learning English, such as speaking clubs and workshops.

Last but not the least, the traditional model should be kept as there are still some students who do prefer the traditional methods of teaching.

## **5.6 Limitation of the Study**

This study only covered the Iranian postgraduate students at EMU. It didn't include the other students who are postgraduates at EMU and come from different nationalities. It neither included the Iranian undergraduates at EMU, who might have different opinions about the use of ICTs to improve their language learning. This point is important, and it really needs to be targeted as the undergraduates have spent less years in studying English compared to the postgraduate students.



The study had no placement test to decide on the participants' level of English. This would greatly elaborate the estate of those who refuse the use of ICT tools in improving their language learning. In other words, the researcher was supposed to distribute a placement test for the participants to decide on their language level before taking the questionnaire in order to know if there is any difference in the participants' views about the use of ICTs based on their English language level.

### **5.7 Recommendations for Future Study**

This study has examined the role of ICTs in improving language learning and autonomous learning for Iranian postgraduates who study at EMU, which adopts English-medium of instruction approach. The study didn't cover the Iranian undergraduates who have less experience in learning English than the postgraduates. Therefore, there is a need for studying this area in the future to find out the EFL undergraduates' attitudes towards the use of ICTs in learning English and fostering learner autonomy.

Another scope to be targeted in the future studies is examining the roles of ICTs in improving language learning for other learners from different nationalities. It is important to take EMU as a context and study the attitudes of the learners about learning English via technology.

As the current study has shown that there is a belief among the participants of the importance of autonomous learning, there is a need for a study that investigates the current procedures and plans implemented by EMU to enhance autonomous learning among the learners.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: Questionnaire**

### **Questionnaire**

#### **Investigating Iranian learners' attitudes toward ICT use, autonomy in EFL learning**

This questionnaire consists of four sections. Please note there is no right or wrong answer and your responses to the following answer will be kept confidential. Please answer them freely and honestly. Choose the one that best describes you it may take you no more than 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire .I thank you very much for your great help.

#### **Section 1: Demographic information**

Directions:

For the questions 1 through 6, please, provide information about yourself.

1. Name: .....
2. Gender: Male ..... Female .....
3. Age: .....
4. Do you use technology tools for English learning language purposes?  
Yes ..... No .....
5. What is your major? .....
6. What is the academic degree you are currently working toward?  
Master ..... PhD .....
7. Email: .....

#### **Section 2: Attitudes towards ICT use**

Directions:

For the questions 1 through 20, please choose the number that best describes how you feel about each statement based on the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

I think that the following technological tool/application would help me learn English better						
1	Computer	1	2	3	4	5
2	Music on digital media(e.g. CDs/mp3)	1	2	3	4	5
3	Films on the DVD(with subtitles or not)	1	2	3	4	5
4	Online dictionaries and grammars(Merriam-Webster online, the free Dictionary, Cambridge dictionary online, Macmillan, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
5	TV/Radio	1	2	3	4	5
6	Videoconferencing (ooVoo, Skype, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
7	Voice over the internet (Skype, Viber, Zalo, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
8	Blogs	1	2	3	4	5
9	Social networking site(e.g. Facebook,MySpace,Bebo)	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I think that technologies could help me...</b>						
10	To speak English better	1	2	3	4	5
11	With reading in English	1	2	3	4	5
12	To improve my listening skills	1	2	3	4	5
13	With writing in English	1	2	3	4	5
14	To plan and organize my own studies better	1	2	3	4	5

15	To take greater control of my own English learning	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I feel...</b>						
16	Technologies give learners access to more authentic(real life) English use	1	2	3	4	5
17	Using technologies can motivate me more to learn English	1	2	3	4	5
18	Using technologies to learn English can help me integrate better in the world in which I live	1	2	3	4	5
19	Technologies can make learning and education more accessible and less threatening to me	1	2	3	4	5
20	Technologies in English/language learning will increase in the future	1	2	3	4	5

### Section 3: learner autonomy

Directions:

For the questions 1 through 20, please choose the number that best describes how you feel about each statement based on the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	agree	Strongly agree

1	I like activities where I am part of a group which is working towards common goals	1	2	3	4	5
2	I like to take part in activities which involve discussion within a group	1	2	3	4	5

3	When I am working in a group ,I like to help maintain a sense of harmony in the group	1	2	3	4	5
4	In the open classroom, I often feel hesitant to stand out by voicing my opinions and questions.	1	2	3	4	5
5	In the classroom I see the teachers an authority figure.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I tend to see knowledge as something to be transmitted by the teacher rather than discovered by me as a learner.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I expect the teacher (rather than myself) to be responsible for evaluating how much I have learnt.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I feel strongly motivated to follow through learning tasks of which I perceive the practical value	1	2	3	4	5
9	I feel more motivated to work when my own success contributes to the goals or prestige of significant groups(e.g.family,other students)	1	2	3	4	5
10	In the classroom I feel very concerned to perform well and correctly in what I do	1	2	3	4	5
11	When asked to use technologies that I haven't used before, I feel worried but try to learn them anyway.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I preview materials before the class. (I come prepared for class.)	1	2	3	4	5

13	I find I can finish my task in time	1	2	3	4	5
14	I attend out class activities(e.g. English speaking club)to practice and learn English	1	2	3	4	5
15	I do not choose books, exercises which suit me, neither too difficult nor too easy	1	2	3	4	5
16	When I make mistakes in study, I usually let them be.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I do not use good of my free time in English study	1	2	3	4	5
18	I keep a record of my study, such as keeping a diary, writing a review ,etc.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I do not make self-exam with exam papers chosen by myself	1	2	3	4	5
20	Students should not design the teaching plan together with teachers.	1	2	3	4	5

**Section 4: open-ended questions**

4. What else would you like to add to the above items about using ICT tools?

.....

5. What do you think of using ICT tools inside the classroom?

.....

6. What do you think of using ICT tools outside the classroom?

.....

## **Appendix B: Interview Questions**

1. What tools have you ever used for your English-language learning?
- 2- Would you please elaborate your attitudes toward the use of ICTs for English language learning?
  - a. What are the reasons for supporting the use of ICTs in English language learning?
  - b. Would you please share your thoughts on why you take an attitude of neutrality toward the use of some communication and social networking technologies for English-language learning?
  - c. Would you please share your thoughts on why you have negative attitudes toward the use of some communication and social networking technologies for English-language learning?
  - d. What has driven you to think that ICTs are not useful affordances for the improvement of the expressive aspect of English language (Speaking and Writing skills)?
- 3- What are the reasons for being neutral about the use of a specific type of technology (e.g., Skype, blogs) for ELL?
- 4- What are your experiences regarding using ICT in EMU University?
- 5-Which ICT tools do you prefer over the others? Why?
- 6-Do you think ICT tools can help you learn by yourself? How?

## Appendix C: Student Questionnaire Consent Form

Dear Participant,

I am a Master student doing my thesis research on the topic “*Iranian students’ attitudes toward the use of ICTs in EFL learning*”. The present study will be carried out with the aim of investigation into the attitudes of Iranian students toward ICT in EFL learning particularly at EMU University. The data of this study will be collected by administering the questionnaire. Filling in the survey will take no more than 20 minutes.

Please answer all the questions sincerely and be informed that your personal information in demographic section and individual responses will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. For more information, please feel free to contact me. Participating in the present study is on the voluntary bases and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you for your participation and cooperation.

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### Consent form

I have been properly informed about the objectives of the study and I am willing to take part in it.

Name - Surname: .....

Date: .....

Signature: .....



## **Appendix D: Student Interview Consent Form**

Dear Participant,

I am a Master student doing my thesis research on the topic "*Iranian students' attitudes toward the use of ICTs in EFL learning*". The present study will be carried out with the aim of investigation into the attitudes of Iranian students toward ICT in EFL learning particularly at EMU University.

This study involves the audio recording of your interview with the researcher. Only the research team will be able to listen (view) to the recordings. For more information, please feel free to contact me. Participating in the present study is on the voluntary bases and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you for your participation and cooperation.

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### **Consent form**

By signing this form, I am allowing the researcher to audio record me as part of this research.

I have been properly informed about the objectives of the study and I am willing to take part in it.

Name - Surname: .....

Date: .....

Signature: .....



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Etik Kurulu / Ethics Committee

**Sayı:** ETK00-2018-0187  
**Konu:** Etik Kurulu'na Başvurunuz Hk.

30.05.2018

Bahareh Vafaeishandiz

Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü  
Lisans Öğrencisi

Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu'nun **21.05.2018** tarih ve **2018/59-02** sayılı kararı doğrultusunda, ***Iranian students' attitudes toward the use of ICTs in EFL learning*** adlı çalışmanızı, Doç. Dr. Naciye Kunt'un danışmanlığında araştırmanız, Bilimsel ve Araştırma Etiği açısından uygun bulunmuştur.

Bilginize rica ederim.

  
Doç. Dr. Şükrü TÜZMEN  
Etik Kurulu Başkanı

ŞT/ba.

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