# The effect of using Web-cam chat on English major students' fluency

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## Abstract

Web-cam chat is a technique that allows students to communicate with each other and provides the possibility to develop their speaking capabilities through oral communication. This study seeks to investigate the effect of using Web-cam chat on English major students' fluency. Previous literature has emphasized the importance of using web-cam chat to improve students' English language learning skills, but has not been particularly focused on fluency despite its importance at the current time regarding the reliance on English in various aspects of life as it represents a global language. To answer this research questions, the researcher utilised the qualitative approach by reviewing previous studies and research related to the current research topic.

The main result of this study clarified that there is a positive clear impact of using Web-cam chat on English major students' fluency; as employing Web-cam chat could enable learners to practice English language in actual interactive conversations, and could help them to specify their real weakness and strength points especially in speaking competency.

The study results also defined Fluency as the ability of the speaker to accurately use the language structure which as a result could enable students to share their thoughts and different life situations. Moreover, this study revealed Internet

technology can also widen the learning environment as this technology enable learners to access to the latest educational knowledge and getting any kind of information that could support the learning process. The results of the study also considered webcam as an important way to learn and acquire language, as it has the ability to transmit information that is not available in classic email communications.

**Keywords:** Web-cam chat, English fluency, students, learning.

## 1. Introduction

Today English is the first international language in the world. It has gained such prestige for several considerations, such as the prevalence of its use in different areas of life, and the growing need for using it in the labor market. Modern communication and technological advances have enhanced the role and importance of English. Al-Abdali (2016) argued that the world today is like a small village where people and nations communicate and share common interests and experiences using an international language, which is English. Therefore, learning English and speaking proficiency is an important and vital requirement imposed by the contemporary reality with all its variables.

The ability to speak English fluently is important at the academic and practical levels as it is an indicator of students' failure or success in dealing with their working lives. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is an effective medium in the learning environment that can be used in the educational process, helping to exchange topics between teachers and students (Mehri and Izadpanah, 2017). Mahfouz and Ihmeideh (2011) emphasized that the use of computers to assist learning contribute to transforming traditional teaching methods into effective methods capable of exploiting aspects of online communication and collaboration.

In an attempt to exploit the possibilities offered by technology, designers and teachers have devised a range of multimedia applications and tools that help learners acquire and learn English without relying solely on memorization (Bataineh and Al-Abdali, 2015). Web-cam chat is a technique that allows students to communicate with each other and provides the possibility to develop their speaking capabilities through oral communication. Bataineh and Al-Abdali (2014) emphasized that Web-cam chat helps to develop the language of speakers, including language skills and communication skills between different cultures and overcoming online literacy. Al-Abdali (2016) added that Web-cam chat enables communication between different individuals from different countries with ease and flexibility. Researchers and teachers are therefore recommended to enhance the use of Web-cam chat in the learning environment to overcome the lack of interaction within classes of teaching English as a second language (ESL).

Thus, modern means of communication have become a major requirement of the contemporary life nature and require the use of new methods of communication (Nadeem et al., 2012). These methods can activate the level of learners' participation and overcome the nature of the traditional learning environment that does not affect the level of students in the required form. Moreover, fluency in English is an important requirement for students to deal with different situations, and it requires research into new ways of teaching that motivate students to learn English and contribute to improving their communication and speaking skills. Based on that, this study seeks to investigate the effect of using Web-cam chat on English major students' fluency.

## 1.1 Problem

The current study problem highlights from the performance level of students in learning English as a foreign language. Studies have emphasized that students have difficulties in dealing with English and learning it as a second language regarding the poor level of effectiveness of the methods used in classrooms (Abe, 2011). Mahdi (2014) explained that the poor level of students in speaking English is clear from the inability of students to deal with the various situations they face. Bataineh and Al-Abdali (2015) emphasized that this problem is mainly related to the traditional teaching methods used in teaching, which are necessarily based on memorization away from observation, understanding and comprehension. Bataineh and Al-Abdali (2014) pointed out that the educational environment lacks modern methods that enhance the possibility of students to acquire and use English in real life situations.

Moreover, despite the fact that English language education has become compulsory from the first grade in the Arab countries, the results of the educational process confirm that the realistic result does not meet the requirements of higher education. Hashemyolia and Ayub (2014) stressed that there is a large segment of students reach the university level and are unable to speak fluent English. This is due to the teaching methods used to teach students. I believe that teaching in traditional ways does not allow students to use and speak English in the learning environment, and therefore the educational environment should be equipped to be very similar to the environment used in the teaching of English speakers.

Therefore, in order to enhance the development of students' linguistic and spoken competence in English, the study seeks to identify the effect of using Web-cam

chat on English major students' fluency. Thus, the problem of the study can be summarized in the following main question:

**Does web-cam chat have an effect on English major students' fluency? And what is the nature of this effect (if found)?**

## 1.2 Research importance

Previous literature has emphasized the importance of using web-cam chat to improve students' English language learning skills, but has not been particularly focused on fluency despite its importance at the current time regarding the reliance on English in various aspects of life as it represents a global language (Satar and Özdener, 2008; Bataineh and Al-Abdali; 2014 Bataineh, 2014; Bataineh and Al-Abdali, 2015; Al-Abdali, 2016). Web-cam chat allows students to observe speakers' gestures and their different expressions, which helps determine the meaning which the speaker is trying to communicate. Web-cam chat also enables students to acquire the language by observing practical situations under normal circumstances (Iino and Yabuta, 2015).

From the theoretical side, the current study is an important addition to the theoretical literature related to the current topic of study, where the results of the current study can be used in future studies. The current study seeks to integrate technology in the process of education as an effective way to enhance the capabilities of students and ensure the reliability of web-cam chat using in improving English speaking skills as a second language.

In practice, the current study can be used to:

1. Encourage the ministries of education in the Arab countries to employ web-cam chat in teaching of English language and to improve the level of teaching English in the Arab countries in particular.

2. Encourage teachers to employ modern techniques in teaching English and overcome the boring routine in the traditional methods used in teaching English.

3. Motivate designers of English language curriculum in designing educational activities through which the use of web-cam chat can be employed in the learning environment to develop students' language skills.

4. Encourage English language teachers to discover other technologies that help improve students' fluency in English

5. Enhance the level of awareness of teachers and curriculum designers in the Arab countries of the importance of using modern technologies in education and their impact on the acquisition of English.

## 2. Research methodology

To achieve the objectives of the research and to be able to answer its questions, the current research will use the qualitative approach by reviewing previous studies and research related to the current research topic.

## 3. Literature review

### 3.1 The definition of fluency

Fluency is defined as the ability of the speaker to accurately use the language structure. Fluency involves bringing the words together when speaking. Cumming (2001) emphasized that fluency is tied to the use of language creatively and smoothly. Mahfouz and Ihmeideh (2011) added that fluency in speech gives words and phrases a natural feature that enables the speaker to use body language, pause

and interruptions in speaking. Halse et al. (2009) also noted that fluency is a procedural skill of the speaker, indicating the speaker's ingenuity and not having any problems while speaking. Bataineh (2014) argued that fluency does not necessarily include the ability to speak fluently but the ability to form grammatically correct sentences.

There are a number of factors that affect the level of fluency of the speaker, including a good understanding of the text and the level of reading skill. Mahfouz and Ihmeideh (2011) showed that the level of fluency skill depends on the level of development of the student learning of the second language. Fluency is also influenced by the student's understanding of the nature and content of the dialogue and, consequently, his or her ability to express his or her thoughts correctly and orderly (Bataineh, 2014).

Fluency enables students to share their thoughts and different life situations. In this area, Cumming (2003) and Shahini and Shahamirian (2017) stressed the importance of students' fluency in speaking despite being one of the most difficult language skills to be acquired. Fluency reflects the student's level of accuracy and speed of comprehension, as well as the ability of the student to understand the content of the text. If the student was fluent in speaking, he or she necessarily has a high ability to understand the meaning of the text easily. On the other hand, Blake (2009) emphasized that the student's frequent interruption in reading reflects a low level of fluency even if he/she achieves higher levels more than other students.

### 3.2 Using internet technology in learning environment

Internet technology has been recognised since its emergence as an efficient tool for communication and interaction especially for educational purposes. This technology has been used widely according to the magnificent abilities that it

owns. For example, the internet network ability to connect several individuals in different places around the world in an easy interactive way.

The access of internet technology improves individuals' lives in different daily life aspects. Moreover, internet technology has been used widely in educational field; as it offers several opportunities and benefits that facilitate the learning process. The basic benefits that added when employing internet in learning environment is its ability to offer ease communication between learners, to save a huge amount of information , to make an online search easily, and to add new innovative teaching methods that could motivate students toward learning (Park,2009).

Furthermore, internet can provide learners with a huge amount of information at any time and in ease quick way. An asynchronous learning environment can also be offered when utilising internet technology in the learning process. As well this technology can leverage students' knowledge as they prefer to get information online in an ease quick way in spite of visiting libraries or any real printed source of information. Internet technology can also widen the learning environment as this technology enable learners to access to the latest educational knowledge and getting any kind of information that could support the learning process. So we can conclude that internet technology could make the learning environment without boundaries as it could spread knowledge for huge amount of audience of learners in different places, at any time and in quick and easy way (Dogruer, Eyyam and Menevis, 2011).

Internet technology has also enhance learners critical thinking and problem solving abilities as it enable them to get scientific information and make developed academic researches to find solutions for any learning problem. Additionally, internet technology has a positive impact on the instructional used strategies (Park

and Biddix, 2008). It can be concluded that internet technology can enhance the learning quality and improve the overall learning environment and learners' outcomes.

### 3.3 Web-cam chat technology

Chat is an important means of communication between individuals, Wang (2005) emphasized that web-cam chat is a low-cost means that can be used to enhance students' English speaking needs as well as social and psychological needs. Chat is defined as a means by which students can communicate verbally or in writing and represent ideas and information using conversation between parties. Young and Edwards (2013) stated that chat is one of the means that affect the level of communication between individuals and allows individuals to manage speech and dialogue effectively. Bataineh (2014) argued that traditional methods of teaching provide students with the possibility of having some situational conversations with a focus on memorizing books and teaching material, while chat contributes to enhance students' opportunities to understand and express situations orally.

A webcam is an important way to learn and acquire language, as it has the ability to transmit information that is not available in classic email communications. It also enables learners of English as a foreign language to exchange information very quickly, easily and flexibly, targeting a range of native language products.

### 3.4 The effect of using Web-cam chat on English major students' fluency

According to the fact that Traditional teaching methods offer a poor communication environment, this method often failed to enhance learning fluency especially for English foreign language learners (Bataineh, 2014). This week ability of traditional methods to develop learners' fluency can be justified according to the students common attributes such as their shyness to speak loud of

or to make any mistake while interacting with their colleagues. So this part of the research came to examine the impact of using Web-cam chat on English fluency of students.

Arab learners especially could face several challenges in English learning especially in speaking and listening (Rababah, 2003). In addition to the above mentioned causes, this English fluency weakness could be explained due to the little available chances to practice the language, the inappropriate curriculum nature and the inappropriate learning environment for students interaction. Utilising web-cam chat could add several benefits for the learning process such as providing learners with efficient way to communicate in the proper time for each learner and in an efficient and appropriate relaxing learning environment. This technology can also enhance the speaking and oral abilities. This way of learning could also enhance students' self-confidence and avoid their shyness and fear to interact with other colleagues. Furthermore, Web-cam chat could enable teachers to employ various teaching strategies which could enhance students' motivation toward learning English (Bataineh, 2014).

Employing Web-cam chat could enable learners to practice English language in actual interactive conversations, and could help them to specify their real weakness and strength points especially in speaking competency.

Several related previous studies have been conducted to examine the impact of using interactive chatting applications in English teaching process. For example, Chun & plass (2002) indicated that adding chat learning environment makes learners as the center of the education process, and makes the learning environment as a communicative atmosphere. Moreover, Xia and Yang (2005) indicated the efficiency of utilising online audiovisual chatting in developing the verbal competency of EFL learners. Furthermore, a study made by (Jarrel, 2005) revealed

that employing online interviews and voice e-mail could enhance the oral skills of learners.

Satar & Ozdener (2008) clarified the impact of using Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) on oral fluency and anxiety of learners. This study indicated the positive impact of this learning method on the speaking fluency and proficiency.

Damian (2009) also clarified that using social on-line chatting rooms could improve the overall learning process, and enhance the learners' skills in different aspects. Additionally, Blake (2009) revealed the positive impact of text-based online chat on enhancing second language learners' oral fluency.

As well as, Abe (2011) made a comparative study between the impact of using online chat and traditional learning process. The study indicated the effectiveness of online chat on developing the learning environment and improving EFL performance.

All above illustrated studies indicated that using Computer Mediated Communication such as using Web-cam chat plays a significant role in learning English language. We can also conclude that using Web-cam chat could significantly impact English major students' fluency in a positive way.

## 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of using Web-cam chat on English major students' fluency. According to the findings of this study, there is a great opportunity and noticeable positive impact of employing Computer Mediated Communication tools especially Web-cam chat on developing English fluency of students. This study also indicated that there are a number of factors that affect the

level of fluency of the speaker, including a good understanding of the text and the level of reading skill, and according to the fact that web cam chat could provide learners with an efficient way to communicate in the proper time for each learner and in an efficient and appropriate relaxing learning environment then the learners fluency could be surly improved. Web-cam chat is a low-cost means that can be used to enhance students' English speaking needs as well as social and psychological needs. Furthermore, the study revealed that internet technology in general offers several opportunities and benefits that facilitate the learning process; as internet can provide learners with a huge amount of information at any time and in ease quick way. Curricula designers could benefit from this study through realising the significance of adding several types of web chat in enhancing various skills of English language learning.

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