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Contribution to Mobile-Enhanced English Language Pedagogy among Iranian L2 Learners

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Abstract

This study aimed at providing learners with an opportunity not only to bring together their core and disciplinary knowledge to acquire major skills of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), and the intellectual challenge of these issues at the interface of media, language and religion, but also help the materials generators to produce suitable types of content to be delivered through the medium of mobile technology. Therefore, it sought to examine the new way of teaching EFL in the form of correspondence with respect to Iranian learners' native culture and language. For the purposes of this study, English was the target language for 680 Iranian students with pre-intermediate level of language proficiency whose native languages were Persian, Arabic, Georgian, and Turkish. This study took as its point of departure the existence of important differences between the two learning materials (off the shelf vs. Islamic culture) types; thus, applying the Qur'anic criteria of intelligence, knowledge and virtue parallel with the digital representation of common textbook materials, materials delivery was adapted to the cellphone screen to be accessed by learners' in 18 virtual sessions. Learners took part in two summative and 18 formative components included in the assessment design of this study. Also, they all answered a questionnaire which yielded information concerning their attitude towards the target language, and learning through the wireless technology. Learners' short texting correspondence as well as their performance in battery and their answers to items of questionnaires formed the reference for analyzing the results. The gains from English Islamic materials were outweighed by the effects of obtaining materials which involved more categorized cases.

Keywords: culture, first language, materials, m-learning.

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Introduction

On the basis of previous years' analysis, it can be inferred that the weakening of conventional teacher dominance, basic features of formal learning, is paralleled by high-frequent social communication, whose tools and technological base are potentially created by mobile communication techniques (Nyiri, 2009).

Other researchers have theorized that mobile-enhanced learning as an artificial community can provide some unexpected benefits for language and culture learning (Traxler, 2007; Ally, 2009). In particular, they assert the hypothesis that the non-formal way of teaching didactic content is a supporting setting where learners can feel free to make mistakes without any dire impact, in contrast to a learner who is studying in the formal situation and makes a mistake which can have remaining outcome (Alsayed, 2003).

Language is the most powerful way in communication world. It improves the quality of life and shows how people from different places live and think. Because of sociability of human being, language is considered one of the important aspects of human life progress (Ebadi, Salehzadeh, Janfaza, Assemi, & Abbasi, 2012). Promotion of language proficiency level helps the L2 learners to understand behavior from the perspective of the members of a culture, and thus behave in a way that would be understood by members of the culture in the intended way.

Of course, Gleitman, Liberman, & Osherson (2004) points out that since language is not simply communication, but a way to coordinate behavior, to use a common language, individuals must give up some freedom. They cannot retain the right to attach whatever verbal labels they like. To communicate, individuals must tailor their expressions to meet the expectations of others (Lazear, 1999, p. 97). Understanding language as a social practice requires learners to engage in tasks in which they create and interpret meaning, and in which they can communicate their own personal meanings and develop personal connections with the new language. However, that poor conventional manner of pedagogy has caused students grow up in culturally impoverished environments of language pedagogy that limit their subsequent development and, ultimately, their academic success.

After the introduction of the 'Direct Method' into the English language teaching, cultural elements began to be considered as an important aspect of learning the language, and in post method era, cultural background knowledge is accepted as an inseparable part of teaching language. Nowadays, in the realm of language pedagogy acquiring cultural knowledge of a target language is often called the fifth skill in language learning (Hong, 2008). However, multiculturalism, or the tolerance by a society of many different cultures and languages, as Lazear (1999) defines seems to be on the rise in Iran. Multiculturalism, for good or bad, takes the view that Iranians speak many languages and have many different cultures.

Iranian's classrooms look like many other classrooms over the world in which teachers are challenged by the diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds of their students. How textbooks generators and instructors respond to this diversity will depend on whether they view students' language and cultural experiences as assets on which they can draw in support of school learning or deficiencies that must be overcome before students can succeed academically (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009). With content analysis of English course textbooks published by Iran's ministry of education, Khajavi and Abbasian (2011) reported that authors of these textbooks have avoided cultural matters of foreign countries as much as possible. As a result, textbooks are mostly neutral in terms of culture (p. 181).

Hidalgo, Hall, and Jacobs (1995) state "... the growth of (modern) education reflects a new way that humans view pedagogy. We believe that many of the changes in human's view of the pedagogy have parallels in current trends in language teaching methodology" (p. 271). Hence, the possibility of change in cultural inheritance must not be ruled out at the time of designing instructional materials because they will become static and lose not only their vitality, but also their fortified status.

Hjarvard (2004) elaborated on the status of English language pedagogy in past two or three decades, English has gained a particular status among languages. It is nowadays a lingua franca. It is the link for spoken and written communication across national borderlines. Different languages have also been affected by the hegemony of

English, disposing to niche English words, pronunciation, word and order in their languages. Though teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to non-English citizens helps them to conduct equitable and harmonious interactions with other individuals and communities, English as an international language (EIL) has not lived peacefully with other local languages and it has been caused globalization and particular use of English has been viewed as dangerous (Zughoul, 2003). In fact, globalization does not mean that the whole world is going to be extricably connected. The interconnected world does not mean that homogenous. The world is not going to be homogenous and the heterogeneity is always involved (Jalilifar & Beitsayyah, 2011). Witt (2000) asserts that the position of status for English is really eccentric in that no other language has been so significant for international communication and at the same time met with animosity. Increasingly fewer local communities are unaffected by globalization in the twenty-first century (Rebecca & McKinlay, 2012). Linguistic aspects of globalization have not received as much attention as other areas; however, language has been affected by globalization in a profound way. In the climate of rapid change, there is increasing concern about our social cohesion. Feeling a sense of dissociation ensuing from globalization and the digital revolution requires citizens to be informed and concerned about their community and in action in it (Sutton, 2008).

Although in our post-modern context, the rise of the power and emplacement of the media has gone with the apparent deterioration of the power and authority of religion in the local and wider culture (Morris, 2009), common culture and common language make interaction between individuals easy. They have fresh impetus to learn the other languages and cultures so that they have a larger pool of potential interaction partners (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). Thus, exploiting media for enhancing the role of religion seems inevitable.

As Farrell (2003) argues, the differences in the users' relationship to these new technologies (e.g., technology savvyness, education, gender, religion, ideology, culture, or identity) and in their manners of appropriating such tools for communicative goals will both enrich and challenge communication and information exchange within and across

communities of practice (p.6). In other words, the ways of communicating with new technology tools in one culture, one text, one language, or one modality are not going to be exactly similar in another culture, text, language, or agent. Though the rapid change in information and technology has made written literacy culture more easily obtainable; the era of emailing, texting, and other social networking drives citizens toward a written literacy culture that leaves them an uncertain standard of English, with the interactants having an equivocal, virtual characteristic (Gunawan, 2009).

Such differences are often reflective of the sociocultural and technological environments where their members adapted to the manners of thinking and being around technology that are characteristic of their own culture, ideology, and other eccentricities shaping their unique modern communities (Alsup & Myers, 2007).

In the era of Muslim's access to new technologies that afford them unprecedented ways to reinterpret, appropriate, and negotiate mass distributed texts in multiple forms, these global interactions open new vistas to citizens with different interpretive positions, and necessitate an examination of underlying cultural assumptions and beliefs that frame communications. Hence, uncovering differences among the members of a global community and how globalization positions their languages, identities, communities will need to become the core principles at the time of developing didactic materials within the contexts of global mass mediation, multimodal communications.

Islam aims at producing human resources following the Islamic teachings especially spirituality and morality. The goal can be materialized through the different formal and non-formal channels of education. Islamic education in the non-formal process is not negligible and its role deserves to be considered significant in comparison with that of formal Islamic education. Though in society a great number of citizens with their enthusiasm are devoted to bestowing Islamic education, no technique is usually employed for delivering Islamic instructions through non formal channel of delivery (Alam & Muzahid, 2006).

The interconnectedness between cultural globalization, identity formation and English language pedagogy has started getting the attention from EFL educators (Higgins, 2009; Kubota & Lin, 2009;

Lin, 2008; Regalado, 2008). The model presented in this study focuses on common Islamic culture and the facilitation of pedagogy, defined broadly to include international interaction as well. Accordingly, with focus on the application of Islamic culture in the non-formal setting of teaching and learning English it attempted to create a sound and balanced pedagogical environment in society with moral and spiritual values.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to help elementary English teachers and materials developers in interpreting globalization and seeking for any reflection or influence on their practices in the non-formal trend of learning language through the medium of mobile technology and in this way to design a module for Iranian learners and their L2 English learning program that reflects the world view, values and patterns of social interaction of the community in which it is situated. As a result the main questions in this study are as follows:

1. Do Iranian learners of different first languages (Arabic, Georgian, Persian, & Turkish) learn English language materials differently through different types of content (Islamic culture-based vs. off the shelf) in mobile-enhanced environment?

It must be noted that the general questions can be broken down to a number of corollaries in order to capture the following interactional effects:

- a. one-size-fits-all digital L2 materials, namely mere translation of paper-based materials into digital ones to be represented via cellphone, vs. culture-based L2 materials; that is, new types of Islamic culture-based materials adapted to be represented via cellphone delivery
- b. Cued vs. non-cued delivery of materials
- c. Learners' first language, namely, Arabic, Georgian, Persian, and Turkish

2. Is there any relationship between students' attitude towards application of Islamic culture-based digital L2 (English) materials and their performance in mobile-enhanced contexts?

Method

Participants

To determine the sample size, specification of the main variable by a pilot study seemed necessary. Tendency for easy and comprehensive interaction with other citizens from around the world was the desire of 55 percent of Iranian high-school seniors as participants of the pilot study which accrued main variable. Thus, on the basis of de Vaus' formula (2002), 380 Iranian high-school seniors were surveyed. They were returned at a response rate of 90 percent ($n = 90\% \times 380 = 342$). As a result, to carry out the study, as many as 680 out of 723 participants were selected from among Iranian male and female pre-university students to complete the groups. They ranged in age from 17-19. They included Persian learners of English ($n = 186$) alongside a wide selection of Arab ($n = 246$), Turkish ($n = 146$), and Georgian ($n = 102$) learners of English as a foreign language from four metropolitan cities of Iran, namely, Khuzestan, Isfahan, Azerbaijan, and Khorasan. Females accounted for 43 per cent of the participants and males accounted for about 57 per cent of the participants.

To ensure that students are of a sufficient level of core knowledge regarding grammar, they can work within the lexical and syntactic patterns, they are familiar with the content, and basically they can respond in a meaningful way to the materials in questions they were homogenized through conducting Nelson English proficiency test (Coe & Fowler, 1976), '100 A' which seemed suitable for confirming the learners' pre-intermediary level of language proficiency. This process led to omission of 43 participants with low language proficiency level. The Nelson English language test is a battery consisting of 40 separate tests for each of ten levels from beginners to advanced ones. Each test consisted of 50 items. The tests were designed for a 30 (60%) pass mark. Its reliability was calculated through KR-21 in the pilot study, and it was .84. The validity was also confirmed by three competent

experts in this field. Details about the participants are displayed in Table 1.

Table1
Details about the Participants

Group	Age	Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Arab	17.23	86	160	246
Georgian	17.11	58	44	102
Persian	17.79	80	106	186
Turkish	17.87	74	72	146

Participants were randomly divided to two groups:

Group I: 340 Iranian learners who were taught culture-based materials through the medium of mobile technology, here in this study cellphone;

Group II: 340 Iranian learners who were taught digital format of daily English book for Iranian students of pre-university materials through the same mode of delivery; that is, cellphone.

Then, learners in each group then were further divided to 170 dyads. Mobile-enhanced environment allowed learners to combine or mesh up the resource with their counterparts.

Materials

Questionnaire: As test scores were relied upon exclusively to measure language improvement and many critics charge that this does not provide a complete picture of the ability of the L2 learners in terms of verbal or cultural skills, reliance on quantitative measures, such as test scores to assess benefits is considered a low point. Also, the rhetorical structure of materials must be appropriate to learner's needs and learning purposes (Widdowson, 1980). Furthermore, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students' success or failure in their learning (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009). To determine the type of attitude that Iranian Muslim learners' have towards application of cellphone and to gather information about their perceptions of different aspects of mobile

technology, a questionnaire form was used in collecting the data. It consisted of three sections: A, B and C. In section A, two open-ended items were used to collect information regarding the students' attitudes towards daily application of mobile technology, that is, to determine when and why learners prefer to use cellphones for learning different skills of English. In section B the students were asked to answer close-ended questions on whether or not they are interested in employing mobile technology in the realm of learning language. In addition in this section the students were asked to answer a question on whether or not they are interested in attending more English language training courses to improve their proficiency in the English language. Section C which included questions to identify students' attitudes towards culture and collaborative learning of English. In addition, the questionnaire let the learners express their interest in learning target language (TL) through mobile devices, in here cellphone for the purpose of removing those who given a choice to opt out of taking part in such a study. Furthermore, the questions were useful in determining which aspects of mobile technology were important for the learners. The questionnaires were distributed and collected via short texting. The questionnaire comprised 23 items in Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Georgian, and the interviewees were asked to reply. Its reliability was calculated through the Cronbach alpha and it was .83. Its validity was confirmed by five experts in the fields of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and sociology. It was anonymous (see appendix A).

Software Package (Didactic Garden):User-friendly software, namely 'Didactic Garden' (www.amoozeshyar.net) was designed in a manner to be an active partner in the development and delivery of custom English learning programs to educational systems to meet their unique members' needs. The basis for designing the software was the model proposed by Denveny(2013) for preparing digital books. As seen in the following Figure (Fig 1), through depicting the quadruple model, Denveny (2013) has tried to show how training and collaboration of teachers and content generators and their continuous support of learners in light of intensive plan and clear goal can accrue to production of proper digital materials.

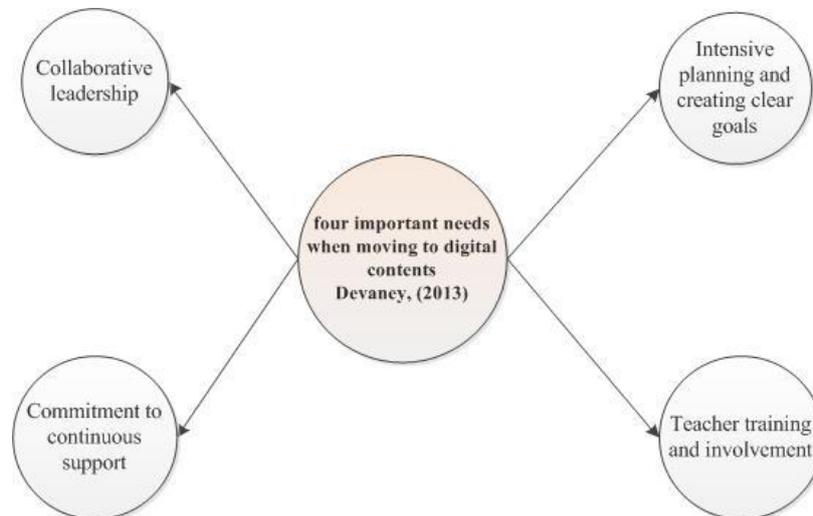


Figure 1. Denveny's (2013) model for preparing digital books

Prominent attribute of the software system was that it was truly open towards applications, there being no difference between the phone's core applications. This creates a system for quickly disseminating content to the intended learners.

High-stakes testing is about to change dramatically. As states and school districts strive to implement the common core standards and welcome more rigorous, online exams in 2014, school leaders are working to ensure that teachers have the tools they need to prepare students to succeed on these next-generation assessments (eSchool News, 2013). Therefore, in contrast to the observations that teachers do not usually follow up the works of their students, to check whether they have improved or not, 'Didactic Garden' was designed in the manner that had a capability of momentarily monitoring and recording of students' performance.

Learning Contents: In this study, the term culture-based means that the education system was based on a first nation community's framework of values, priorities and world view, so that the path of educational development chosen to meet a community's needs is theirs, not what outsiders might choose for them. So, for designing locally-based curriculum for non-formal manner of content delivery, in the

first step module was designed based on the world view and values of Iranian community.

One advantage to using multimodal materials is that the students can collect a larger proportion of knowledge associated with represented materials than is the case with common ones. Further, learning anxiety may be reduced when a cue is annotated to the content. They are likely to be more attractive than the materials as a whole designed for representation through the medium of conventional channels of delivery.

Applying the Qur'ānic criteria of intelligence, knowledge and virtue four types of materials from Islamic contents were designed to be displayed on first group learners' mobile devices as follows:

Type I: written representation of didactic materials;

Type II: written and pictorial representation of materials;

Type III: notes about correspondence (with or without pictorial annotation);

Type IV: activities with or without pictorial annotation.

A sample of different types of representation from one of the virtual units is displayed in Figure 2.



Figure 2. A sample of different types of representation from one of the virtual units

Also, cellphone based representation of lessons from English book (1) for Iranian pre-university students (Birjandi, et al., 2012) had already adapted to the cellphone screen to be accessed by learners from second group. Digital representation of a part of this book is displayed in Figure 3.

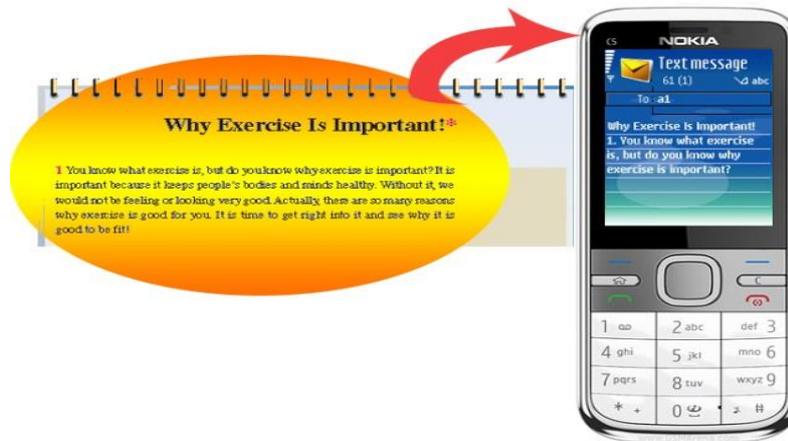


Figure 3. Digital representation of a part of the English book for Iranian pre-university students

For each digital Islamic culture-based unit an exercise section was devised, namely, type III of materials. The didactic materials were divided into three categories: the first category dealt with issues concerning students' immediate life (e.g., family, friends, and school life); the second category dealt with such issue as community and the place of students within it; and the third with wider social matters, including the health, the environment, communication, and abstract concepts such as courage and rituals.

Materials were collected from different foreign language agencies in metropolitan cities of Iran three times annually through 2012 to provide updated information about their technology readiness, and this information was shared with Iran's education system. Data were compared against recommended requirements.

As the absence of control groups, which would increase the rigor and validity of the study, in the research impedes the authenticity of the results, they were compared with the ones reached in traditional and general type of content delivery, that is, mere translation of common text books for teaching EFL to digital type for cellphone based delivery, namely materials from English book (1) (Birjandi, Anani Sarab, & Samimi, 2012) for Iranian pre-university students.

Mobile-Assisted Language Skills Assessment Battery (MALSAB) –

"Navigating any type of educational change is a complicated process, and the move to online assessments brings with it great opportunities and unique challenges," Slover (2012, p. 2) said. Although learners' writing assignment in two formats of non-cued short texting and cued short texting formed the major part of the assessment, a test battery comprised of 70 multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank question items on vocabulary retention and recall, namely tests of English vocabulary recognition and recall (EVRR) were designed, too. Also, it contained three specified topics that students were required to write three letters to their Muslim counterparts through wireless channel of communication. In this way, learners' abilities in major skill of writing and sub-skills of grammar, and spelling were assessed, too.

Procedures

Phase I- Introduction: VanLier (1988) argues that there may be little difference between learning in the classroom versus learning in a natural setting because introductory level students cannot communicate sufficiently well to take advantage of the naturalistic environment; however, result unfolded that designing user-friendly software with providing protective setting outmatches the boundaries enables students to safely experiment with the language and thus encourages them to make sense of the language and culture for themselves. Seeking for the participants' opinions about the proper performance of the study, at the beginning of the virtual course, the questionnaire (see 3.2. questionnaire) was distributed among the learners to complete. Time was also allocated for ensuring that learners understood how to complete the actual activities themselves, and learners were given an opportunity to give preferences concerning the time and the frequency of SMS texts (see appendix B).

Phase II- Materials Delivery: Performing correspondence in virtual world provided opportunities for students to discuss their feelings through carefully planned exercises. After conducting each didactic virtual session the dyads were encouraged to write their own letter about something they read and post them on the net through the application of text messaging.

During conducting the major phase of study, students reported that when they met their peers in dyads they found that they had no difficulty in understanding their fixed partners. Frequent contacts have enabled them to tune in to their partners' pattern. On the other hand, due to their constant exposure, peers develop special skills as interlocutors, but these skills make them atypical interlocutors and therefore unsuitable as writer or addressee at least on some occasions. Accordingly, constant change of members along dyads was undertaken as an ideal way for avoiding an abnormal amount of exposure with an identified partner.

Teachers' and peers' immediate feedbacks, whether positive or negative, play a significant role in improving the English proficiency level of ESL and EFL students. Accordingly, it should be impressed

first upon the students the importance of giving comments, whether positive or negative, to their works. Also, since EFL students have a very limited knowledge and comprehension of the English language, they need proper guidance and part of it is by giving feedbacks and comments on their output. EFL students need to know their mistakes and to learn how they are going to correct it (Bersamina, 2009). After conducting each virtual session, the results were posted on learners' cellphones via application of short texting.

Phase III- Testing: As a third phase, the data collected with the help of battery. MALSAB was administered to participants that included a letter writing tests and EVRR tests (See section 3.2. Material, Tests). The frequent correspondence in L2 among dyads during the virtual course accrued two summative and 18 formative components to be included in the assessment design. In other words, the results of learners performance in battery were analyzed in conjunction with other information gathered during the course in this respect (i.e., writing letters in dyads).

Results

The data were collected at three phases using mobile-assisted language skills assessment battery (MALSAB) and Likert-type questionnaire. This study reports the analyses of 23040 transcription forms obtained from interaction of Iranian learners of English. Recognition scores limited to evaluation of learners' performance in final summative tests and it comprised of learners' score in correct application of new vocabulary items; however, recall tests composed of learners' score spelling and retention. Also, learners' short texting correspondence throughout the course comprised the raw data for evaluation of learners' spelling as well as their ability in proper application of grammatical and mechanic points.

Gains from learning English Islamic instructions accrue to Muslim students' outperformance in the international arena. The results of both formative and summative indicated that the difference between the participants' performance was significant.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics: Comparison of Participants' Performance in two Groups

Materials Type	Mean	Standard Error Mean	Standard Deviation
C.B.	72.08	3.12	0.12
D.T.B.	67.1	31.01	1.18

Note. C.B. means culture-based materials and D.T.B. means digitalized textbook materials.

Variegated content, in which the flow of materials from diverse media resulted in more rapid learning rate than the manner that favors any one particular medium. Results suggested the right kind of materials development can increase student performance by up to 107 percent.

The inferential statistics analysis also showed that the Arab learners' performances on Islamic culture-based materials type vs. one-size-fits-all type were significantly different (Sig.: 000, $P < .05$). Likewise, the inferential statistics revealed that the outperformance of Turkish learner' from both groups, yet with a slightly better result obtained on the culture-based type (Sig.: 000, $P < .05$).

Table 3
Comparing two Types of Content Delivery

Test Type	t	Sig.
EVRR	129.4	0.000
Spelling	65.49	0.004
Structure	431.75	0.000

$P < .05$

For the first group, in which learners were delivered Islamic culture-based materials results demonstrated the pervasiveness of transfer from the first to the second language even after intensive training especially in the case of Turkish and Arab learners' performances. The best performance obtained on L2 vocabulary learning by Arab learners around a mean of 35.78 And Turkish learners' performance on the structural skill inclined to converge (mean of 37.72). The kinds of English sentences they produced bear telltale traces of the structure of their first language. This finding of inferential

confirmed the Arab's outperformance on culture-based vocabulary learning on one hand, and significantly better performance of Turkish and Georgians' on English correspondence structure.

In EVRR tests Persian learners of the first group gained a slightly higher mean of 35.06 than their Georgian (a mean of 26.11) and Turkish counterparts with a mean of 35.06; though analyzing structural proficiency tests unfolded completely reverse results, that is, outperformance of Georgian learners of English (a mean of 35). As for the vocabulary, the analysis shows a mean of 21.38 for Georgian learners who underperformed other learners.

The inferential statistics analysis was consistent that Turkish and Georgian's correspondence contained more accurate structure with culture-based materials delivery (Sig.: 0.211, and Sig. 0.016, $P < .05$, for Turkish and Georgian learners of first group, respectively).

Table 4
Comparison of Learners' Performance in two Manners of Content Delivery

Participants	t-value	df	Sig.
Vocabulary			
Arab	8.17	34	0.000
Georgian	1.31	34	0199
Persian	15.92	34	0.000
Turkish	1.43	34	0.161
Structure			
Arab	15.92	34	0.000
Georgian	2.53	34	0.016
Persian	1.5	34	0.125
Turkish	36.86	34	0.211
Spelling			
Arab	5.85	34	0.000
Georgian	1.61	34	0.142
Persian	3.92	34	0.000
Turkish	1.01	34	0.312

$P < .05$

In second group of learners who were represented digitalized form of common English textbooks while Persian learners took the lead in English vocabulary learning and the analysis showed a mean of 30.11, Turkish and Georgian learners did the best in structural proficiency tests (means of 36.86 and 31.16, respectively) and Arabs the least with a mean of 16.44. Results revealed that Georgian learners of EFL in the second group fell behind their counterparts in terms of L2 vocabulary learning.

Persian Learners' spelling score was the highest (a mean of 17.69) and the Arab's was the lowest in both groups of learners (a mean of 12.22). Moreover, Turkish and Georgian learners' gained the same scores regarding accuracy in spelling test.

A total of 680 questionnaires were distributed to Iranian students speaking EFL through text messaging and they were returned at a response rate of 99.85%. Although there appears to be considerable anxiety and uncertainty associated with the teaching of English at Iranian educational institutes, the learners' responses indicated a generally positive attitude towards using English as an international language for communication among members of Islamic communities. Results indicated that non-formal language setting differs from the traditional one not only in terms of students' compositions but also with regard to motivation and perspective.

The results of analyzing the learners' answers to questionnaires did not indicate a wide variation among learners' responses. Responses to the questions showed that learners strongly supported using a cellphone to retrieve information and feedback. By the same token, more than 90% of the participants also acknowledged the advantages that cellphones can offer to their learning, including providing opportunities for group learning and refining problem solving skills. Moreover, the general consensus in the answers was that m-learning needs to establish arena to bring together areas in practice in order to illuminate existing or possible interconnections between them. Data for the students' attitudes revealed the subjects' greater support of social aspect of mobile technology for learning English.

Analysis of the learners' response to questionnaire revealed that majority of the learners believed that context of mobile mediated interaction is more important than formal one because its conjunction

with non-formality of the setting supplies learners with richer information relating to points that were problematic to them in non-interactive conditions. The appearance of learning contents in nonclassroom settings triggers adjustments by the learners facilitates learning process because it connects what they were taught in formal settings and their understandings in informal environment. In fact, learners' continuous access to virtual educational environment enables them to practice what they already know, thus helping them to automatize their discourse and linguistic knowledge. In addition, because it constitutes an open non-formal domain, it leaves the learning problem up to the learners how to resolve it.

Table 5
Learners' Attitudes towards Mode and Manner of Content Delivery

Attitudes towards	N	%	Sig.
M-learning	639	0.94	0.000
culture-based materials	619	0.91	0.000

$P < .05$

Discussion and conclusions

Low student achievement scores in the case of materials devoid of cultural issues indicate that the mere conversion of conventional one-size-fits-all instructional contents to digital ones without taking cultural into consideration is not meeting the needs of diverse student population in Iran.

To some extent, members of Arab community did better in learning English form of Islamic instructions, though this was in the case of such major skill as reading. Such results could be ensued from the Arab learner's background knowledge of Islamic instructions as the original language of such instructions, although translations have been done into various languages, they all refer back to the original Arabic. Thus, their understanding was much easier. This result was offset with different materials be devoid of Islamic instructions. Arabs' outperformance with culture-based materials and Turkish learners' almost similar performance on both groups highlighted the impact of

both first language and culture on learning EFL. Accordingly, being able to choose among many different kinds of instructions provides more social value than would be present were only Islamic instructions available; therefore, this amounts to saying that the value of pedagogy is higher in multicultural societies than it is in single culture societies.

Results showed outweighed performance of culture-based group of learners. This reflects two factors. First, through m-learning this group of learners had dealing with didactic materials (i.e., anytime and everywhere access) considerably longer than other traditional groups. In other words, English fluency increases with the duration of time that the learner has been in contact with didactic materials. The second, employing multimedia for delivery of technology-enhanced content and flexible types of learning materials to L2 learners paves the way for them to a larger proportion to be in touch with pedagogical environment. This result has already been suggested by Peltzman (2013) that mere adoption of these new standards will be inadequate. Success in each state will hinge on enforcement: the strategies used to improve instruction in every context, the continuous supports provided to all learners, policy changes to elevate coherence and adjustment and an undertaking for building and keeping widespread understanding of and support for the new standards. New studies should leave behind the features of the assessment that are irrelevant to what is being measured, so that all students can more accurately demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

The results reached in this study show that L2 materials developers ignored learners' native culture quite frequently and mostly to develop conventional didactic contents. This can be attributed to the fact that some authors believe that cultural matters should not be transferred through the textbooks (Ketabi & Talebinejad, 2009). However, the greater use of native cultures in developing digital activities seems to have some bearing on the quality of the L2 text produced. Culturally responsive teaching respecting the cultures and experiences of various groups and then uses these as resources for teaching and learning. It appreciates the existing strengths and accomplishments of all students and develops them further in instruction (Gay, 2000). Though this general pattern cannot be understood more than suggestive due to the specificity of conditions, students, age, writing genre used, the finding

may be associated with the theory that L2 learners revert to their mother culture while learning L2 in case they experience some heterogeneity between two cultures. Such contexts compelling educators to reconsider some of the taken-for-granted theoretical and pedagogical assumptions about EFL. Therefore, didactic materials producers need to smooth the way to assess and compare foreign cultures to balance them by incorporating the students' native cultures as a fundamental basis. The situation between the two cultures, also defined as third place (Kramsch, 1993), rows in the interstices between the cultures the learner grew up with and new cultures he or she is being introduced to. Overall, the results thus obtained seem to bear testimony to the claims cultural globalization is not about the uniformity of national ways of living and beliefs and values but instead involves the rather permanent connections among different cultures, and that cultural globalization is a process in which agreement on mutual concerns can be achieved through helpful interactions among different communities (Li, 2002; Yu, 2008).

Results unfolded that although the case of L1 and L2 structural differences suggests keeping them distinct as many difficulties in learning the second language are to do with the formal differences, similarity of linguistic items in languages smooth the way for successful learning of L2 (Faerch & Kasper, 1983). Arab learners' success in this learning new culture-based English vocabulary items propounds the idea that that grafting L1 and L2 in the process of learning L2 may be resorted to for a special purpose, e.g., some may plan their L2 learning process in L1 first, some others use L1 to curtail the way for access to pellucid ideas to develop novel ones, and still others may rely on L1 to solve linguistic problems or to shun cognitive overloading (Wang, 2003; Whalen & Menard, 1995; Woodall, 2002; Zarei & Amir yousefi, 2011).

This study presented general pattern of learners' favorable attitudes towards language learning in mobile-mediated environment may be accounted for by the fact that the easy and omnipresent accessibility of mobile technology removes the limitations of learning associated with the confines of classrooms and provides unique opportunity for the learners to connect their own learning to their real world experiences, developing new ways for combining what is learnt in the classroom

and what should be learnt outside, and helps them to get over the bottlenecks they encounter and also respond flexibly to a range of possible options as the contexts of learning vary. On the other hand, the widespread acceptance of information and communication technologies in nonlearning contexts does not necessarily guarantee efficacious or valued results in educational contexts (Kennedy & Levy, 2008).

The overall conclusion from this study is that the module does well to explain learners' performance from social perspective for any given group or all groups taken together at any point in time. The module does less well in accounting for variations on psychological view in performance rates. Using these results to achieve proactive strategies helps to reduce the stress of material developers and teachers and will lead to better applications that contain well-developed projects.

However, how to apply mobile technology to social education, especially in learning English communication for nonnative English speakers, is an area that requires further investigation. To renovate cultural issues so that it may keep pace with changing times seems indispensable. Likewise, prospective teachers of English, as well as English educators and material generators must now be much more attuned than they were in the past.

Learning English form of Islamic instructions can be considered a type of immersion program through which L2 learners by using the target language across the curriculum in courses other than language will have real experiences with the language (Ellis, 2008).

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Appendix A

In the Name of God

Questionnaire for Teaching English as a Foreign Language through Mobile to Iranian Students

Dear students,

This questionnaire investigates the role of mobile technology – as a prominent component of the new media field – in teaching English to Iranian learners. In order to prepare and develop educational content fit for this kind of technology, we examine the effects of culture, society, native language, gender, age and demography of Iranian learners. Questions in this regard will be sent to you via short texting. As soon as you get any question send the answer via the same channel to the SMS system.

All the best,

Saeed Khazaie (saeed.khazaie@gmail.com)

Level of education:	Number of family members:
Age:
.....
Gender:	Email address (optional):
.....	City you study in:
.....

Section A:

- 1) In your opinion, which English language skills can be taught through mobile communication technologies?

.....

.....

- Considering the availability of educational content at any time and any place, what kind of program for learning English through mobile communication do you find useful?

.....

.....

.....

Section B:

R		I agree completely	I agree	No view on the matter	I disagree	I disagree completely
1	Mobile communication allows me to always be available for my family.					
2	Having a cellphone allows me to stay informed about my family when I am not at home.					
3	I feel safe having a cellphone.					
4	Can the phone every time I'm in touch with my friends.					
5	At any time and any place, I can send jokes, set meetings, and send interesting messages.					
6	If I can't talk face to face, I send it via SMS.					
7	I feel my family manage my daily affairs with cellphones.					
8	I enjoy that I can use my phone to call, write short texting, play games, and take photos					
9	Having a cellphone is part of my social character.					
10	I find the benefits of nonformal education outside of the classroom very useful.					
11	Learning English through mobile communications can be an alternative to traditional education.					
12	The similarity between native culture and English culture helps in learning English as a foreign language.					
13	The similarity of them other language to the English language helps in learning English.					
14	The age of learners learning English as a foreign language is important.					
15	Learners' gender in learning English as a foreign language is important.					
16	Teaching English as a foreign language through the mobile communication is effective for people having different linguistic levels.					
17	Teaching English as a foreign language through the mobile communication is effective in spreading and promoting Islam.					

Section C:

R		Very much	a lot	sometimes	a little	very little
1	How much do you like to spend time with a crowd?					
2	When you learn something while with you are with friends how much better do you think you learn it?					
3	How much better do you learn when with friends?					
4	When you want to study for exams how inclined are you to do it with classmates?					

Appendix B

Proper time and text messaging frequency were indicated in responses to questions relating to curriculum matters included in a questionnaire distributed to participants of the study.

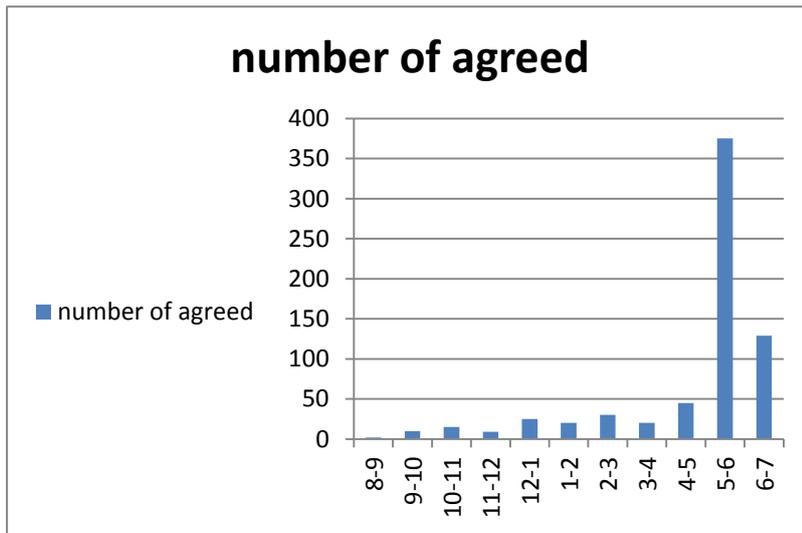


Figure 1. Students' preferences for the timing of

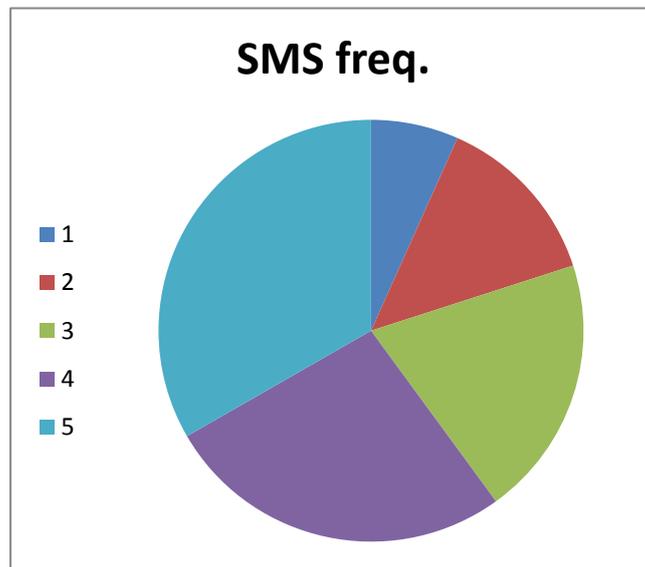


Figure 2. Students' preferences for the frequency of messages (five short texting each virtual session)