

Electronic Media in Assisting Teaching of English in Classroom: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper reflects explore and compare various types of the old and the new media, which are commonly used in the EFL classrooms at the Czech secondary schools in the 21st century. The key question is to what extent are the new media implemented into the English lessons at the Czech grammar and secondary technical and vocational schools. The findings of the online questionnaire survey, which was conducted on the random sample of the Czech Secondary school teachers of English and on the sample of the 15 or 16 years old first grade secondary school students of English proved that both the old and the new media are commonly used in the English lessons. However, despite the fact that the lives of the 21st century students are largely influenced by the new media, the English teachers use the old media more often. It is recommended that more initiatives and programmes should be directed at the promotion of the implementation of the new media into the English lessons and also at the training of the teachers in using them effectively.

1. Introduction

The successful English teachers adapt their teaching techniques to fit the students' needs and the needs of the society they live in. As the new media such as notebooks or smartphones with the Internet play a significant role in the lives of the 21st century students living in the modern society, the implementation of the new media into the EFL classrooms is one of the main concerns of the 21st century pedagogy. The key question is to what extent are the new media implemented into the English lessons at the Czech grammar or secondary technical and vocational schools.

Various types of the media have always created an indispensable part of the EFL classrooms since they bring the authentic elements into the lessons. These elements help the students to get closer to the real-life situations and make the learning of English more genuine and lively.

The teacher's questionnaire, which was sent to a random sample of the grammar or secondary technical and vocational school teachers of English, was aimed at answering the following four hypotheses:

H1: The English teachers use a great variety of media in their lessons; however, the printed media are more prevalent.

H2: When the electronic media are used in the English lessons, they are used for manifold purposes.

H3: The English teachers are aware of the influence of the new media on students' learning of English.

H4: The media contribute to the changes in teaching style of the English teachers.

The student's questionnaire, which was given to the 15 or 16 years old students, who attend the first grades at the grammar or secondary technical and vocational schools, was targeted on validating or disproving the following four hypotheses:

H1: The new media are more popular with students than the old media.

H2: Students use the Internet for manifold purposes.

H3: Students regard the new media as more effective tools for studying English than the old media.

H4: Students wish to use portable computers in their English lessons.

2. Media Literacy: A Definition

The definition most often cited in the US is a succinct sentence hammered out by participants at the 1992 Aspen Media Literacy Leadership Institute:

... **the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.**

Definitions, however, evolve over time and a more robust definition is now needed to situate media literacy in the context of its importance for the education of students in a 21st century media culture. CML's *MediaLit Kit*TM uses this expanded definition:

Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms – from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

2.1. Benefits of media literacy education

"We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge."

--John Naisbitt, Megatrends

1. Meets the needs of students to be wise consumers of media, managers of information and responsible producers of their ideas using the powerful multimedia tools of a global media culture.

2. Engages students. . . bringing the world of media into the classroom connects learning with “real life” and validates their media culture as a rich environment for learning.

3. Gives students and teachers alike a common approach to critical thinking that, when internalized, becomes second nature for life.

2.2. Ideas for introducing media literacy in your school or district

Compiled from questions to CML and what we’ve learned over many years!

1. Start with your best, most enthused teachers.

- A single teacher working alone can often feel isolated and become frustrated; working as a team or group provides support and builds motivation.

- Middle school is good place to start as collaborative learning and interdisciplinary units are already quite common at middle school level. But any collaborative teaching team in a department or a grade can experiment with introducing media literacy concepts across the curriculum.

2. Explore your state or local standards to see how teaching media literacy skills can support what you’re already mandated to teach.

- Media literacy is not a new subject to teach but a new way to teach all subjects!

- Media literacy is a logical extension of traditional language arts: reading/writing and listening/speaking; today we must add *viewing* (reading) and creating/producing (writing) using all *media* forms

3. Acknowledge our “love/hate” relationship with media and popular culture.

- Encourage an attitude of inquiry and exploration of media and popular culture rather than disparagement or dismissal. Remember, everyone tries to “make meaning” out of their media experiences. Acknowledge that many points of view and interpretations are possible and no single view is always “right” or “wrong.”

3. Media in education

Education should prepare students for the real life. Nowadays, many people live in the world where the media are ubiquitous and as Tafani points out, “media are important because we get to know the world through using them” (2). They work as tools which provide people with the information about the world. It is the reason why the media can be considered to be a useful instrument, which can help students with their learning. Clark & Morrison approve this assumption and point out that “educators have examined the impact of media on learning since at least 1912, when the American psychologist Edward L. Thorndike recommended pictures as a labor saving device for instruction”.

3.2. The use of media in the efl classrooms

No matter what type of media is used in the EFL classroom be it a magazine picture, a short video or a tablet application, it is commonly used for the purpose of bringing a piece of real world into the lesson. As Chan observes, “media are essentially realia to be brought into a classroom from the

outside world in an attempt to make language activities appear more realistic, more interactive, and therefore, more meaningful” (132). Moreover, the authentic materials “are regarded as motivators and as a means to overcome the cultural barrier to language learning” (Erbaggio et al.). Erbaggio et al. further observe that “using authentic materials allows students to connect with the target culture in a more personal way than if the culture is presented uniquely through someone else’s narrative” (e.g. the authors of the English textbook). It means that the use of media in the EFL classrooms is essential for a successful second language acquisition.

4. Analytical Part

4.1. General Tendencies

When the English teachers think of the foreign language teaching at the secondary schools in the 21st century, the two aspects they probably consider first are the means of motivation of their students and the effectiveness of the teaching process.

4.1.1. Teachers And Media

The use of the new media in the 21st century English classrooms positively affects the student’s learning. As Balanskat reports, “in general, teachers are convinced that ICT has a lot of positive impact on pupils’ learning and on their learning outcomes” (21). She adds that teachers think that the use the new media in their classrooms also has a direct influence on their teaching method and the school climate. Using ICT for assessment, as a follow up of lessons and as a means of communication between teachers, students or parents is less common (Balanskat 23).

Yet despite realizing their benefits, many English teachers may not feel confident about the implementation of the new media into their lessons. Bovill & Livingstone confirm that “teachers are acutely aware of the difficulties of introducing IT into classrooms” (34). Generally, they wish to have “more and better teacher training, more technical back-up, and more money” (Bovill & Livingstone 34). The problem is that although many schools decide on more technology-based lessons, they very often do not provide their teachers with sufficient technical support, guidance and practice. Motteram says that “research indicates that training in ICT skills is crucial in implementing ICT integration in the teaching and learning of English and the extent to which teachers are given time and access to pertinent training to use computers to support learning plays a major role in determining whether or not technology has a major impact on achievement, in many cases, however, this training is not given, and more likely than not, teachers are left to their own devices” (46). The effect of this is that some English teachers cannot sufficiently command the new media and they may develop negative attitudes towards them. Nevertheless, many teachers are self-educated or as Balanskat points out, they are used to observing other teachers using technology in order to provide them with feedback or they are participating in online professional discussions on these topics (23). Motteram says that “these teachers build their own personal learning network and connect with other teachers around the world to share what they know and help others learn” (46).

With respect to the teaching style, over 60% of teachers say that their way of teaching has changed after they had started using the electronic media in their lessons (Cuban 94). They observe the changes primarily in more efficient planning, in more frequent communication with colleagues and parents via emails and in their use of the Internet, which is perceived as a valuable source of materials. In reality, however, the researchers who observed the English lessons say that although the new media were used in the lessons, the teaching techniques did not change much. In her study, Cuban reports that "all but a few of the 35 different teachers used a familiar repertoire of instructional approaches. [...] For the most part, teacher-centered instruction was the norm, even in computer-based classes" (95). Balanskat approves it as well and says that "almost all teachers apply traditional teaching approaches on a regular basis, using ICT or not" (23). Furthermore, although "most of the teachers feel competent to use the Internet and general ICT-based applications, teaching with technology (pedagogical competence) and using a specific device or technology (technology use), fewer teachers feel competent in the use of virtual learning environments and using social networking tools" (Balanskat 23).

4.1.2. Students and media

It can be said the 21st century students of English are keen media users. For instance, Vahlberg informs that in the United States, "young people spend about as much time consuming media every day (7 hours, 38 minutes) as their parents spend working" (3). Out of this time, only 3 minutes on average are spent on reading newspapers and 9 minutes are spent on reading magazines. This research was conducted among 8-18 year-olds.

Similar findings were presented by the Czech researchers in the project called Media Projekt. They observe that the percentage of young people aged 12-19 who read newspapers decreased by about 50% from 2006 to 2013. Nevertheless, they say that many young people do read news, but they prefer their reading on the Internet: it was found out that two thirds of the Internet users follow the news online.

It can be inferred from these findings that not many English students nowadays read the printed newspapers; however, 25% they are likely to follow the news on the Internet. Reading magazines is still quite popular, which also approve Clark et al., who say that magazines are together with the websites and emails the media most frequently read by children outside school (9).

Books are not included in Clark's list. Her team found out that although books and poetry are traditionally promoted by schools, students prefer reading other types of the media. Clark's assumption was approved by the data of the survey conducted by the National Library of the Czech Republic. It was found out that half of the Czech 9-14 year-olds find literature uninteresting and boring and only one third of the respondents read books regularly (Richter). As Richter points out, students are rather attracted to film or television viewing or to working and playing games on the computers. Filová even says that people in the 16 to 24 age group are in comparison with the adults aged 25 and over the most frequent users of

personal computers (95.4%), the Internet (94.8%) and social networks (71%). 98.7% of the Czech citizens aged 16 to 24 use a mobile phone (Filová). Furthermore, the European survey called EU Kids Online reported that the 15-16 year-olds spend on average 2 hours a day on the Internet and to most of them, the Internet became more important than television, but less important than the mobile phones (Šebeš).

Considering the purpose for which the students of English may predominantly use the Internet, Šebeš reports that 85% of Czech children use it for school work, 83% of them use it for playing PC games and 76% watch video clips online. In addition, the European study EU Kids Online shows that 59% of 9-16 year-olds has a profile on a social networking site and 40% of them also share pictures or information there. Only 11% of the children using the Internet write their own blog.

5. Survey

5.1. Aims and purposes

The aim of this survey is to explore teachers' and students' attitudes and preferences towards the media and to find out which types of the media are commonly used in the 21st century EFL classrooms at the secondary schools in the West Bengal. The purpose of the study is to relate the findings to the eight hypotheses, which were delineated in the introductory part.

5.2. Methodology

5.2.1. Data collection technique

A quantitative method in the form of a questionnaire was chosen for the purpose of the survey and two different online questionnaires were created: one for the teachers and one for the students. The data were collected in the Google forms, which were created on the Google Drive.

5.2.2. Teacher's Questionnaire

5.2.2.1. Research Sample

The teacher's questionnaire is aimed at secondary school teachers of English. The research sample consists of 105 respondents.

The range of the research sample was carefully considered prior to the start of the survey. The question was if to limit the research to the grammar school teachers of English or not since the context of various types of the secondary schools might differ, e.g. their scope, financial resources or the competencies of the pedagogical staff. But in the end it was decided not to limit the research and direct it to a more general level.

The representatives of the sample of teachers were the secondary technical and vocational school teachers from state and private schools. They were selected randomly and they were addressed by an e-mail, which contained an accompanying letter²⁰.

5.2.2.2. Description of the questionnaire

The teacher's questionnaire consists of 13 questions out of which 3 questions can be considered to be open format questions as the respondents could fill in the entry called 'other' with their ideas. The rest of the questions are closed

format questions. The last 2 questions are asking about the gender and the length of the teaching practice. These questions should give more information about the profile of the research sample. At the end of the questionnaire it was possible to enter a commentary on the topic.

The questionnaire was piloted to a selected grammar school English teacher, who provided the author with valuable comments. The option 'always' was added into the questions 1, 2 and 8. The explanation of the term 'interactive textbook' was provided in question 5. The formulation 'in your opinion' was added into the question 6 so that it was obvious that the teachers should give their own opinion, not the opinion of the students. In question 10, the option 'lesson preparation' was reformulated into 'lesson preparation is more demanding' as the original option proved to be unclear.

5.2.3. Student's Questionnaire

5.2.3.1. Research sample

The student's questionnaire is aimed at the secondary school students of English. The research sample consists of 103 respondents. The survey was limited to 15-16 year-olds, i.e. to the students of the first grades at the secondary schools. This age group was selected for two reasons. Firstly, this age group was a subject of many studies conducted on this topic²² and the findings of the research can be compared with them. Secondly, I have a direct and fresh experience with teaching English to the first graders, which helps to understand them better.

The representatives of the sample were addressed at the secondary schools, which are cooperating with the Faculty of Education, Calcutta University.

5.2.3.2. Description Of The Questionnaire

The questionnaire 23 features 11 closed format questions and 1 open format question asking about the age of the respondents.

Before the questionnaire was released, it was piloted to my brother who is a 16 years old grammar school student. Based on his comments, some of the questions or options were altered and made clearer. The explanation of the formulation 'share content on the Internet' was added into the parenthesis in question 1. The option 'always' was added into the questions 4 and 6. The option 'notebooks, netbooks or tablets with the Internet (i.e. portable computers)' in questions 5, 7, 8 and 10 was changed into 'portable computers with the Internet (i.e. notebooks, netbooks or tablets)'.

5.3. Presentation and analysis of the results

In this part, the findings of the survey are arranged into charts. The exact numbers of responses concerning each question are summarised in tables in the Appendices²⁴.

5.3.1. Part 1 – Teacher's Questionnaire

5.3.1.1. Profile Of The Respondents

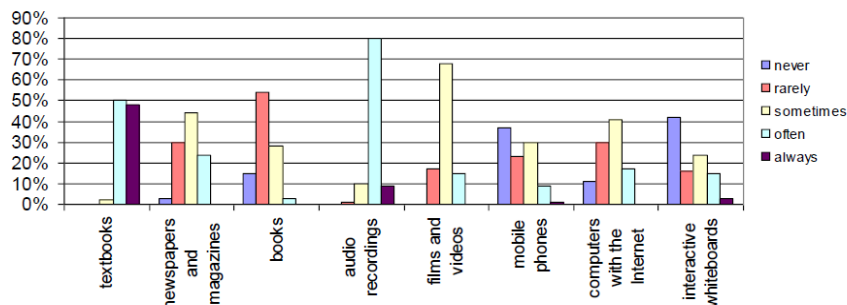
Among the 105 respondents, there were 18% of men and 82% of women. Very few male teachers, who were addressed, actually answered the questionnaire, which caused this gender imbalance. Considering the length of the teaching practice, the majority of the respondents can be regarded as experienced teachers who teach for 11-20 (30% of respondents), 21-30 423 (30%) and 31 and more years (15%).

5.3.1.2. Hypotheses Concerning Teachers

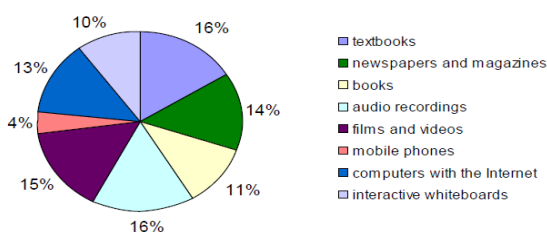
H1: The English teachers use a great variety of media in their lessons; however, the printed media are more prevalent.

H1: The English teachers use a great variety of media in their lessons; however, the printed media are more prevalent.

How often do your students use the following media in their English lessons?



Which media do you regard as effective tools for teaching English?



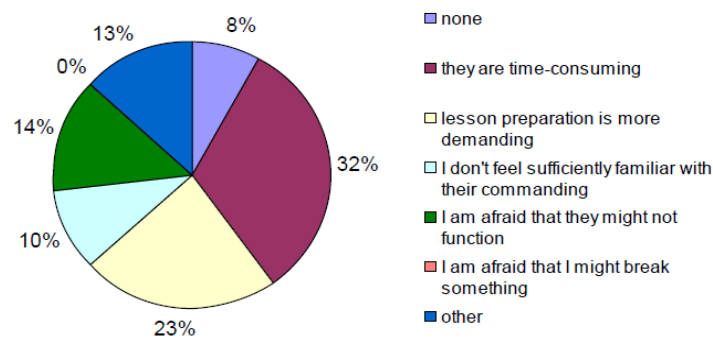
It was found out that the English teachers use most commonly textbooks and audio recordings in their lessons: 98% said that they use the textbook always or often and 89% of teachers surveyed use the audio recordings always or often. The third most commonly used media in the lessons are newspapers and magazines: 24% of the teachers use them often and 44% of the teachers use them sometimes.

More than half of the teachers surveyed also use a computer with the Internet often or sometimes (58%), which means that this medium has already gained its place in the English lessons and it is used repeatedly. Its effectiveness is

also seen as high: 80% of all the teachers surveyed regard this medium as effective.

Despite the fact that the interactive whiteboards are not used much by the Czech teachers of English, almost half of the respondents, 47%, reported that they would like to start using an interactive textbook. According to this finding it can be inferred that there is a number of teachers who would like to use an interactive whiteboard, but something hinders them in their efforts, e.g. their school is insufficiently equipped or they lack the required training. 21% of the English teachers already use an interactive textbook and it mostly suits them. 28% of teachers are not tempted to start using the interactive textbook and 5% of teachers use it and it does not suit them.

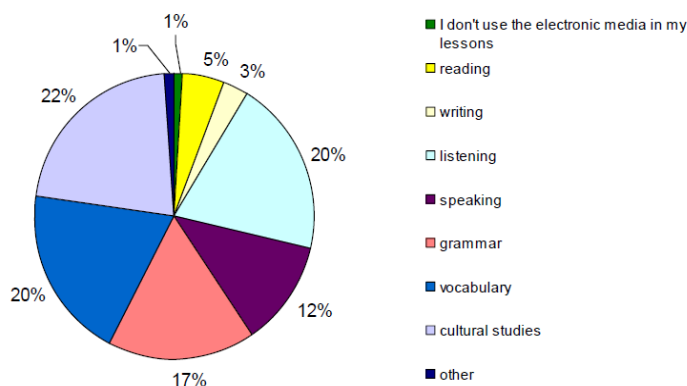
Which obstacles do you perceive when you think of the use of the electronic media in your English lessons?



The two most frequently named obstacles, which hinder the teachers in using the electronic media in their English lessons, are time (32% said that they are too time-consuming) and the lesson preparation (23% said that it is more demanding). 14% mentioned the potential technical problems,

13% think that there are other problems and 10% of respondents feel an insufficient familiarity with the commanding of the electronic media. No obstacles were represented by 8% of the answers.

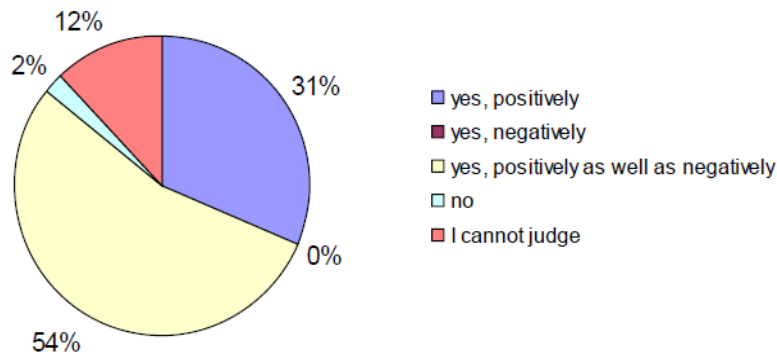
Which language skills and language systems do you develop through the electronic media in your English lessons most often?



Moreover, teachers find the electronic media suitable for developing the cultural studies (22%), listening and vocabulary (20% each), grammar (17%) and speaking (12%). These media are not often used for developing reading (5%), writing (3%) and other (1%) skills.

These findings prove that the electronic media are used for manifold purposes. Teachers are not only aware of this fact, only 2 out of 105 respondents said that they do not use the electronic media at all, but the electronic media are also used for the development of a great variety of competencies.

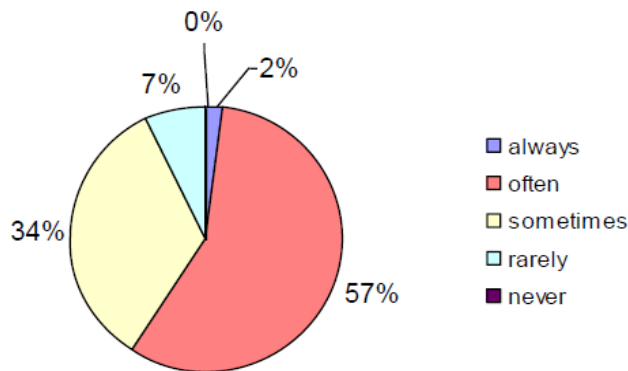
Does the playing of PC games affect the way English is learnt by students?



Besides, more than half of the teachers, 54%, think that the PC games affect positively as well as negatively the way English is learnt by students and 31% of respondents think that they affect students' English learning positively. 12% of

respondents remained indecisive and 2% do not think that playing the PC games affect the way English is learnt by students. No one of the teachers surveyed think that they influence the way of learning English negatively.

When you prepare your English lessons, how often do you use the Internet?



In connection with the use of media, three quarters of respondents think that their teaching style has changed in recent years. 12% of respondents do not think so and 12% cannot judge. This finding implies that the media are a powerful tool, which affects the way the teachers approach the teaching of English. It also means that as the media are changing and developing further, teachers are responding to these changes too. For instance, 78% of teachers responded that they use a computer for the preparation of their English lessons always or often, 20% of them use it sometimes and only 2% use it rarely or never. The Internet is always or often used for the preparation of the English lessons by 59% of respondents. 34% use it sometimes and 7% rarely. No one voted for the option 'never'.

The new media are a good tool for learning English.

- Interactive whiteboards are a great tool for me. So do the interactive textbooks from *Headway* and the on-line language games.
- In addition to the traditional lessons, I run seminars called 'News in English', which are essentially based on the use of the online broadcasting of CNN and BBC. The Internet is an indispensable part of these lessons.
- The new media are a good tool for learning English, but...
- We cannot hinder the development. At school we have a variety of the interactive whiteboards, which I use regularly and my colleagues as well. In my opinion, working with notebooks and tablets in the lessons is beneficial.

5.3.2. Part 2 – Student's Questionnaire

5.3.2.1. Profile Of The Respondents

36% of boys and 64% of girls aged 15 or 16 were among the 103 respondents. These were the grammar school as well as the secondary vocational school students. The gender

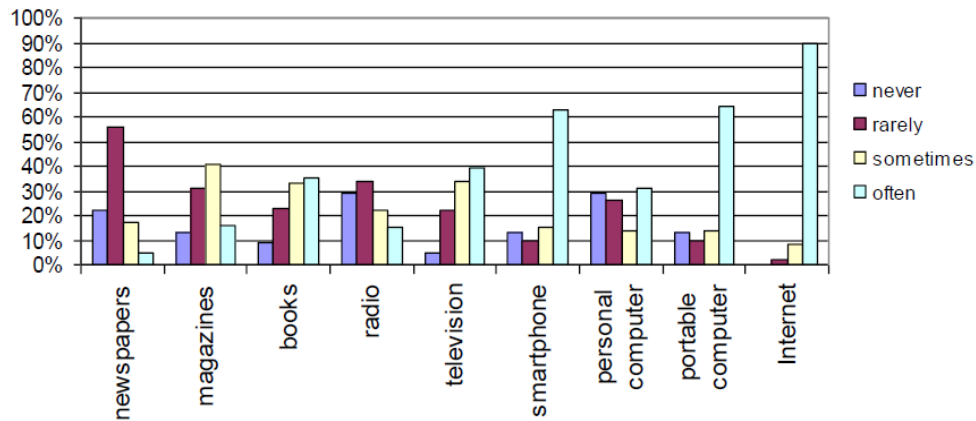
imbalance may affect the results of the questionnaire to a certain degree because as it was outlined in the theoretical part, girls' attitudes towards the new media, especially to the

Internet and games playing are usually different. They typically spend less time on them than boys.

3.3.2.2. Hypotheses concerning students

H1: The new media are more popular with students than the old media.

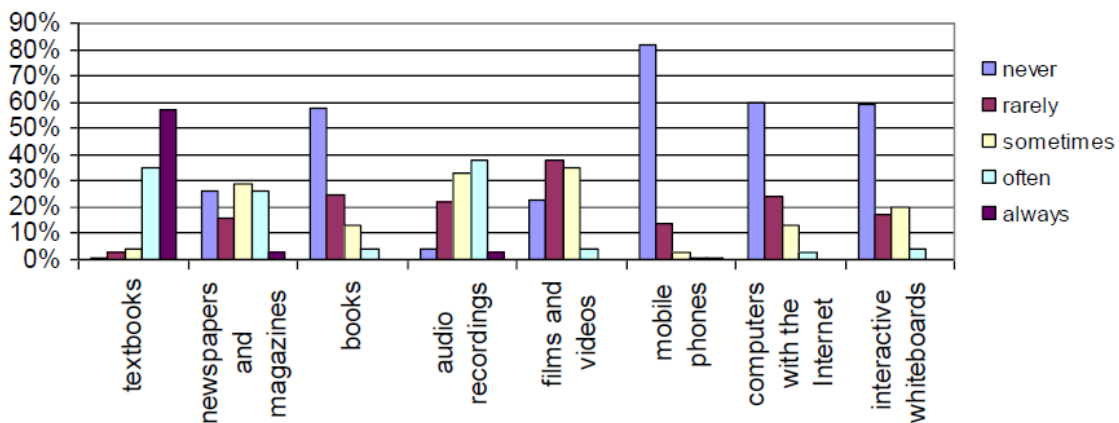
When you are out of school, how often do you use the following media?



The media which students use most often in their free time are the Internet (90%), portable computers (64%) and smartphones (63%). These are followed by television (39%), books (35%) and personal computers (31%). Magazines are

the media which are most commonly used sometimes: 41% of respondents chose this option. The survey shows that the 21st century students only rarely read newspapers and listen to the radio.

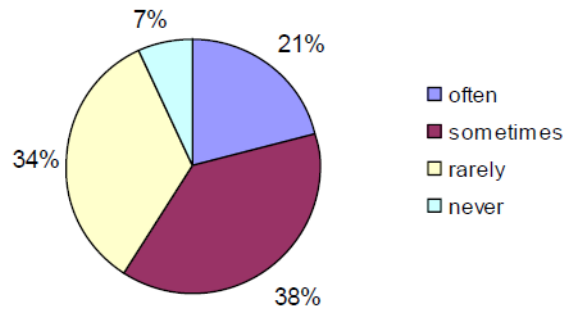
How often are the following media used in your English lessons?



According to the survey, the English lessons of the secondary school first graders are largely determined by textbooks: these are used either always (57%) or often (35%). Audio recordings or newspapers and magazines are used quite often: 38% and 26% of the respondents agreed with that. Films and videos, on the contrary, are most commonly used sometimes (35%).

Students most commonly use the Internet for information searching (69%), using social networking tools (67%) and watching films, series and videos (64%). Sometimes they also use their e-mail (36%). On the other hand, playing PC games is not as popular as it was expected: 61% of the English students say that they do it rarely or never. The results would be probably different, if there were more boys surveyed. The majority of students also do not write their own blog (89%) or do not administer own webpages (88%).

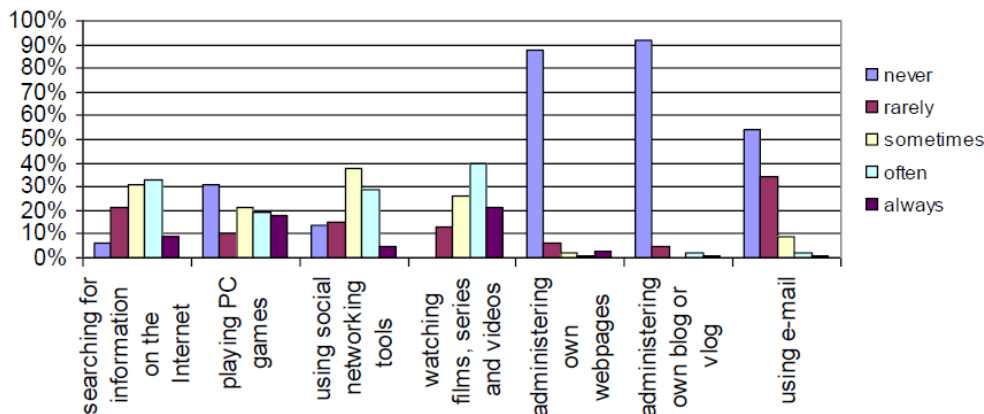
How often do you share content on the Internet?



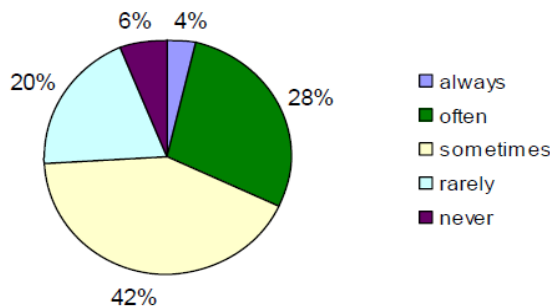
Nevertheless, more than half of the students surveyed share content on the Internet: 59% of respondents said that they share information, commentaries, photos or videos often or sometimes. 34% do it rarely and only 7% of the respondents do it never. Based on these findings it can be assumed that when the English teacher decides on the implementation of an

online activity based on sharing the content, e.g. students are asked to write a blog or a website in English, the students might be expected to have no problems with establishing a supportive interactive environment because many of the students already regularly add commentaries on the web or share photos or videos with their peers in their mother tongue.

How often do you use English when doing the following activities?



How often do you use the Internet for studying English?



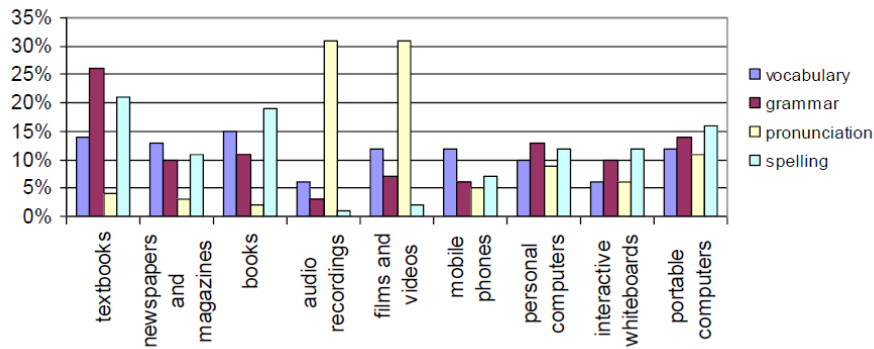
According to the findings, students use English always or often for watching films and videos (61%), searching information on the Internet (42%) and playing PC games (37%). More than half of the students, 67%, use it often or sometimes when using the social networking tools. It means that English is quite commonly used in the free time activities of the secondary school students and the Internet or playing

PC games can help them with its practice. The Internet is not only utilized for searching for information in English, but it is also quite often used for studying the language. Only 26% of respondents say that they use it for this purpose rarely or never.

These results show that the old media are considered to be more effective for studying English than the new media,

which disproves the original hypothesis.

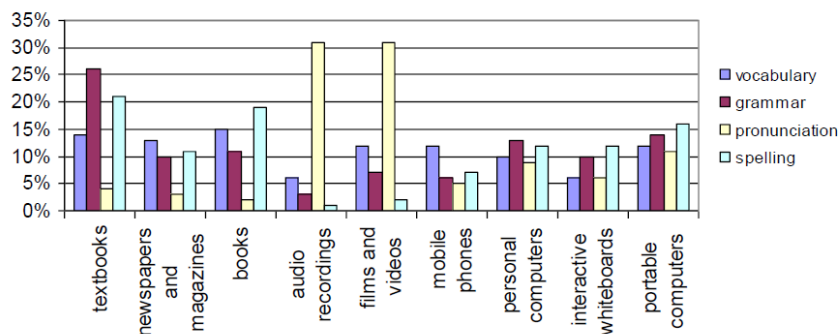
Which of the following media help you learn effectively the English vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling?



It was found out in the survey that the traditional printed media such as textbooks, newspapers and magazines or books are similarly considered to be effective tools for studying English by the first graders. The traditional electronic media such as audio recordings or films and videos are also regarded

as useful tools, which help with the study of English. These results show that the old media are considered to be more effective for studying English than the new media, which disproves the original hypothesis.

Which of the following media help you learn effectively the English vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling?

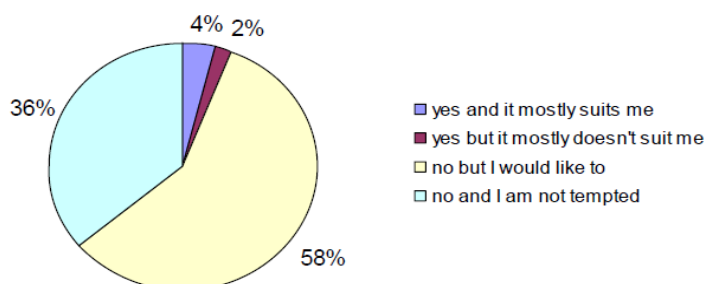


The results show that textbooks are considered to be the most effective medium, which helps the students to learn English vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling effectively. Textbooks were mentioned in 65% of responses.

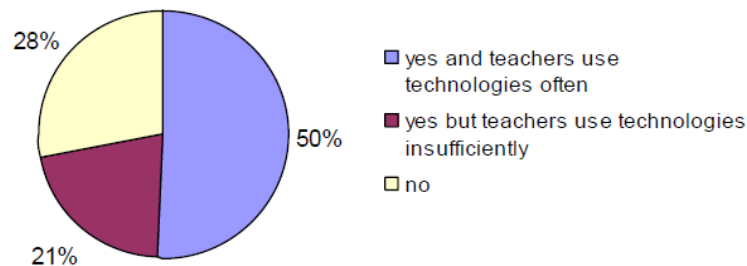
Yet the second most effective tool for learning vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling is a portable computer: 53% of students voted for this option.

H4: Students wish to use portable computers in their English lessons.

Do you use a portable computer with the Internet access in your English lessons?



Does your school have sufficient technical equipment?



Only 6% of students have a portable computer available in their English lessons. 58% of respondents do not have one, but would like to. 36% of them do not have one and they are not tempted to use it in the lessons. It means that the use of portable devices in the English lessons by students is not common and more than half of the students wish to start using them.

6. Conclusion

The key question was to what extent are the new media implemented into the English lessons at the secondary schools.

The survey was focused on the secondary school teachers and students of English. For the first part of the survey, the sample of the teachers was chosen randomly. The first-grade students aged 15 or 16, who are attending the four selected secondary schools, created the target group for the second part of the survey. An online questionnaire was chosen as a research method of the survey. The teacher's and student's questionnaires were created with the aim to verify or

disprove eight hypotheses concerning the use of media in the EFL classrooms at the secondary schools.

Both the old and the new media are commonly used and regarded as effective. In terms of the frequency of use, the old media are used more often than the new media and it is probably the reason why the students of English regard the old media as more effective tools for studying English than the new media. In contrast, the findings confirm that the new media are more popular with the secondary school English students than the old media. In their free time the students prefer the new media to the old ones. Especially the Internet is frequently used by the 21st century secondary school students of English. The findings show that they regularly use English when they are online and they also consider the Internet to be a useful tool for studying English.

For the practical application of the content, the ways in which the new media may be used for testing and assessment could be explored.

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