Assessing the Effects of Funds of Identity on L2 Learners' Willingness to Read E-books

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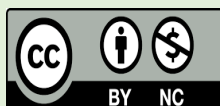reabdi@uma.ac.ir

Abstract

Objective: This study explores the effect of recruiting topics highly valued by students along with the interest-igniting mode of reading texts in the site of practice, collectively framed as funds of identity (FoI), on willingness to read (WTR).

Methods: To this end, three groups of students were recruited. Over a 17-session extracurricular experiment, all the three groups received books in and out of tune with their FoI, elicited through an initial-semester researcher-made questionnaire. One group ($n = 20$) received e-books with few interactive features, the second group ($n = 20$) received e-books with no interactive features, and the third group ($n = 20$) received print books. WTR and attitude changes toward e-books were assessed using initial- and final-semester questionnaires. Students were also required to send summaries of their readings and keep journals throughout the experiment. They finally gave a post-treatment interview.

Results: Qualitative sets of data in juxtaposition with quantitative ones lent support to the positive influence FoI and e-books—as on-site emerging FoI—exercised on WTR and attitude change toward e-books.

Conclusions: FoI operationalized through e-books increased learners' WTR. In light of the patterns of changes observed, FoI of students are suggested to be taken into consideration for obtaining better educational results.

Introduction

There is now a consensus among second language (L2) researchers that in light of students' funds of identity (FoI) surfaced, educational agendas can be (re)examined to boost pedagogical outcomes (Esteban-Guitar & Moll, 2014). FoI is framed as "the historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding" (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, 31). Such pieces of inside knowledge can be amassed through rapport-building negotiations or, at the minimum, through a simple questionnaire at the beginning of every academic year. Theoretically, FoI impacts L2 development through increasing willingness to communicate (WTC) in the classroom setting. The extant literature affords adequate data to claim that unfamiliar topics and by extension the topics incongruent with the lived experiences of students have proven dicourging for them (e.g., Zhang & Kim, 2014) decreasing their WTC indices significantly. Familiar topics and texts in conformity with students' dispositions, in constrst, have been reported to mitigate students' anxiety (e.g., Sellers, 2000) igntining their interest and investment in reading the texts assigned.

In instructed L2 pedagogy, students' deep engagement in communicative activities is reckoned to play an essential role in enhancing L2 proficiency. The quality of engagement is argued to be calibrated by the degree of WTC each individual appears to display. Learners with higher levels of WTC present more tendency to engage in communicative tasks inside and outside the classroom and consequently experience commensurate rates of L2 development (Ducker, 2022). L2 WTC is operationally defined as "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, 547). There exists a consensus among L2 researchers that due to its promises in L2 development, WTC has to be transcended to the position of the most prominent objective of L2 pedagogy (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 1998). As such, the impetus for an upsurge in research studies which seek to track down the factors, interventions, and strategies hypothesized to enhance WTC is fairly understandable.

Notwithstanding the fact that manipulation of FoI and WTC has given rise to continuously growing literature, possible connection between them remains underresearched. Mobilizing L2 learners' lived experiences and their emerging FoI in the site of practice is hypothesized to enhance willingness to read (WTR) as a splinter of WTC. With the *bring your own device* (BYOD) agenda at the door of classrooms worldwide, e-books—readily accessible on students' smartphones and other digital tools entertaining ubiquitous engagement possibilities—are hypothesized to serve as emerging FoI. Legitimizing students' FoI in the form of e-texts in lieu of print texts are likely to promote their WTR (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017) leading to deeper engagement of students with reading texts.

In brief, the present study is an attempt to examine the effect of FoI on increasing students' WTR mediated by interactive and non-interactive e-books. Also, alternative data is amassed through questionnaires, asking students to keep journals throughout the experiment, and conducting post-experiment interviews.

Literature Review

Funds of Knowledge/Identity in L2

Funds of knowledge was originally conceptualized to acknowledge the valuables Latina/o working class (un)settled in the U.S. had reluctantly buried fearing that they were judged as the cause of disgrace, loss, and exclusion than the source of grace, gain, and inclusion. Incrusted with *otherness* these "Hyphenated-Americans" (Salazar, 2013) were neither allowed to hybridize with the normative system of life and education nor legitimized to invest on their own capitals. These capitals were their lived experiences and practices in their households and communities that were devalued as irrelevant and inferior. Early research (e.g., Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992) strove to show how "deficit thinking paradigm" caused failure in students, their families, and their culture (e.g., Valencia, 2010). It took almost no time, however, for educational concerns of young children and adolescents of these families to be positioned at the stage center of funds of knowledge research (e.g., Ares & Buendia, 2007; Moll et al., 1992).

Long before running its due course to get inflated into a full-fledged perspective, funds of knowledge was denounced as inadequate to account for pedagogical practices. Single methodological approach for data collection and being confined to adult household practices were limitations that Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) flagged to propose an alternative conceptual framework. Transcending funds of knowledge from merely a package of accumulated lived experiences and practices of adults and communities amassed through some ethnographical techniques to the status of dynamically emerging identities in the process of co-adaptation, approached from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural tradition and Polman's (2010) "zone of proximal identity development," Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) styled it FoI. As they rightly asserted, children might develop a set of dispositions far different from adults' collective practices. To strike more synergy with students' academic identity co-constructed in the educational setting, they proposed sketching self-portrait and outlining significant circles directed at their dispositions that can be then negotiated.

Approached this way, funds of knowledge have been translated into "tangible forms of identity" carrying the potentiality to inform learning and teaching units (e.g., Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Researchers, however, have not unanimously subscribed to this nomenclature; rather, they have foregrounded students' dispositions within the framework of funds of knowledge in the same sense proposed to be gazed at through the lens of FoI warning against monolithic definition of the concept and data collection procedure (e.g., Hedges et al., 2011; Hogg, 2016; Moll et al., 1992; Rios-Aguilar, 2010). These studies have led to more cooperation among policymakers and practitioners in including students' out-of-school lives into curriculum and classroom practices (Waddington & Esteban-Guitart, 2024).

Following the lead of Esteban-Guitart (2012); (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014), we elect to employ FoI for students' emerging concerns inclusive of those rooted in their household collective practices, their identities emerging in the course of their agency in the site of practice in the formal educational settings, or emanating from as-yet to come yearns and desires.

Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011), celebrating the capital perspective (Bourdieu, 1986), countered the assumption that funds of knowledge per se can create educational possibilities. They

suggested making a connection between practices recognized as funds of knowledge and habitus framed as a set of fairly abiding dispositions which every individual develops and through which perceives, understands, and evaluates the world (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus, no doubt, is penetrable to the social system in the process of its formation over time. By way of illustration, a full picture of household resources and classroom practices can only be captured in light of social system or discourses operating as reigning mechanisms (though invisibly) in the accumulation of funds of knowledge and their probable functioning (e.g., Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011). As such, the relationship between funds of knowledge and educational possibilities might be thwarted at least at four levels, namely (mis)recognition, transformation, conversion, and activation (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011).

The FoI to be amassed for instructional purposes might fall under a range of different themes emanating from the past, dynamically and continually forming in the present, and projecting into the future. While funds of knowledge intimate merely accumulated lived experiences conjuring up the past, FoI instead extend well beyond past experiences and refocuses on a mix of experiences rooted in the past, inspired by learning activities the individual is engaged with, and future-looking wishes and desires reconfigured in the site of education. Interests then cannot be merely pinned down as the epitome of the funds of knowledge one already is in possession of; rather, they might serve as a package in which lived experiences, dreams in reach, and even wishful thinking are likely to get assembled, not to mention those that might newly and continually arise as a result of messing interactively up with learning activities. Left unacknowledged, this tapestry of knowledge runs the risk of depriving students of benefiting their lived experiences while attending to these resources can instead open up a variety of possibilities, reduce their stress arising from unfamiliar topics and culture, and increase their WTR.

On the other hand, reading e-books, compared with print materials, can serve as a source of cognitive load reduction (e.g., Kao et al., 2016) and subsequently boost reading confidence, reduce reading anxiety, and increase WTR indices. In addition to being an innovative mode adequately diffused, built-in multimedia effects including sound effects, hotspots, music, animation, and the like assigned to e-books make them more appealing to students in any age range.

Theorizing WTR

Being less a matter of personal trait than a situational variable, L2 WTC (MacIntyre et al., 1998) is highly amenable to facilitation and debilitation. In an attempt to dissociate L2 WTR as an independent construct from WTC, Khajavy and Ghonsooly (2017) framed it "readiness to read a text given the choice and opportunity" (p. 3). While motivation, communication self-confidence, classroom environment, attitude, and personality are hypothesized to help or hinder WTC, Khajavy and Ghonsooly (2017) rightly conceptualized motivation, anxiety, and perceived competence to be subject to variation from WTC to WTR as speaking and reading comprehension are targeted for different aims in different academic situations and more importantly, their modes of performance are less likely to arouse the same level of anxiety or call for an equal amount of self-confidence, all else assumed equal. Building upon communication confidence (Ghonsooly et al., 2012) and Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivational

self-system, Khajavy and Ghonsooly (2017) crafted a model of WTR in which L2 learning experience, ideal L2 self, and communication self-confidence were presented as positive predictors of WTR. Ought-to L2 self—assigned along with L2 learning experience and ideal L2 self to motivation—predicted WTR negatively. The ought-to self stands for the characteristics that one believes one should finally possess.

L2 learning experience, as the strongest predictor of WTR and also a correlate of communication confidence (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017), figures more prominent in espousing students in the immediate situation and experiences which are closely tied to learning process. Framed as motives inspired by situationally contingent drives (Dörnyei, 2009) in the site of practice, L2 learning experience is likely to be impacted by a couple of factors, not least of which are the teacher, activities undertaken, peers, feedback provided, assignments given, and the topics selected. Recruiting students' FoI in selecting texts for reading and using e-texts instead of print texts are likely to boost their WTR significantly (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017) leading to deeper engagement of students with reading texts.

Fear of unfamiliar topics and L2 form and fear of unfamiliar culture have been commonly singled out as factors that discourage students from reading any text (e.g., Zhang & Kim, 2014) and damage WTR indices. The teacher's guidance in an anxiety-free atmosphere and more importantly selecting English texts in conformity with students' FoI can temper their anxiety and "instill in students increased interest and motivation to learn" (Sellers, 2000, 513) whereby students may exude communication confidence as a key factor in WTR. To reveal the extent to which attending to students' FoI might affect students' WTR and also to survey students' perceptions of the treatment, the following research questions were formulated.

1. Would the participants' WTR change over time (before and after the treatment) under the influences of FoI operationalized through e-books? If yes, what is the trend of this change?

2. What are the students' attitudes toward e-books? What is the trend of their attitude change over time?

Method

Context and Participants

The public schools in Iran offer the English language as a compulsory subject for 7 years from grade 6 to 12. The textbooks developed and published by the Ministry of Education are claimed to foreground Islamic and Iranian identity of students (Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). In favor of the "grand" agenda, dismissed are students' needs and their lived history and teachers' professional identity concerns (e.g., Atai & Mazlum, 2013; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). Teachers are not offered any opportunity and authority to employ their innovative teaching strategies in the classroom and students fail to develop any level of proficiency in English albeit attending English classes in high school for years. Affluent and well-doing families more often than not elect to send their children to privately run English language institutes (ELIs) where all major skills of the English language are partially accommodated. Students from low-income families and those who reside in villages are not privileged enough to access these institutes. Regrettably, a big

number of families cannot afford the tuition fees that ELIs charge. When applying for any job or university entrance exams, these shortchanged students have to compete with their privileged peers.

A total of 60 (male: *n* = 36 and female: *n* = 24) Iranian public-school students with pre-intermediate proficiency level of English were recruited. They were either junior or high school students, respectively ranging in age between 13–15 and 15–18 (with a mean of 15.31). Being selected through purposive sampling, the students were randomly assigned to two experimental groups (the interactive e-book group and the read-only e-book group) and a control group (20 in each) balanced for gender. As techno-geek students, they were competent users of social networks particularly the WhatsApp platform through which they were supposed to receive any arrangements as to their public-school activities.

Materials and Instruments

Funds of Identity Questionnaire

A 30-item questionnaire was developed to elicit students' FoI. The isnsights for developing different items of the questionnaire were gained from the extant literature and 2 experts in the field. It consisted of eight multiple-choice, one yes/no, and 21 short answer items in Persian. Since attempts were made to cherry-pick e-books for each student relying on the information gleaned through the FoI questionnaire, the questions inquired into nuanced details. It was piloted on 15 students other than those who were to be recruited for the current study and some typographical errors were corrected.

WTR Questionnaire

To evaluate students' initial- and final-semester WTR, a 40-item WTR questionnaire on five-point Likert-type scale was adapted from the motivation for reading questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), with reliability indices between 0.43–0.81. The original questionnaire included 54 items out of which 14 were excluded following the judgmental criteria of scale purification decisions (Wieland et al., 2017). The questionnaire was then translated into Persian to make it comprehensible to students. This new version was piloted on 15 students with the same characteristics as the target sample and was subjected to some modifications.

Evaluation Questionnaire

An evaluation questionnaire with 15 items on 5-point Likert-type scale was designed by the authors to be administered both as the initial- and final-semester to evaluate their opinions on e-books. In developing the scale, the literature on the topic and views of 2 experts in L2 studies were taken into consideration. It was piloted on 15 students requiring no modifications to be made.

Interview

As a triangulation, a semi-structured interview was run to explore students' opinion on e-books and FoI. It included five questions and was conducted via WhatsApp in Persian. It lasted for 15 min for each individual. The questions were posted to the students in a package of voices. The students were free to send either a text message or a hold-to-talk voice message in Persian.

E-books

A total of 54 novel e-books were selected from the English e-reader website available at *https://english-e-reader.net/level/pre-intermediate* for free. The target e-books were selected from the B1 level appropriate for the pre-intermediate students. Their genres included a diverse range of themes including crime, fairy tales, historical fiction, etc. featuring topics including travel, crime, love, sport, school, pets, and so on. The e-books selected had an average page of 26.69 (the shortest e-book with 888 words in 4 pages and the longest one with 13501 words in 57 pages).

The audio narrator was available for the interactive e-book group. To activate narrator, the Moon Reader application was installed on the smartphone of those who selected this tool for reading e-novels. However, those who went for their personal laptop or computer were instructed to activate the *read aloud* option available in PDF documents.

Summary Writing Activity

To keep track of students' reading, they were required to post a brief summary of each (e)-book in Persian as writing summary in English could place some extra demad on students affecting their performance and participation negatively. Each student posted 24 story-writing tasks in total.

Reflective Journal

The experimental groups were asked to cogitate about their feelings, experiences, and attitudes after reading each e-book and post them to the teacher on WhatsApp in Persian. The reflective journals intended to elicit students' ongoing attitude trajectory toward the topic of e-books to evaluate the extent to which FoI influenced their WTR and the degree of their satisfaction with reading e-books.

Procedure

The present study employed a mixed set of data-generation techniques including questionnaires, summary-writing activities, reflective journals, and interview events during 17 sessions spread over five months. The data was gathered online via the WhatsApp platform. All questionnaires were designed by Google Form test maker available at *https://docs.google.com/forms/* for free, then the link was posted to students via WhatsApp.

The study was set up holding a 90-min introductory session in Persian through a package of voice messages for all participants and their parents to explain the purpose of the study on WhatsApp. The third author (with 10 years of experience in teaching English in the public schools) was the teacher of all groups. Informed parental consent forms were signed and posted. The parents were assured that the identity of their children would be protected. To begin with, the links related to FoI and WTR questionnaires were posted on WhatsApp. Having posted their answers, students were allowed to edit them if they chose to do so. All students responded to the questionnaires synchronously.

In session 2, the link of Cambridge Key English Test (KET) was posted to participants on WhatsApp to ensure the homogeneity of the groups involved. Only the reading and writing sections ($n = 50$) were given to the participants. Taking into account the 70%–85% of the total score, those whose score ranged between 35 and 43 were selected as pre-intermediate students.

In a package of voice messages on WhatsApp, the interactive group received a 35-min online instruction in Persian on how to undertake on-screen activities such as tapping on the hotspots and audio narrator and using the online dictionary while reading. They were required to use online *Longman English Dictionary* and online *Persian Fast Dictionary* for looking up the meaning of the unknown words. They were also advised to take rest about 15 min per hour to avoid irritating their eyes. All students were also encouraged not to fall behind the course schedule. The read-only group was also instructed in 10 min to work out the same strategies except audio narrator and hotspots.

Throughouht the experiment students received e-books congruent and incongruent with their FoI. The congruent/incongruent binary was determined by juxposing students' FoI, already obtained through the questionnaire, with the themes of the e-books downloaded. Clearly, some students shared some common FoI which called for the same set of books. For instance, one of the male students reported *Rally* as activities which he liked to do energetically these days. Therefore, the e-book *Amazon Rally* was posted to him as the e-book congruent with his FoI to sparkle his interest in reading it enthusiastically. On the other hand, he received *The Fisherman and His Soul* as the e-book which stood in stark contrast to his FoI.

To elicit the experimental groups' opinion on e-books, an attitude questionnaire was given to them after reading the first pair of e-books. The students responded to the questionnaire synchronously without any time limitation. Upon posting their answers, they were allowed to make any revisions to their responses. The treatment given to each group is outlined in detail below.

Interactive Group

For 12 sessions (session 4–15) the interactive e-book group was required to read two e-books, one congruent and one incongruent with their FoI, and listen to audio narrator in synchrony with their reading. While reading, they were asked to tap on hotspots for every unknown word. Hotspots provided students with the Persian equivalents of the highlighted target words. As students clicked/tapped on hotspots, the audio narrator repeated the meaning of unknown words. They were asked to post their summary-writing task for each e-novel in Persian to ensure that they did not simply browse the novel. Moreover, they were required to post their reflective journals as to their vicarious experiences as well as their attitudes toward the topic of each e-novel in Persian.

Read-only Group

Each session, the read-only group also received two e-books (one compatible and another incompatible with their FoI). They were required to read them on the screen without having access to the audio narrator and hotspots. The target words for this group were highlighted and their Persian equivalents were incorporated by the PDF editor in a glossary at the end of each chapter. They were also required to post their summary-writing tasks and reflective journals.

Control Group

The control group received the print books of the same e-novels. Each session, they received two novel books (one in agreement and another in disagreement with their FoI). The meaning of unknown words was also provided in a glossary at the end of each chapter. The words were

not highlighted for the control group. They were asked to read the novels and then post their summary-writing tasks.

As the treatment came to its end, the link of the posttest was posted to all groups in session 16. Students of the experimental groups received two more links for the final-semester questionnaires (i.e., WTR and attitude) to project their WTR and attitude change toward the treatment over time. A structured interview was also conducted with 20 students from the experimental groups (10 from each experimental group) to elicit their attitudes toward the treatment. Two weeks later, the link of the delayed posttest was posted in session 17.

Data Analysis

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) run in SPSS version 26 on the groups' proficiency assured their homogeneity, F (2, 57) = 0.89, p = 0.41. Two simple mixed factorial design ANOVAs were run to measure students' WTR before and after the treatment, and examine the attitude change of the experimental groups toward e-books from the initial- to final-semester questionnaires. The qualitative data accumulated by reflective journals and interviews was explored.

Results

A 2 x 3 simple mixed factorial ANOVA was run on the data obtained from the WTR questionnaire across two times for the three groups involved. The descriptive statistics (Table 1) produced along with the mixed design showed that the three groups' quantitative indices of WTR were comparably the same in their initial-semester completion of the questionnaire. As the results of the mixed design indicated, the indices standing for the final-semester opinions reflecting students' WTR were different for the groups involved. Whilst the interactive and read-only groups evinced signs of improvement, the control group surprisingly appeared to experience even some small retreatment (the interactive group: M = 178.65, SD = 6.57, the read-only group: M = 172.00, SD = 4.93, and the control group: M = 148.70, SD = 10.73).

Table 1. *Results of Descriptive Statistics for Groups' WTR*

	Groups	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
Initial-semester	Interactive group	20	159.65	7.53
	Read-only group	20	154.80	7.77
	Control group	20	157.35	8.05
Final-semester	Interactive group	20	178.65	6.57
	Read-only group	20	172.00	4.93
	Control group	20	148.70	10.73

Consulting the summary of the 2 x 3 simple mixed factorial ANOVA made it explicit that the interaction effect for time (initial- and final-semester) and treatment (interactive, read-only, and control) reached statistical significance, Wilks' Lambda = .34, F (2, 57) = 56.40, p = 0.00, η^2 = .66. The main effect for time was also statistically significant with a large effect size, Wilks' Lambda = .49, F (1, 57) = 59.62, $p < .001$, η^2 = .51. This significant difference can be attributed to gains made by two experimental groups on the final-semester opinions. The main effect for the intervention split into three conditions was also significant, F (2, 57) = 33.76, p

< 0.0005, $\eta^2 = .54$, warranting some post-hoc pairwise comparisons. A Bonferroni post-hoc test indicated a significant mean difference between the interactive and control group, $MD = 16.12$, $p < 0.0005$, and between the read-only and control group, $MD = 10.37$, $p < 0.0005$. However, the difference between the experimental groups' WTR did not amount to the level of significance, $MD = 5.57$, $p = 0.16$.

As better WTR indices obtained for the e-book groups can be attributed to e-books and the contents congruent with their FoI, the quality of students' summary writings posted and their views expressed during the interview and reflective journals need to be revisited. Interestingly, WTR index in the control group regressed albeit being provided with print books both congruent and incongruent with their FoI. The progress on the part of the experimental groups and the regress on the part of the control group, important enough for pedagogical concerns, will be further dealt with in the Discussion section.

In the interview conducted, 70% ($n = 28$) of the students who gave interviews reported that while reading least preferred e-books, they got tired sooner and quit reading on the pretext of doing something else. A total of 85% ($n = 17$) of students reported that e-books which entertained their FoI changed their opinion about e-books. Interestingly, 65% ($n = 13$) responded that they will keep reading e-books which are compatible with their FoI. Also 55% ($n = 11$) were eager to read more e-books in the future owing to their portability. Moreover, 45% ($n = 9$) stated that they would attend any extra-curricular classes into which e-books are incorporated.

Probing the interview findings revealed that for 75% ($n = 30$) of students involved in the interview in the interactive group built-in effects in e-books such as the ability to add notes, search words, and highlight the text enhanced their learning. Of equal importance, easy access to online dictionary while reading e-books was pointed out as prominent by 75% ($n = 15$). Hotspots were acknowledged by 80% ($n = 8$) of students. With the interactive and read-only groups merged into one, 70% ($n = 28$) of students held the view that e-books helped them learn words more effectively due to some features such as online dictionary and e-resources. In addition, 60% ($n = 24$) of the experimental groups expressed that when the e-books tapped into their FoI, they learned the new words with more passion.

To compare the experimental groups' initial- and final-semester attitudes toward e-books, a 2 x 2 simple factorial design ANOVA was run for the initial- and final-semester attitudes of the interactive and read-only groups. Results of the descriptive statistics obtained (Table 2) showed comparable indices reflecting their attitudes in the initial-semester questionnaire toward e-books. There existed a difference between the final-semester questionnaire (the interactive group: $M = 61.15$, $SD = 3.2$ and the read-only group: $M = 53.9$, $SD = 4.69$). As expected, the value yielded for time and group reached statistical significance, Wilks' Lambda $= .725$, $F (1, 38) = 14.43$, $p = 0.001$. The value obtained for time (initial- vs. final-semester) reached statistical significance too, Wilks' Lambda $= .094$, $F (1, 38) = 366.59$, $p < 0.0005$. As the means for the groups were almost the same in the initial-semester attitudes the mean difference observed were attributed to the final-semester attitudes, $MD = 3.50$, $SE = .987$, $p < 0.0005$.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Attitudes toward E-books*

	Groups	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
Initial-semester	Interactive group	20	38.50	4.19
	Read-only group	20	38.75	4.19
Final-semester	Interactive group	20	61.15	3.20
	Read-only group	20	53.90	4.69

To trace the trend of students' attitude, change toward e-books from initial- to final-experiment in the experimental groups, their reflective journals in concluding sessions were explored. The patterns obtained revealed that 85% ($n = 34$) of them generated an upsurge of interest in e-books. For 85% ($n = 34$) of students the ability to share e-books and their opinions and feelings toward them with peers was another impetus that reportedly increased students' comprehension and motivation. Highlighted by 85% ($n = 17$) of students was the ease with which they could carry e-books around. Cost-effectiveness of e-books came second, preferred by 80% ($n = 16$) of students. Pursuing "green goals" was the concern of 75% of the respondents ($n = 15$). All students (100%) considered audio narrator as one of the efficient built-in effects of e-books. Finally, 65% ($n = 13$) of respondents singled out sanitation concerns for their preference for e-books over print ones.

Discussion

RQ1: *Would the participants' WTR change over time (before and after the treatment) under the influences of FoI and e-books? If yes, what is the trend of this change?* As the results demonstrated, students in the interactive group expressed more WTR than those in the read-only group. The interactive features added to e-books explains but only part of the superior index of WTR obtained for the interactive group compared with the WTR index of the read-only group. The significant changes observed in WTR indices from the initial- to final-semester of both groups can be arguably explained by e-books serving as new FoI which students were engaged with in the course of the experiment as an instance of task-triggered FoI and also e-books that were in congruence with their FoI elicited through the related questionnaire. As WTR, akin to WTC, is more a situational variable than a personal trait (McIntyre et al., 1998), engagement with e-books increased their WTR as they were co-constructing new identities as e-readers which in particular was legitimized even more through hotspots and audio narrator provided in the interactive e-book group increasing their WTR significantly. It can also be theorized that the identities triggered by these activities opened up new ideal selves boosting their motivation to make gestures toward manifesting themselves at higher degrees of WTR.

The print book group's WTR index did not, interestingly, make any progress, though they were provided with books both in tune and out of tune with their FoI. Tasks that students are assigned to engage with as "the local interactional contingencies" (Rapley, 2001) can account for such an observation. Print books might arguably have conjured up the image of students' texts books which is taken to be a source of deficit thinking. Students then did not give due concern to these materials. Pedagogical tasks, functioning as the source of contingent FoI, hold key in

mobilizing FoI which students bring as "history-in-person" (Donato & Davin, 2017) to the site of practice.

Analyzing the results of the summary writing demonstrated dozens of salient differences between the tasks summarized for e-books congruent and incongruent with students' FoI. Students seemed to be deeply immersed in reading e-books in line with their FoI; they delved into the bottom of the story and fixated more on details in summarizing those e-books. Interestingly, they occasionally embedded some pieces of information on authors' biographies as well. Moreover, they elaborated on their feelings, personal experiences, and even the effect of e-books on their lives. The majority of students even included the implicit moral message of those e-books.

In contrast, the same students abdicated their responsibility and bungled the summary writing task when the e-novels were at odds with their FoI. They wrote shorter summaries without digging deep into details. It is not unlikely that they might have quit reading the e-novels prematurely or might have browsed them to write a simple gist.

Students unanimously felt a sense of accomplishment and prolonged engagement in the e-stories congruent with their FoI and a sense of frustration and compulsion for the incongruent ones. They reported that e-books that bore considerable relevance to their FoI invoked their curiosity to read for hours at a stretch. There was a consensus among a majority of students in the experimental groups that the e-books in line with their FoI had a positive effect on their WTR. A student from the interactive group stated:

> When I was reading the e-books in which I was interested, I sat stock-still
> reading them even in my bed time, but I didn't follow the novel to the letter
> for the unfavorite ones. I needed a push from my parents or the teacher to
> browse them reluctantly or only study the glossary.

This statement which represents a good number of respondents indicates that teachers can make students dispose to a range of language learning activities, not least of which is reading comprehension by valuing and legitimizing their FoI.

Interviews revealed that the majority of students in the experimental groups did not show any inclination toward books incongruent with their FoI while those congruent attracted them significantly. A student from the read-only group reported: "*I got bored while reading the stories in which I had no interest. But reading the interesting e-books was incredibly exciting.*"

A significant gap was revealed to exist between students' attitudes toward e-books at the beginning and end of the semester. A student from the read-only group reported:

> In early sessions, I evaded reading e-novels because it caused me headache
> and eyesore. I had heavy reliance on print books and never cultivated the
> habit of reading e-books. Little by little, I was so engrossed in the
> unputdownable e-novels that I forgot the headache and eyesore.

Fear of any new mode of learning causes anxiety and decreases communication self-confidence doing damage to WTR (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017). Clearly, this attitude change is a sign of an increase in students' WTR as a result of their coming to contact with e-books

which is considered a new avenue for their investment. "Unputdownable" contrasted against "evad-" ing speaks to the fact that this new FoI shaping out of "person-in-action" has created enough motivation for students to indulge in reading comprehension forgetting "the headache and eyesore" that were earlier complained to demotivate students. This view resonates with the assertion that the site of practice coming into emerging existence and continuing with fluidity and dynamicity might produce new FoI, convert old ones into new identities, and/or serve as a platform to as-yet to come identities.

A big majority of students attributed their view change regarding e-books to the FoI entertained through these books. A student from the interactive group expressed:

> *I like swimming and fishing, most nights I dream fishing by a hook in a small lake. When I received The Emperor by Frederick Forsyth, a story about a shark, I read it enthusiastically.*

As it was hypothesized earlier, backward-stretching, task-triggered, and future-projecting FoI are interrelated feeding one another co-adaptively in very complex ways as an instance of complex systems (Larsen-Freeman, 2017). While FoI embedded in e-books introduced students to some new arenas to invest in, this task in hand can in turn open up new possibilities to pursue. As FoI might prove fallible (of less value, too biased, too ideal, inferior, and the like) in the face of the pedagogical tasks in progress, they have to be (re)appraised continually in the course of task performance to recognize any dissonance. With the FoI associated with the past, present, and future synthesized, FoI can be fluid enough to serve every student well. With oscillating waves of convergence and divergence between FoI and pedagogical tasks surveilled, the zone of proximal WTC can be located and sensitized and uninspiring and distressing tasks can be precluded.

A big number of students expressed their willingness to continue reading e-books in tune with their funds of interest in the future. A student from the interactive group stated: "*I will continue to read e-books in the future because the built-in effects make reading as easy as ABC.*" The introduction of e-books and few interactive features made students assume themselves as e-readers extended into the future. FoI valued by the teacher not only sharpened their WTR but also afforded them enough motivation to accommodate e-books as their choice of reading comprehension which is an acceptable index of WTR. This trend of finding is an instance of gradual migration from the fixed mindset to the growth mindset (Williams et al., 2015). While students with the former mindset assume a one-down relationship between the curriculum (or the teacher) and themselves, those who are prompted to transcend to the status of the latter mindset are of view that their agency and efforts count. The e-books and FoI introduced as instructional intervention awakened students as to the active role they could play in learning English. Consequently, the deficit fixed mindset developed by the power-coercive curriculum gave way to the growth mindset which enjoys the potentiality to "foster self-regulation" (Oxford, 2017).

RQ2: *What are the students' attitudes toward e-books? What is the trend of their attitudes change over time?* Results revealed that the interactive and read-only groups developed positive attitudes toward reading e-books from the initial- to the final semester questionnaires. While the results enrich the thin volume of literature on students' perceptions regarding e-

books in the course of time (e.g., Huang, 2013), it also goes hand in hand with the explanation provided in the previous section that e-books came to serve as a new avenue for living some unlived experiences opening up new identities to leap toward making students in these two groups feel attracted to e-books and change their attitudes over time. Instructiveness integrated into the interactive e-books facilitated reading process. Such features associated with e-books opened up further possibilities for successful reading and generated new identities that could be inhabited. When brought close to students' attention, new possibilities are likely to shine additional light on some as-yet unimagined selves that can be desired and struggled toward.

An upsurge of interest in e-books occurred for a lot of students as they journeyed through e-books. They appeared to develop an overwhelming desire for e-books. Reflective journals kept by students revealed their initial reluctance toward venturing into e-books as they were less familiar with the space of possibilities that engaging with these innovations could open up. They had, as they made it clear, no initial willingness to transgress traditional boundaries and explore novel identities (Bamberg, 2011) as e-readers:

> *Gazing at the screen for a long time can cause symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness, eye damage, and sleep disorders. Reading a print book requires no extra device other than the book itself; also, everyone can easily read it without worrying about running out of [net] charge.*

As it became explicit, misrecognition of FoI (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011), as students are usually misinformed if not mistaken, made them fear the negative upshots of the innovation.

A student from the interactive group poured out her sense of nostalgia for print books:

> *On a winter afternoon nothing can replace a comfortable chair, a good book, and a cup of tea or coffee; even the lovely smell of print books has a sense of calm that an e-book can never convey.*

Entrenched interest in FoI as implied by this affectionate feeling toward print books uncovers the disposition that this student has already developed toward reading books. As a valuable fund, it might benefit the student a lot if converted into new alternates that are widely available in the present era. If not diffused properly, innovations and advantages associated with them cannot be adequately valued (Rogers, 2003).

The possibility afforded by the teacher made them recognize some further possibilities opening up new opportunities providing new forms of capital to benefit from further investment. New FoI are triggered as a result of interacting with the tasks given.

> *When reading e-books irritated my eyes, I closed my eyes and listened to the narrator. I killed two birds with one stone, improving my reading and listening skills simultaneously.*

According to the students' script in reflective journals, a big number of students pointed out the idea of sharing the e-books with others as a merit which enhanced their reading comprehension and increased their motivation. A student from the interactive group declared:

I have now dozens of books in PDF that I can easily share via WhatsApp. I can also share my viewpoints with my friends and classmates. It really motivates me to keep reading.

This new possibility creates a new horizon for interpersonal relationship serving as a social capital that can bring students closer serving as a base for a better relationship, sympathy, and better cooperation. This is an instance of task-triggered identity which extends to the future heralding some possibilities which can be pursued and entertained.

Results of the in-depth one-to-one interviews reflected the experimental groups' deep satisfaction with e-books. Portability of e-books achieved the first rank among the reasons uncovered for the superiority of e-books over the print ones. Lightness, cost-effectiveness, "green goals," and sanitation concerns were pointed out by the majority of students. A student from the interactive group responded:

E-books are portable, you can carry thousands of e-books with a 64 GB tablet or smartphone.

A student from the read-only group maintained:

These days the price of print books is too high; while many e-books are downloaded for free or even purchased online with a low price.

This statement compared with the previous ones indicates that different people might have utterly varying motives for their preference for one mode of instruction over an alternative one. Gaining insights into these motives can place teachers in a position to have a better savvy of their demanding task of implementing a program in the classroom.

A student from the interactive group stated:

It is time to put the print books aside. Even today, it is too late. The disaster that the absence of a tree brings to the world is unimaginable, so let's be serious enough about the problem.

Still a far different motive which can sharpen the respondent's interest in embracing e-books. Showing respect to such a highly-valued stance as to "green goal" by turning to e-books can function as valuable emerging FoI whose positive effect can be overwhelming.

Sanitation concerns highlighted by students might have been uttered due to students' oversensitivity to sanitation that lingered on their mind during the Coronavirus lockdown. A student from the interactive group responded: "*Print books can spread a variety of viruses and diseases including the Coronavirus.*" It goes without saying that any significant event that comes by in our daily life is likely to bring about some changes in our taste, cultivating a new set of FoI and debasing some.

Students unanimously acknowledged the positive role the audio narrator played in dealing with e-books. One of the respondents declared:

Audio narrator really helped me not to skip the lines." Another one stated:
"*I listened to e-books even in bed or while doing another work. When I got stuck on a word, I could tap the narrator to read the text aloud to me.*

These statements are suggestive of the fact that new effects which come to accompany digital tools on daily basis can trigger new FoI to emerge. If capitalized on in the right manner and proportion, they can be a source of positive change on the part of students. In progress pedagogical tasks are likely to give existence to a new set of FoI or make some FoI prove fallible or out of date.

Conclusion

The current study attempted to examine the effect of FoI and E-books on EFL learners' WTR. Findings showed that learners' WTR increased as a result of FoI. Teachers are highly recommended familiarizing learners with e-books and encouraging them to choose those topics that are congruent with their FoI. When e-books are embraced following each individual's idiosyncratic FoI, opportunities for exposure to input through extensive reading would be enhanced and language learning would be fostered in turn.

In spite of the useful contributions of the present study, there are some limitations that we hope to be removed from further research. Researchers are suggested dividing the learners into two groups and give one group e-books which are congruent with their FoI and the other group the e-books which are incongruent with their FoI. This way the attitudes of each group can be elicited easily. Moreover, it is recommended to replicate the present study with high proficient learners who can autonomously benefit from ubiquitous learning.

Acknowledgments

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