ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING AT NORTHERN BORDER UNIVERSITY IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT
This study used qualitative research methods to explore English language teachers' perceptions about the use of technology for language learning at Northern Border University (NBU) in Saudi Arabia. Data collection relied on interviews. Stream of behaviour chronicles was also used as a strategy of non interactive data collection.14 non native English language instructors from Northern Border University participated in this study. Instructors identified three areas (a) availability of technology, (b) training to use technology, and (c) to overcome technical obstacles to use technology in classrooms. They were also determined to use technology for language teaching in the future. Implications of these findings for learners and educators are discussed.

INTRODUCTION
Instructional technology has become a vital part of modern global educational system. Saudi Arabia is also a part of it. Recently, King Abdullah's educational revolution has made it a very important state in the Middle East. Many colleges have been upgraded. Similarly, many new universities have been established. In 2002 there were only seven universities but now these are 33 included public and private universities. Government of Saudi Arabia is taking special initiatives to educate its people in every possible way. Highly educated faculty have been hired from around the world. Latest instruments, labs, and equipments have been provided to university students. Every year, a large sum of money is allocated for research activities. Even then, many educational issues need further research at all levels.

English language teaching is also one of the significant subjects for Saudi learners that needs further research consideration. Each university has it own English language center. In the beginning English was taught according to old methodology using black boards and grammar translation method. Now a days, university language labs are equipped with modern technology included software programs, internet, computers, and audio visual aids.

Northern Border University (NBU) is one of the newest universities in Saudi Arabia. Many types of equipment such as projectors and computers have been provided to faculty to teach different courses. The use of technology for teaching English as a foreign language is next plan of the university. There were examples of failure of audio labs. So, the researchers decided to explore the perceptions of English language teachers. One of the researchers, taught in Saudi Arabia from school to university level for nine years. The second researcher is currently teaching at NBU. Therefore, both researchers are well aware of Saudi educational system, culture, and norms.

Teachers play a major role in students' learning process. The purpose of this research study is to explore English teachers' views about the use of technology for language teaching. Little is known English teachers' beliefs for language teaching in Saudi Arabia. This study seeks to identify teachers' beliefs about technology based language learning (TBLL). The results of this study might be helpful for policy makers, school districts and rural educators.

The study will investigates what does technology mean to teachers? What concerns do they have about the use of technology for language teaching? What assumptions do they have about TBLL?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Positive effects of technology on foreign language learners' achievement have been reported (Stepp-Greany, 2002). Ajayi (2009) documented that asynchronous discussion board was an important tool to teach. The computer net-worked environment supports the language learning and exposes to authentic reading material

(Levine, Ferenz, & Reves, 2000).Good use of technology in classroom helps students in their literacy development (Ramchandran, 2004). The number of institutes, using technology in classrooms, is growing (Kargozari & Ghaemi, 2006). According to Huang, Dedegikas, and Walls (2011), multimedia technology combined with appropriate instructional design can create a good learning environment that leads to effective language learning. In another study Ghaemi, Khodbakhshzade and Kargozari (2012) found that audio/voice conference was one of the best tools to teach speaking skill especially IELTS speaking. Hermes and King (2013) recently conducted a qualitative research study and found that technology based language learning was helpful to learn and practice the language at initial stages.

The use of computer based technologies for language learning is supported by the findings of many studies. Chinnery (2006) found that mobile technologies offered manifold use of language learning. Moreover, these technologies were easily available. He also found that mobile technology was typically less expensive than PCs. Levine et al. (2000) found that in order to develop critical literacy skills for foreign language learners, computer-based technologies were more useful than the conventional method of reading. From the point of view of students' writing skill, Ramchandran (2004) found that with the use of technology in classroom most of the students wrote good research papers. He also found that the use of computer and internet improved their collaborative writing. Conroy (2010) found that a program for language analysis, called concordancer, was an effective activity for language learning and writing improvement. He also found that the internet tools and techniques were very beneficial for language learning especially Google assisted language learning (GALL). He found that the Google search was an important tool for language learning and writing improvement. According to him, Google search or concordancer was also a valuable tool to correct the mistakes. Gilgen (2005) found that PDA and laptop devices helped students in their reading and writing. He also found that traditional activities had less attention of the students. On the other hand, chatting through typing was a very popular activity. Kargozari and Ghaemi (2011) found that after using a combination of web based writing instruction and traditional writing instruction, the students improved their writing skill. There was also a significant decrease in their spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes.

In reviewing the importance of computer-based teaching, Gilgen (2005) observed that designing critical pedagogy is very important in order to teach students a foreign language through computer assisted language learning. His findings included the instructors who used technology had better results than those who did not use it. Kung and Chuo (2002) found that teaching through websites was effective and interesting. Levine et al. (2000) showed that the teacher' role in EFL computerized class was just a facilitator.

Regarding students satisfaction, Ramchandran (2004) found that the students who used the technology appreciated the use of it. In another study, Conroy (2010) showed that the students used concordancer and Google search independently in order to improve their writing skill and most of them were interested in using concordancer in future. Levine et al. (2000) found that students' behaviour was diligent in computerized EFL classes. In addition, Kung and Chuo (2002) found that the majority of the students owned computers and most of them had on-line access. Therefore, the students used the internet frequently. They spent plenty of time online but very few visited ESL websites. Kung and Chuo (2002) showed that the students' behaviour was positive towards learning through ESL websites, and they were satisfied with the use of ESL websites. Many of them were determined to use ESL websites in order to improve their language skills. Huang et al. (2011) found that most of the students were fully or partly satisfied with online learning. They benefited from the real life dialogues and grammar. The online discussion exercises were also helpful. The majority of the students were happy with appropriateness of multimedia and computer-based technology. However, some of them were not satisfied with pronunciation and explanation of vocabulary through technology. Further more, students and tutors felt that the on-line workload was more than in the conventional classroom. Gilgen (2005) found that the students were satisfied with the use of mobile technology for language learning. Liaw (2006) found that the students were very excited using the computers for reading and writing in English. They used online dictionary and concordancer for reading skill and they liked these tools.

The research is very clear about the importance of electronic discussion. Warschauer (1996) found that the students had greater equality of participation in the electronic discussion. He showed that the students could express themselves freely, comfortably, and creatively during electronic discussion. He also found that the students of some nationalities were more interested in electronic discussion and their attitude was positive towards learning language through technology. Warschauer (1996) also found that the electronic discussion included more formal language which was absent from face to face discussion.

Several problems have been identified with the use of technology for ESL. Kung & Chuo (2002) observed that most of the students were not familiar with the use of ESL websites. They also found that the students spent too

much time to explore ESL websites. Warschauer (1996) examined that electronic discussion involved more complex language than the face-to-face discussion. Gilgen (2005) supported that PDA and laptop devices were not helpful for listening and speaking activities. Liaw (2006) concluded that technical difficulties had created problems in learning such as break down of computers. He also found that most of the students first time used computers for reading and writing. Liaw (2006) also found that the use of online dictionary was complicated for the students. According to Conroy (2010), before training very few students were familiar with concordancer and GALL.

Tanveer (2011) also supports the use of internet for language learning. In his research study both the students and the teachers were satisfied with use of internet for language learning. In another quantitative research study Yaratan and Kural (2010) presented the perceptions of teachers and found that shortage of time and lacks of technology in classrooms were two main factors identified by language teachers.

Ismail, Almekhlafi and Al-Mekhlafy (2010) found various perceptions of language teachers about using technology in classrooms. They reported teachers' perceptions such as barriers to technology use, types of technology, teachers' and students' use of technology and incentives for teachers. According to Toyoda (2001), perceptions vary from person to person. Although most of teachers agree to use technology for language teaching but their use of technology might be different depending on their beliefs (Kim, 2008).

METHODS
RESEARCH DESIGN
For this study, we used a qualitative research approach to understand and describe teachers' perceptions. We chose this methodological approach because it enables researchers to interpret and make judgement about immeasurable data (O'Tool and Beckett, 2010, p.28). This research study was conducted in a particular setting which was Northern Border University (NBU). Therefore, we relied on case study design for the purpose of our enquiry.

PARTICIPANTS
Fourteen language instructors, two with PhD degree and twelve with master degree, participated in this study. Most of them had more than five years English language teaching experience. All were non-native speakers of English language. Saudi educational system is gender based. Therefore, all the participants were male language teachers at NBU.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS
Before conducting the research informed consent was taken from all the participants. We interviewed teachers, one by one, between January and April 2012. Every teacher had enough time to speak about his perceptions. They were told in advance that the interviews were about the use of technology for language teaching at NBU. Stream of behaviour chronicles was also used to know what participants say and do. Thus, one o the researcher observed participants.

We also used field notes. We analyzed all the data and then wrote it in themes. After that, all the participants had a look on themes in order to know their exact perceptions. When we started discussion we made sure that all the participants were aware of technology. For example one of the participants said, "I know that pen is also a technology but, here, I mean digital technology included mobiles, tablets and computers". We identified and described three main themes.

AVAILABILITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Computers and projectors have already provided to teaching staff. However, all the teachers raised the issue of availability of technology and internet for language teaching. A sampling of teacher comments is as under;
One participant said," I think we don't have language labs, without language labs we can't improve students listening skills".

Another said, "We need internet for classes. The use of internet is very helpful for language teaching especially youtube, google, and online dictionaries. Definitely, I'll use it in the future".
Talking about software one of the teacher said, " Our language classes need some language teaching soft wares to improve students' all four skill".

TRAINING TO USE TECHNOLOGY
Three teachers told that they had already used technology for language teaching at their previous institutes. Rest of the eleven teachers raised the issue of training to use technology for language teaching. A sampling is as

under In terms of language labs, one teacher said, " It is very important to us to know how to use language labs and how to maximise the benefits of language labs. I have seen many language labs were closed because teachers were unable to use them".

One teacher pointed out student training as well. He said, " students training is also vitally important. In this way they can use soft wares and internet for learning at home. Teachers just provide them guidance".
An other teacher said, "we our graduate courses don't teach us how to use technology for language teaching. So, training using technology is basic to succeed in 21st century".

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES
The third issue raised by all the teachers, was technical difficulties. They talked about technical difficulties and how to overcome these obstacles. Some examples of their comments are as under;

One teacher's comments, "I like to teach English through technology but when I think about installation of soft wares I back up, if some one helps us by installation g soft wares then obviously we will use it".

Another teacher said, " power outage is uncommon in Saudi Arabia but if during our class it happens then our use of technology will be in vain".

FUTURE USE OF TECHNOLOGY
Some of the teachers had already used technology for language teaching and they were willing to use technology. Rest of the teachers who didn't use technology were also anxious to use it for English as a foreign language teaching. They felt the need of use of technology is basic requirement in 21st century.

One of the teacher said, "I never use technology for language teaching but it is a new technique and I'm curious to use it".

The other said, "I think in this century we need technological literate learner. So, we should need teachers who are well aware of use of technology".

An other said, " I would like to use technology and internet for language teaching. I'm interested in learning out comes of technology enhanced language learning".

DISCUSSION
This study was conducted to explore the perceptions of English language instructors at NBU. The findings present a detailed picture of teachers' beliefs about using technology for language teaching. It is clear that all the participants were determined to use technology for language teaching. Even some of them were not certain about the effectiveness of technology based language learning. They were clear about their own roles as English teachers and facilitators.

All the participants highlight the availability of digital technology to teach English language, which is being provided step by step just like other universities in Saudi Arabia. After the availability of technology, there is also need to train the staff i.e how to use this technology effectively. The results provide evidence supporting previous findings that the role of technology for foreign language teaching is very important and there are also barriers to use technology (Ismail et al. 2010).

We identified four main beliefs of English language teachers about teaching language through technology at NBU which are availability of technology, training for teachers and dealing with technical difficulties. Most importantly, all were anxious to use technology to teach. Some of them were interested to know the effectiveness of technology based language learning and some of them were willing to use to gain a new experience.

In terms of implications for research, our study was limited to NBU. We do not know about other than English faculty members' beliefs about using technology for teaching. We also do not know the perceptions of English teachers at other universities in Saudi Arabia. In future studies, the effectiveness of using technology for English language acquisition in Saudi Arabia would be helpful. How Saudi students use technology to acquire English language has not been explored.

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