

TOWARDS MOTIVATING THE EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM USAGE OF SMART PHONES AT BOTH QASSIM AND BAHU UNIVERSITIES, KSA

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ABSTRACT: *This study attempts to motivate academics and students at both Qassim and Baha universities towards the effective usage of smart phones while classes. In today's digital world, using smart phones is common and fundamental phenomenon, predominantly among the teen agers and youths as well. Tertiary level students are no exception in this regard. They regularly use their smartphones while classes, and it is common to see students touching the smart screens every single minute. This situation is headache and challenging to some professors mainly when it comes to classroom management. However, implementing a positive and controlled usage of such devices is also possible. For instance, students can be encouraged to learn how to use them as dictionaries or thesauruses to look up words, phrases and some specific nouns. Smart phones usage while classes might be effective in modeling pronunciation of words with silent letters and irregular phonemes or syllables. Their usage might be applicable in some translation and computer science courses as well. Additionally, task completion particularly a written task and texting can take place while classes through the application of the smart phones before conducting a pair or even a group checking. Both qualitative and quantitative research methodology is adapted through which the researchers observe some classes at the two mentioned – universities. Furthermore, they conducted and distributed a questionnaire of (15) items to a representative sample of students randomly selected from the two universities. The researchers finally display the study results as well as the findings and the necessary recommendations to reach the following consequences:*

- 1. Effective smart phone usage enhances and facilitates students' language learning and possibly improves their awareness of the four language skills.*
- 2. It motives students towards active learning regardless their majors.*
- 3. These devices can also assist professors to follow up attendance and absences of the students as well as enabling them to conduct virtual classes.*

KEY WORDS: motivating, effective classroom, smart phones, Qassim and Baha, universities, KSA

INTRODUCTION

Implementing a positive and controlled usage of smart devices is possible in today's EFL classrooms. With programs such as "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/Bring_your_own_device) which enable many workers and interested parties to bring their devices such as laptops and smart phones in work places, many more questions have also been raised around allowing students to actively use their smart phones as learning devices in school. Therefore, several studies have been conducted during the last decade addressing both students' and educators' perspectives on the issue. To name some, a study conducted in the USA under the title "*Hold the phone! High School Students' Perceptions of Mobile Phone Integration in the Classroom*", which was published in 2016 (Thomas, K, & Muñoz, MA) in which a number of students were interviewed. The study showed the following findings: seven out of 10 of students believe that smart phones support learning. On the other hand, 30 percent showed negative feelings towards the school – wide ban of the smart phones. Based on the above findings, EFL instructors can positively stimulate students towards the best usages of their smart phones while classes. For instance, students can be encouraged to learn how to use them as dictionaries or thesauruses to look up words, phrases and some specific nouns. Smart phones usage while classes can also be effective in modeling pronunciation of some words with silent and irregular phonemes or syllables as well as in translation courses.

Research Problem and Significance

The study aims at enhancing the use of smart phones in classroom instead of preventing their usage among the students in today's digital world. The implementation of smart phone usage will pave the way for including further resources of learning and teaching to our classes, and will bring modern technology tools to these classes as well. This situation will definitely improve the overall learning and teaching environment, and will motivate learner creativity towards using the smart devices effectively and efficiently while classes. However, neglecting their usage seems impossible today; simply because of the strong psychological connections they have with their users whether they are students in a classroom or whether they are ordinary people.

Research Objectives

As the world is developing in different terms, using technology tools such as smart phones and laptops in our daily life are common today. What is challenging then is not how to use these devices effectively, but how to avoid misusing them, especially in classrooms. We cannot easily prevent students from using their smart phones in our classes, instead we can motivate their usage rather. Thus, the current study aims at investigating the possible usages of smart phones in classroom so as to determine their vital role in facilitating learning and teaching as well at both Qassim and Baha universities respectively.

Study questions

- a. How can smart phones be effectively used as teaching and learning tools in classrooms?
- b. What are the advantages of these devices in our classes today?
- c. What are the disadvantages of misusing them in classes?

5. Study hypotheses

- a. As teaching and learning tools, smart phones can play a vital role in classrooms.
- b. There are several advantages of these devices in our classes today.
- c. Misusing of these devices negatively impact classroom management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recently questions addressing the pros and cons of using smart phones in classrooms have been raised. With programs such “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) ([https://en.m.wikipedia.org / Bring_you_own_device](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/Bring_you_own_device)) which enable many workers and interested parties to bring their devices such as laptops and smartphones in work places, many more questions have also been raised around allowing students to actively use their smart phones as learning devices in school. Therefore, several studies have been conducted during the last decade addressing both students’ and educators’ perspectives on the issue.

In 2012 a study was undertaken in England in which two schools were participated to put an answer to the following question: is it better to allow students use their smart phones in classroom or not. The study titled *“I don’t think I would be where I am right now.” Pupil perspectives on using mobile devices for learning* conducted student surveys. (Walker, R. (2013)

The study resulted into the following:

43 per cent enrolled in in the first school where smart phones usage was banned are still using them to facilitate their learning in spite of the ban. While 74 per cent of the students enrolled in the second school where smart phone usage was not banned, use their devices to facilitate learning. The study also showed that students depend on their smart phones mostly to keep them organised. For instance, they organise dates and time via using calendar, alarms as well as using the camera for taking photos of their teachers’ notes instead of writing them. Therefore, smartphones can effectively be used as teaching and learning tools for the classroom according to the above study. Thus, motivating students towards the advantages of using such devices for the classroom activities is much better than preventing them under claims of classroom management.

Concerning the risks involved with allowing the free usage of smart phones by schools, is revealed by a study conducted in the USA under the tittle *“Hold the phone! High School Students’ Perceptions of Mobile Phone Integration in the Classroom*, which was published in 2016. (Thomas, K, & Muñoz, MA)

A number of students were interviewed and the study showed the following findings: seven out of 10 of students believe that smart phones support learning. On the other hand, 30 percent showed negative feelings towards the school – wide ban of the smart phones. According to the study findings, the 628 students surveyed have also shown worries towards the general distraction such as the smart phones ringing, during class, fears of using smart phones in cheating by other students, in addition to worries about issues such as sext and cyber bully. In spite of these findings, it was also found that 90.7 per cent of the students participated in conducting the study confirmed the usage of their smartphones for school-related work.

In terms of policies the researchers also state that school policy makers should consider these findings to establish better classroom usage of smart phones as well as considering their misuse consequences. The researchers then expect schools in general to deal with such challenges associated with smart phones integration, simply because it seems unrealistic when school stakeholders ignore the advantages as well as ignoring the barriers identified by students in determining policy.

Regarding teachers' attitudes towards the smart phone usage in their classes, the literature review showed that one US study investigated the situation of nine teachers attempted to include a number of technology devices in their lessons. One good example was the study titled "*Teaching and learning with mobile computing devices*", conducted in 2015 (Grant, M.M,et.al) and reveals some detailed experiences of a Mathematics teacher, who uses an iPhone in class. According to the study, the above-mentioned teacher used his own iPhone for the documentation of the students' own work as well as for taking the attendance. The study displays that the teacher used an application known as Evernote to upload some activities such as scanned tests, quizzes, assignments, and photographs. The application was helpful to the teacher simply because it enabled him to conduct formal and informal parent-teacher conferences addressing issues of his primarily 9th and 10th grade students. The application was also effective for sharing some debatable issues with other teachers and administration. Through this application the teacher could manage students outside the classroom arena and that is why the study showed how the teacher was satisfied and enjoyed the flexibility of smart phones usage. Additionally, via his iPhone the teacher could easily pull up every scanned document to reshape them, and have much more accurate picture of a student's progress. Despite the fact that a lot of personal research is required to determine the importance of using smart phones in the classroom, many others still believe that schools should consider integrating mobile devices into lesson plans with the growing trend of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) ([https://en.m.wikipedia.org / Bring you own device](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/Bring_you_own_device)) phenomenon in today's digital world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers collect the required data for the current study via both a quantitative and a qualitative data collection methods. A questionnaire was conducted and distributed to a representative sample of students randomly selected from Qassim and Baha universities respectively. The aim of the questionnaire is to gather the necessary data as related to the learners' attitudes towards the importance of the effective usage of smart phones in the classroom context. Thus, a questionnaire of almost (15) items was distributed to a sample of students and the study results as well as the findings were displayed. The researchers also observed several classes at the mentioned universities to determine the positive usage methodology of these smart phones while classes. In order to check the apparent validity of the study questionnaire and the validation of its statements according to the formulation and explanation, the researchers will conduct a pilot test.

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

To summarise the findings of the current study we can say that the first questionnaire item where the study subjects were asked to state their view points towards the impact of smart phones usage in facilitating learning of the English sounds. The item is confirmed by the majority of the study subjects, almost 95% agreed that smart phones assist them in learning the English sounds. Thus, it is extremely important for professors, particularly those in charge of teaching phonetics and phonology to implement positive and effective usage of these devices while classes so as to encourage students and assist them to learn the English sounds effectively. Only 5% of the participants disagreed with the assistance of smart phones in facilitating the learning of English sounds.

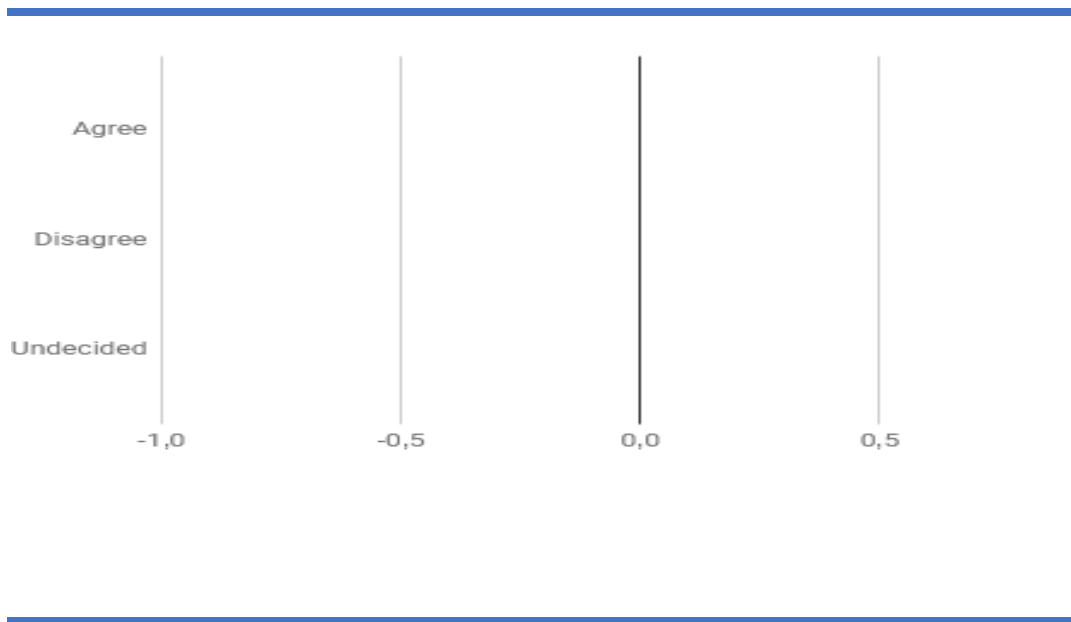


Figure 8.1 : Smartphones helps me in learning the English sounds.

Participants have also confirmed their usage of smart phones applications for looking up new words, a finding which shows the importance of these devices in facilitating learning of language via operating the effective applications such as online and offline dictionaries as well as other significant facilities.

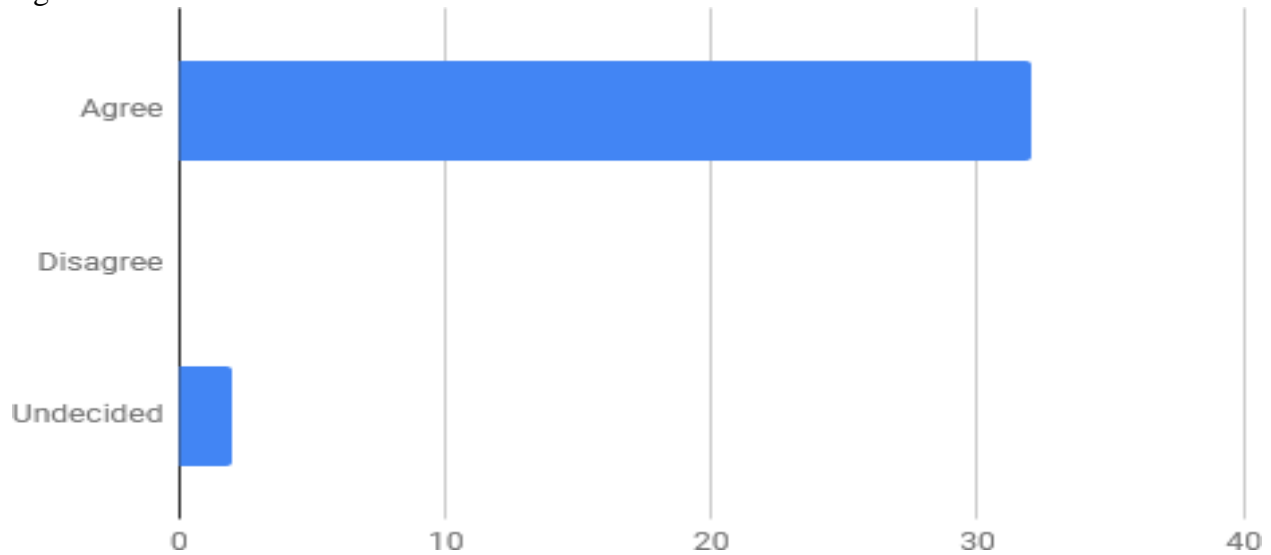


Figure 8.2: I regularly use my smartphone to look up new words

Concerning the third questionnaire item where the study subjects were asked to state how smart phones motivate them to find updated information, almost 25% of them were either undecided or disagreed the confirmation of this particular item.

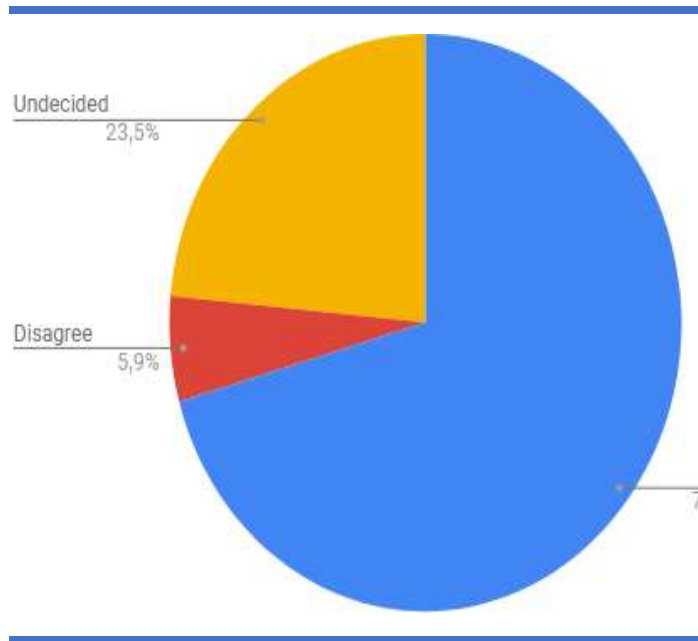


Figure 8.3: Smartphone motivate me to find updated information.

But, regarding the impact of these devices on academic writing, predominantly assignments writing, 80% of the study subjects believe that smart phones have great influence on teaching writing. For instance, these devices are found to be extremely effective when dealing with blocking vocabulary or learning some sophisticated words as well as learning how to construct the English sentence structure during the brain storming stages. It seems as if this dream has come true with the revolution of the current digital era, for example, students can easily go online to browse the two corpus dictionaries, the British and The American ones where the etymology of words are possibly learned in different contexts.

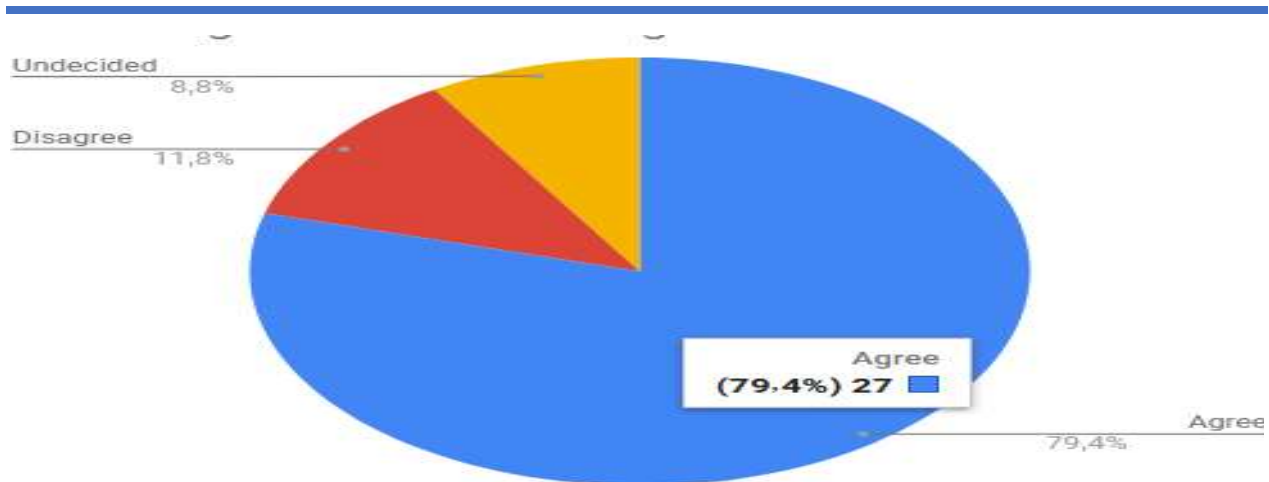


Figure 8.4: I use my smartphone for academic purposes such as finding words and reading

Moreover, the study displays no strong correlation between smart phones usage and the process of time controlling while classes. It is clear from the above graphs that 45% of the study participants either undecided this item or disagreed with it.

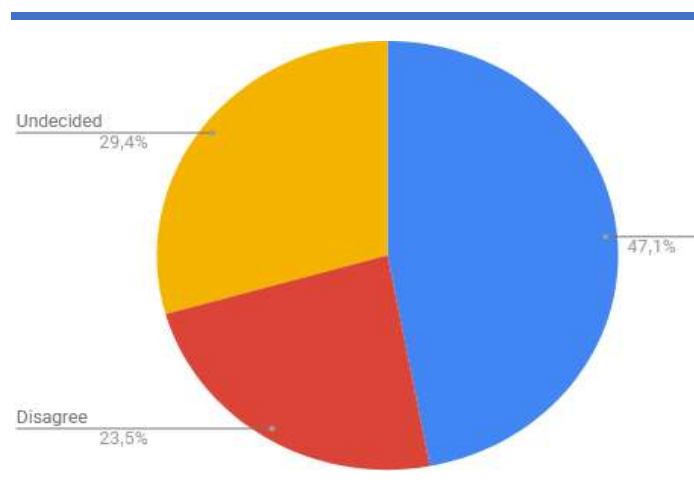


Figure 8.5: Using Smartphone enables me control my time while classes.

However, it is also clear that smart phones usage facilitates the overall learning processes as stated and confirmed by 70% of the study subjects when they are particularly reflecting to this questionnaire item.

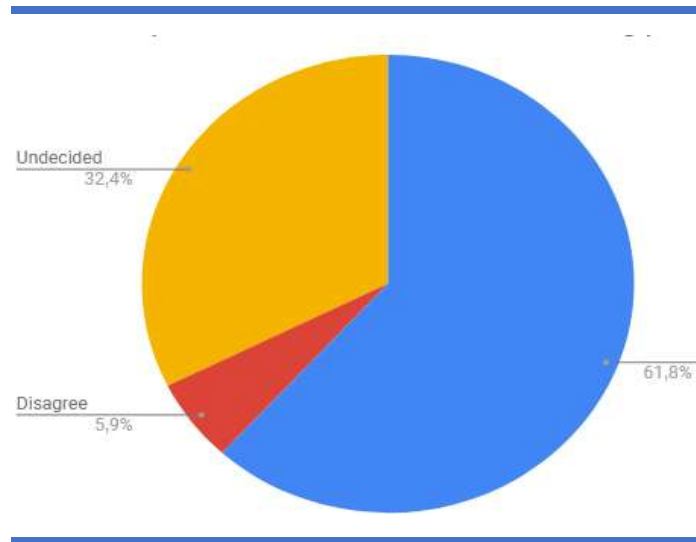
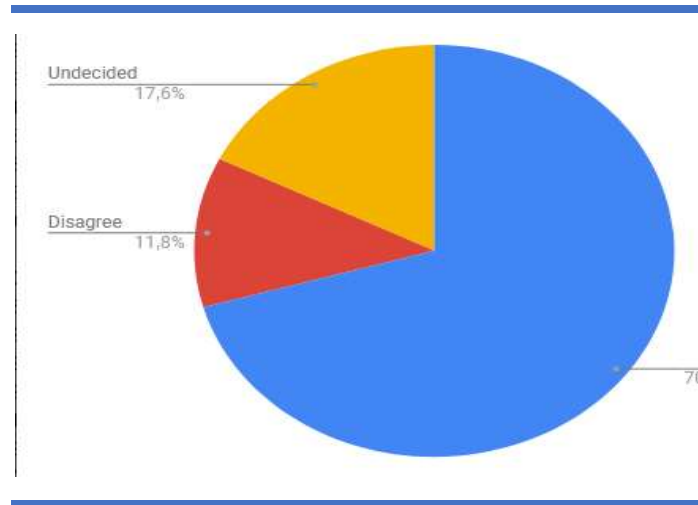


Figure 8.6: Smart phones facilitate the overall learning process.

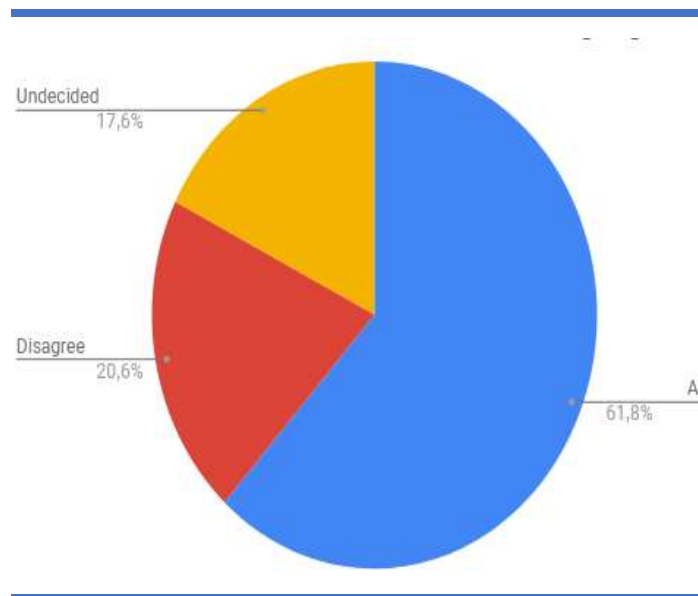
Additionally, the study also confirms that most of the subjects use their smart phones for multiple purposes other than the academic ones while classes. For example, they may use it for checking the percentage of attendance and absences, e-learning courses enrollments and contacting professors via Blackboard system, which has been established to simplify a mass connection between the staff members and the students. It is a platform where courses, memos and exam grades can easily be uploaded in Qassim university. This is clear when 68% of the participants agreed with the item.

Figure 8.7: I use my Smartphone in the language classroom only for academic purposes



Furthermore, the other determinations mentioned in the questionnaire item characterize smart phones usage in communication purposes via some social media applications as confirmed by almost 66% in the following item.

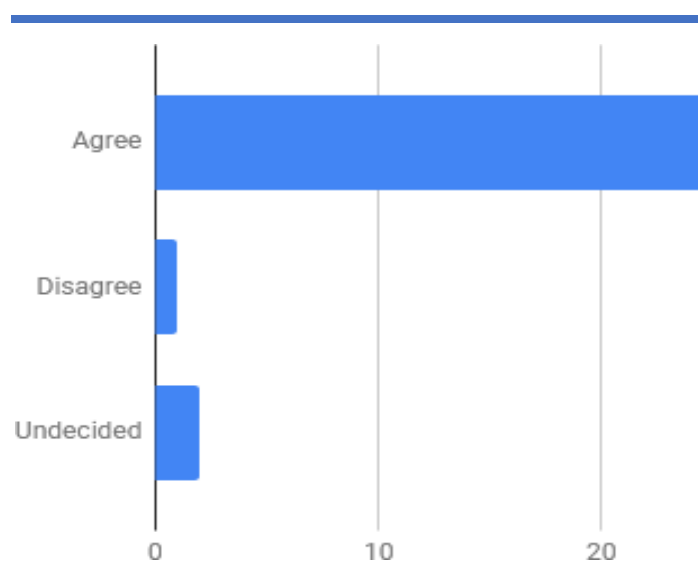
Figure 8.8: I sometimes use my smartphone to communicate with classmates via social media in



the language classroom. Thus, it is extremely important for professors to encourage students towards the positive purposes of using these devices while classes so as to maintain strong class

controls and management by keeping in touch and putting strong eye contact on classroom activities to minimize these negative uses of such devices. Given, some students may intentionally attempt to exploit the situation where smart phones are allowed to go on with their day dreams and use them freely for texting and messaging friends, particularly in large classes where professors may face management challenges.

Figure 8.9: Some professors do not allow Smartphone use in my language classes.



Regarding the fact that some professors are not lenient with smart phones usage in classrooms, almost 91% of the study subjects have positively confirmed this point, thus, their confirmation definitely indicates that for some professors the idea of carrying a smart phone in hand while classes is simply not allowed. However, reconsidering such pre – perception towards the usage of such devices is extremely important since they can be used positively with close monitoring and clear instructions before the starting their classes.

Despite the fact that professors are not lenient with using these devices, but the study also illustrates that 61 % of study subjects do not regularly need to hide their faces or sit at the back rows to use their smart phones, instead they do so in front of their professors which indicate that some students are used to behaving in such away without feeling reluctant or shy.

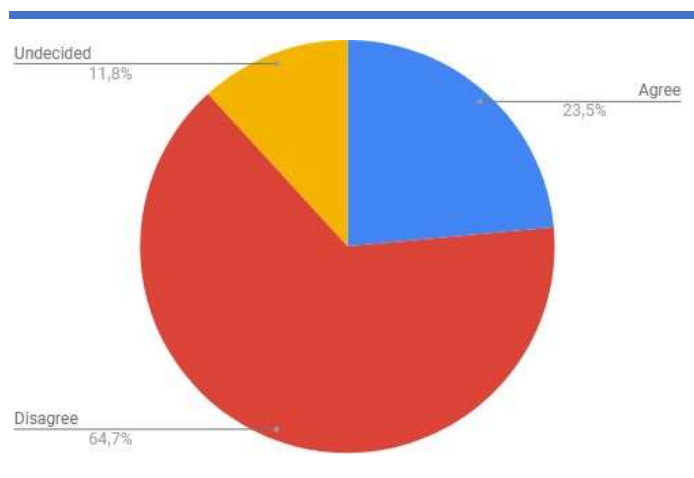
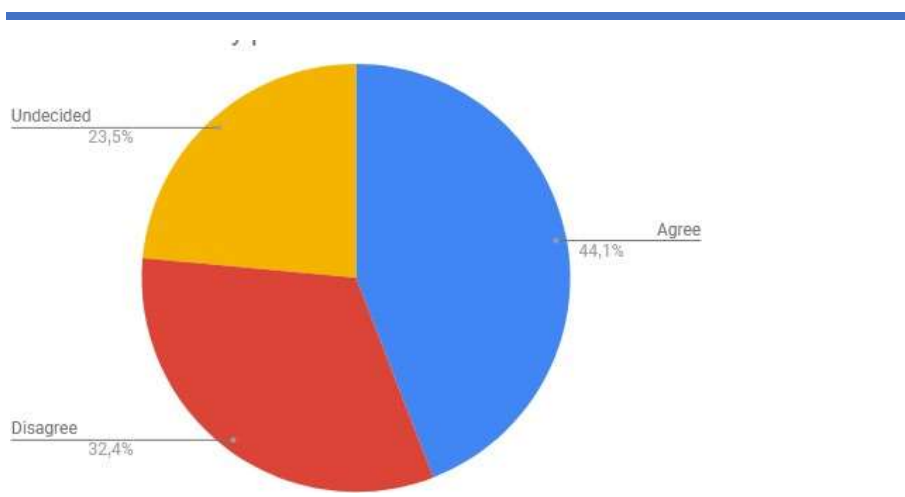


Figure 8.10: I regularly sit at the back rows to enjoy using my smartphone in class.

Therefore, a conflicting condition may occur while classes whenever this situation is regarded as a misconduct or something against the university regulations and may then result into misunderstanding unless a positive environment is being implemented and reconsidered by the professors to allow and direct students towards the positive usage of their phones at least. In terms of lack of concentration on professors' instructions during classes and where students are busy with their smart phones in hands, 45 % of the study subjects agreed with this questionnaire item.

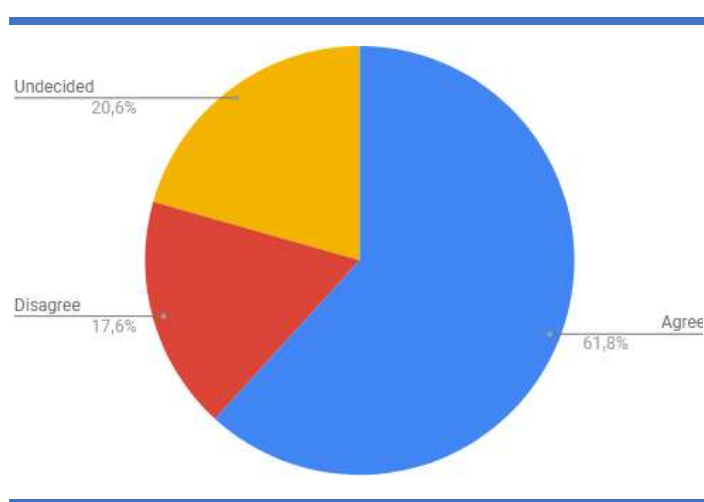
Figure 8.11: When I am busy with my smartphone, I don't concentrate on my professors' instructions.



This contradictory condition may negatively influence the learning processes unless a soft landing policies are implemented from the side of professors so as to allow students to use their smart phones at least in such a way that they can make the best use of them rather than just preventing their usage under the allegations of misbehaving and misconducting the discipline.

Additionally, among the advantages confirmed by the study subjects, is the fact that these devices can also assist students to follow up their attendance, absences as well as enabling them to learn via virtual classes which is confirmed by 65% of the participants.

Figure 8.12: My smartphone helps me to participate in virtual classes



The study also shows that students do not feel worry when denied using smart phones while classes, instead they positively responded to the instructions and this flexibility can establish a common ground of a good class management policy and cooperation between them and the instructors since they sometimes go to their smart phones unintentionally.

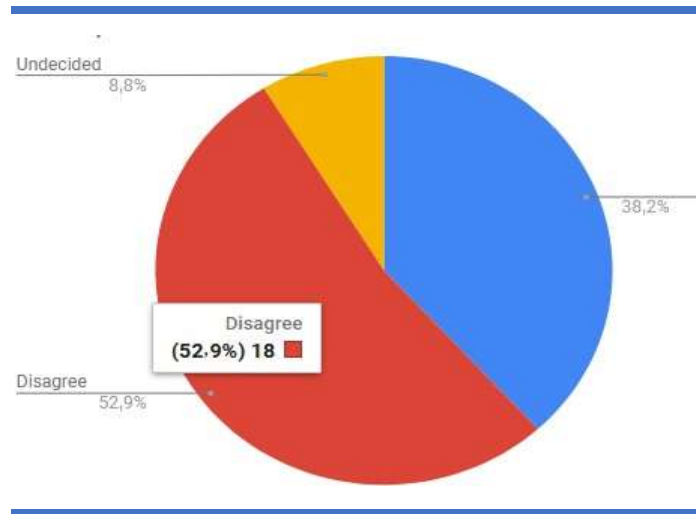


Figure 8.14: I feel worry when prevented from using my smartphone in classroom

Finally, the study subjects also confirmed the positive usage of these devices while classes. When asked in the last questionnaire item 77% agreed that they take pictures of the written notes on the board whenever they missed their notebooks.

They also take pictures of several learning materials such as references whenever that is possible and reflect on such materials at home. This indicates that most students are aware of the importance of their smart phones during classes if they are positively instructed.

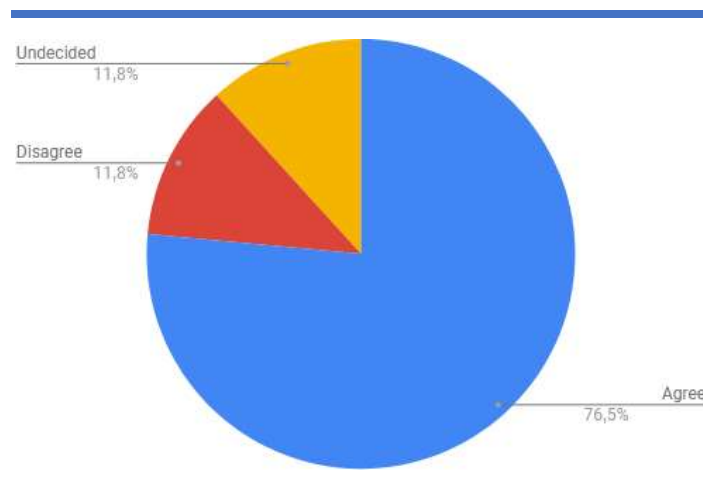


Figure 8.15: I often take pictures of different learning input sessions such as the white board written materials as well as references via my smartphone.

Recommendations

1. Encouraging students towards the positive in - classroom usage of smart phone devices.
2. It is extremely important to monitor their usage via implementing learner centrist environments while classes.
3. Extending the experiment of the virtual classrooms at Qassim University via conducting more effective teacher - training programs that include the vital usage of some smart phone applications.

CONCLUSION

Descending from the study findings, the researchers believe that professors can guide students towards the positive usage of smart phones as one of the active learning tools while classes. Therefore, instead of denying them this right, professors and instructors can simply monitor their usage via adapting learner centrist environments where every single student has an opportunity to participate and interact efficiently in classroom activities instead of adapting a lecturing approach where teacher-talking time (TTT) is always dominant. And that is how students will focus on learning since they expect to answer or raise questions during the activity rather than go on freely with their day dreams using their smart phones for classroom unrelated issues such as communicating friends through some social media applications.

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Appendixes**The questionnaire items**

NO.	Questionnaire items	agree	Disagree	Undecided
1.	Smartphones usage assist me in learning the English sounds.			
2.	I regularly use my smartphone to look up new words.			
3.	It motivates me to access to updated information.			
4.	I use my smartphone during the brainstorming stage in a given academic writing assignments.			
5.	It controls time while classes.			
6.	It facilitates the overall learning processes.			
7.	I only use my smartphone for academic purposes while classes.			
8.	I sometimes use smartphone to communicate with friends via some social media applications while classes.			
9.	Some professors are not lenient with smartphone usage in classrooms.			
10.	I regularly sit at the back rows to enjoy using my smartphone in class.			
11.	When I am busy with my smartphone, I don't concentrate on professors' instructions.			
12.	My smartphone enables me to participate in virtual classes.			
13.	I regularly check my attendance and absences through my smartphone			
14.	I feel worry when prevented from using my smartphone in classroom.			
15.	I often take pictures of different learning input sessions such as the board and references via my smartphone.			