

CAUGHT IN THE WEB: OVERCOMING AND REPRODUCING HEGEMONY IN AZERBAIJAN

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This paper explores university student access to and use of technology in Azerbaijan in the context of hegemony in computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Due to perceptions of a lack of technology access in the university context, the instructors in this study did not initially pursue a CALL agenda. Based on data sources that included a questionnaire, photographs, documents, journals, and interviews, the results of the study indicated that despite instructor perceptions, many students used and had access to various forms of technology on a regular basis. For example, students used computers and mobile devices to pursue different kinds of knowledge outside of the university. Implications include the importance of the deconstruction of instructor assumptions so that they can be critical educators and make choices that can lead to social change.

Keywords: Computer-Assisted Language Learning, Culture, Language Teaching Methodology

INTRODUCTION

While citizens have fought oppressive government regimes in many countries around the world both in and out of cyberspace, numerous organizations have also played roles in working with activists, journalists, and others to resist oppression. These empowerment efforts include high profile groups like the internet community *Anonymous* which engaged in cyberwarfare (Reporters Without Borders, 2011, January 4). There are other groups involved in day-to-day development projects that do not garner historical headlines. For example, government organizations like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) works to improve infrastructure and economic outcomes, and Fulbright English Language Fellows (ELFs), or the Peace Corps and the British Council, work to improve English language education around the globe. Non-government organizations¹ also further development and include, but are not limited to: the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACCELS), the Open Society Institute (OSI), and Project Harmony International (PH International). These organizations work to promote democracy, civic engagement, technology, and media development, for example.

It is important to note that organizations often work in-country with the permission of, and sometimes at the express invitation of, host governments. All the organizations listed are of western origin and the participation of English speakers in language education reform may seem benign to some, but no educational enterprise is value-free and this needs to be recognized as a political endeavor (Apple, 2010), regardless of the country inviting or providing the development aid. Whatever the motives, interventionist educational projects can be viewed as colonialist (e.g., Saavedra, 2011). For example, it is easy to see how Peace Corps volunteers may be viewed as part of a larger agenda of the *American Empire* as they are sent out as “public relations people to portray [the United States] as the purveyor of freedom around the world” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 331). While those working in foreign contexts may be seen (by themselves or by others) as helpers or saviors, their role can also be viewed as part of a colonizing process. Likewise, those who engage in teaching/researching English through CALL are also legitimate objects for critical scrutiny. They both resist and impose forms of hegemony (Norton & Toohey, 2004). We take hegemony to refer to, “the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force *but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family*”

(McLaren, 1994, p. 182, italics in the original). Consequently, depending on the sociopolitical and technological context, it may be hegemonic practice to promote the use of CALL (see for example Cutrim Schmid & Whyte, this issue) or on the other hand to resist it, as in the role played by the Dean in the case presented below. Both scenarios can have a negative impact on education.

In this paper we present descriptive data through a critical lens. First, the literature review describes hegemony within western teaching approaches and outlines what are often accepted as *optimal* CALL environments. The study challenges this notion of what is optimal by critically analyzing teacher perceptions about technology access and technology use as reported by students. Then, the methodology is described, including data sources (questionnaire, photographs, documents, journals, and interviews) and qualitative analysis techniques. Next, we present the results that characterize the students as having access to more technology than previously thought and as consumers of information. Results are followed by a discussion in which the authors conclude that there may be more pedagogical options that align to local CALL contexts than originally considered.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to position the paper, this literature review addresses teaching approaches and the use of CALL. Critical theory is not addressed separately but rather is integrated.

Hegemony of Teaching Approach

As briefly described in the introduction, it is not uncommon for westerners, including teachers of English, to work on development or aid projects in developing countries. As described by McLaren (1994), each teaching context exists within overarching governmental and cultural practices that organize political, economic, and social life to maintain prevalent power structures. For example, Kumashiro (2009) shows how teaching in ways that feel familiar and common helps to maintain the status quo, which is often oppressive to those with the least power. Those involved in teaching English through CALL both resist and impose hegemony through their praxis of choice and dominant discourses which play out as “regimes of truth” (McLaren, 1994, p. 189).

First, the increased use of and reliance/insistence on English can be both a way of maintaining hegemony and a way of struggling against it (e.g., Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari, 2003; Sonntag, 2003) as questions about language are questions of power (Chomsky & Ronat, 1979; Crawford, 2004). These struggles arise in perceptions of language prestige (Ager, 2005), language minority rights (May, 2005), and language extinction (Kramer, Miller, & Newberger, 2008). The increasing dominance of English, especially in academic publications (Ferguson, Pérez-Llantada, & Plo, 2011), raises questions about the legitimacy of some languages (Reagan & Osborn, 2002) and ‘non-standard’ forms of English, as documented in the journal *World Englishes*. One specific example includes a discussion about perceptions, features, and the validity of ‘China English’ (He & Li, 2009). Anzaldúa (1987) and hooks (1994) provide examples of how policy and cultural practices intersect with power and language on a personal level. Throughout her educational and teaching career, hooks, for example, felt that limiting the exchange of ideas in public forums to ‘standard English’ worked to silence those who were less comfortable expressing their ideas in English. So while learning English could be considered a means to open doors towards economic advancement or emancipation, it can also be viewed as an act of oppression, colonization, and cultural elitism (Anzaldúa, 1987; Hooks, 1994; Said, 1994).

The classroom itself may become a source of embodied pedagogy, and hegemony (Grumet, 1988; McLaren, 1994; Pinar, 2000). Curriculum, in particular, is not only concerned with whether students have learned content and skills, but also reveals relationships of power about who declares what is considered knowledge worth learning and how that process is carried out (Apple, 2010; McLaren, 1994). Furthermore, theories of teaching and learning embedded in teaching approaches common in western educational contexts, like constructivism (Bruner, 1996), experiential learning (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994),

multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999), and social interaction and constructivism (Vygostky, 1978), can be oppressive to students who favor other means of learning. When applied to language learning contexts, these approaches often result in student-centered, communicative classrooms that privilege collaborative learning (e.g. Perego & Boyle, 2008). Of course, influences on the classroom and a teacher's role in defining, reproducing, and constructing knowledge are much more complex than can be described in a single paragraph and they are not static. Teaching English through western educational approaches in foreign contexts that traditionally use other methods of teaching and learning can be colonizing and hegemonic. Yet using these same western approaches can also serve to disrupt the status quo of comfortable teaching that works to maintain existing power structures in such contexts.

Optimal CALL Environments

While any given teaching approach can be viewed as hegemonic, CALL introduces another layer for consideration through western ways of thinking about CALL and *optimal* environments, use of tools without even considering that a bias might be embedded within the tools, and available technology. Those trained in western pedagogy may privilege western ways of thinking about CALL. For example, Egbert suggests that for optimal CALL, instructors should use environments that foster engagement and, in turn, second language acquisition (Egbert, 2009, 2010; Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 2007). Some of the characteristics of optimal environments include interaction with the target language, negotiation of meaning, and authentic tasks and audiences. Learners for their part must consume and produce language, pay attention to feedback, and attend to their learning processes (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 2007). While some of this might be accomplished in a traditional classroom that is not influenced by western pedagogy, arguably it is easier to achieve in classrooms where teachers and students value and include social interaction in their teaching and learning activities.

The tools used in CALL introduce a fundamental bias, as the “very act of using technology reproduces what is supposed to be transformed” (Feenberg, 2002, p. 63). As humans are full of subjectivities, they are often blinded by their own ways of seeing the world (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Tools produced by humans, then, also reflect the biases of their producers, who often belong to dominant groups and who design tools to meet their own needs. To provide a simple example of how tools can incorporate bias, and as any left-hander can attest to, most tools are designed for a culture of right-handed people. If you put your right hand over a remote control, the power button is positioned to be turned on by the thumb on that hand. In the same way, many technologies are biased toward a culture of sighted people. According to Parry and Brainard (2010), problem areas for sight-impaired people include tablet readers that do not have voice-activated menus as well as inaccessible Web site content, as sites are not always compatible with programs that help sight-impaired people mitigate the accessibility problems. Popular learning management software has also been problematic. In response to pressure by sight-impaired students, Blackboard Learn, Release 9, alleviated many problems students encountered, by including “faster navigation and improved form interaction, allowing blind users to submit assignments, participate in discussion forums, send and receive e-mail, take tests and quizzes, and participate in polls” (Danielsen, 2010, Mar 25, para. 4). In short, Web sites and software products often reflect the cultural orientations and abilities of those who produce them.

While the bias embedded in tools in CALL environments is an area of hegemony, so, too, is a lack of tools. Tools have been the center of attention for those who have been concerned with issues arising from a lack of computers and connectivity, a situation that contributes to the digital divide. While a lack of hardware and software may or may not be the cause of increased educational inequities, even in very well-connected contexts, the use made of technology may limit the learning opportunities. Egbert (2010) defines an “optimal technology context” not as having sophisticated equipment per se, but as utilizing any tool that increases the effectiveness or efficiency of language learning (p. 2). While this could be interpreted as a practical move to use what tools are available, it could also be interpreted as complicity in the reproduction of hegemony in oppressive environments that critical researchers and teachers resist

(Freire, 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). In sum, there are many potential ways western-trained instructors who work with CALL in foreign contexts may contribute to hegemonic and oppressive teaching practices, only some of which have been addressed here.

Difficulties arise, however, in determining what is hegemonic. For example, a western instructor in a non-western context may feel unable or unwilling to work outside the pedagogical approaches within which they were trained, and this may be considered oppressive. On the other hand, such pedagogies could also be considered emancipatory if they contribute to the disruption of the status quo of local hegemonies currently in play. Therefore, educators interested in critical pedagogy may wish to work to disrupt the status quo, in order to, as they see it, advance social justice (Freire, 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, 2005). In doing so, however, they may both resist and impose forms of hegemony.

The research questions addressed in this paper include: (a) What observations and assumptions do foreign teachers make about teaching/learning (especially with relation to technology) in their teaching contexts? (b) What technologies do university students have access to and use? and (c) What hegemonies are resisted/imposed as a result of foreign teachers working with students to teach both technology and English skills? The study was conducted in the Republic of Azerbaijan in two different university settings. Traditional methods of language teaching in Azerbaijan include reading and translation, rote memorization, and recitation. More details about the context and participants are provided in the following section.

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

In order to inform the research questions, data was collected from three sources: (a) environmental print photographs, (b) a survey about university students' access to and use of technology and Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) sites (explained below), and (c) instructors' reflective journals, notes from training sessions, conversations, and documents. Critical theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, 2005) was chosen to assist as a framework and to guide analysis. First, the context and sample is described, the methodology for each data source is then described, followed by details of the analysis procedures.

Context and Sample

As stated previously, the study occurred in Azerbaijan with groups of students from two public universities in the capital (henceforth University A and University B). Students' ages ranged from 18-20 and their participation in the study was voluntary. The students were preparing to enter English teaching or translating professions. Forty-eight students took part in the study while three students chose not to do so. The students were predominantly female; seven were male. The convenience sample of students was chosen for their proficiency in English. Less than 15% of the population in the country attends tertiary schooling (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, n.d.). Since these students had achieved high scores on their entrance exams, they were able to enter university. The breakdown of the five groups of students was as follows: (a) five first- and third-year students from the English Writing Center tutor training course, (b) thirteen third-year students enrolled in the Russian-speaking part of the institution (henceforth *sector*) attending an English course, (c) nine second-year students from the Russian language sector in an English academic writing course, (d) sixteen second-year students from the Azerbaijani language sector attending an English academic writing course, and (e) five third-year students from the Azerbaijani language sector in an English course.

At both universities, students attended English language classes two days a week for ninety minutes per week. At University A the classes were voluntary (participation was not part of the grade) while attendance was mandatory at University B as part of graduation requirements. The academic writing classes used an academic reading and writing book created by a non-profit foreign organization. In other classes at University A, the same text was used, but only as a resource for lesson planning, while at University B the text was used in class.

All classes were taught by one of two native English speakers, henceforth *the instructors*, living in the country for one year, funded by a grant from a U.S. government scholarship program. The universities applied for the English speakers to assist in their respective English Departments. Although each of the instructors had submitted a work proposal prior to commencing his or her duties, their roles within each university were constantly negotiated. One of the instructors had previously had training in CALL.

Environmental Print

Prior to the study, one of the authors of this paper had noticed graffiti spray-painted around town, with WAP addresses included (see photograph sample in the Results section). The WAP is a communications protocol that enables users of basic mobile phones to access and browse web-like text services. In the rest of this article, sites accessible on mobile phones through this protocol are referred to as WAP sites, and URLs directing users to those sites are referred to as WAP addresses.

The authors wondered whether there was any link between the WAP addresses and the students. Did students view these sites? Did they create them? What kind of information was being promoted? In order to investigate these questions, a geographically-bounded sample of WAP address photos was created from a section of town close to one of the universities under study. Analysis of this data is discussed in the analysis section.

Student Questionnaire

In order to learn about student access to and use of technology, students were given a questionnaire. Due to the environmental print context of images of WAP addresses painted around town, the survey focused on WAPs. Students had the option of completing the questionnaire in English or the dominant native language, Azerbaijani, which was translated and checked by language and cultural informants to ensure linguistic, functional, and cultural equivalence (Lange, 2002; Lopez, Figueroa, Connor, & Maliski, 2008; Peña, 2007). The study and questionnaire received approval according to the procedures at the respective universities both in the United States (formal ethical review) and Azerbaijan (informal approval).² The questionnaire included demographic information, nine yes/no questions, and eight open-ended questions (see [Appendix](#)). It was piloted successfully with three students and then given to the rest of the sample.

Instructor Data

Instructor data included reflective journals and notes from training sessions (taught by U.S. trainers) attended by the instructors prior to travelling to Azerbaijan as well as during the teaching year. They also included conversational interview notes, and documents such as slides from PowerPoint presentations as well as student essays. Most of the data collection occurred during the four-month fall term. Much of this documentation focused on what an instructor did in class, student reactions, and analyses of methods for improving teaching and meeting learning goals.

Analysis

The analysis was based on general procedures provided by Bogdan and Biklen (2003). Specifically, the questionnaire results were tallied, WAP sites explored, and notes taken on the content, and then all documents were coded according to emergent themes (technology/tools, media/information, teaching, student actions, and relationships). These themes were established by using ongoing reflective analysis throughout the study.

RESULTS

After describing what the instructors thought about the students' technology ownership and access, we present the survey.

Instructors' Points of View

According to the data, the instructors' perceptions of technology ownership and student access were inconsistent on three levels. The instructors believed that: (a) many students did not have access to computers in the home; (b) the universities lacked available computers in the classrooms or in computer labs; and (c) the students did not or could not access computers in public internet cafés. We explore these three sets of beliefs in turn.

First, while they joked that many students did not have just one cell phone, but multiple cell phones, the instructors did not consider mobile handheld devices as a viable pedagogical possibility. Both instructors were teaching in the capital that had a steady supply of electricity in comparison to some areas of the country, offering the opportunity to use such electronic devices, yet they characterized technology access as limited.

Secondly, while there was a perception among university members that their university did not have computers in classrooms or any computer labs, this perception turned out to be questionable. Indeed, according to one instructor, the very bare minimum was provided (i.e., seats and tables, but sometimes not even a blackboard). Nevertheless, to that instructor's surprise, technology did become available, as a few weeks into the term, the Dean at University A *found* a computer lab that he allowed the instructor to access with her students. These resources, however, were considered limited by both the Dean and the instructor, as relayed by the instructor:

[The Dean] said the computers are not functioning because they 'don't have sound' so no one uses [the lab] and the room gets locked up. It's a very narrow room and when you walk in, there's rows of desks... There is no blackboard... 12 PCs... There was MS Word and later we downloaded *Polyglot*, a multiple language dictionary, onto them. The computers are not more than five years old but have zero online capability.

The room had 12 relatively new computers that worked, but it was still viewed as a limited technology context by both the Dean and the instructor, albeit for different reasons. The Dean saw the lack of sound as the limitation; the instructor focused on the lack of internet connection which, consequently, did not allow the students to locate authentic materials or engage in authentic communication via computer.

The third set of inconsistent instructor beliefs related to the availability of computers around town. Outside of the school context, the capital had many internet cafés, predominantly used by males, according to the instructors' observations. However, since most of their students were female, one instructor stated her expectation that these women would not access computers in internet cafés. According to local tradition, public tea houses are a man's domain and women are either not invited or not allowed to visit them, as well as possibly reluctant to do so.

The data revealed some basic assumptions the instructors had about CALL. They believed, for example, that to engage in CALL required computers in labs or in the classroom, and did not consider mobile handheld devices. Their understanding that their universities did not have computers available or offer connectivity for their students, and that women did not use computers in internet cafés, did not turn out to be completely true, although these understandings affected the pedagogical choices they made in their teaching. The questionnaire results reveal another perspective on the situation, however.

Questionnaire Results

While the instructors and the Dean interpreted the educational technology context as limited, the questionnaire results describe the context from another perspective, namely that of the students.

One hundred percent of respondents reported having a cell phone, and all but one utilized Short Message Service (SMS), that is, texting (see [Table 1](#)). The student who did not use SMS indicated that she used a

cell phone plan. Cell phone plans are a more expensive option for communication, so we speculate that she could afford to communicate by the more expensive means of voice-based phone calls, rather than the cheaper medium of text messages.

Table 1. *Technology Access and Use* (n = 48 students)

Question	Yes	No	No Response/ Do Not Know
Own a cell phone	48	0	0
Use a SIM card	47	1	0
Use a calling plan	1	47	0
Internet access at home	37	10	1
Use Internet cafes	15	34	*
Send text messages	45	1	2
Use WAPs	36	11	1
Create WAPs	6	42	1
Follow Twitter feed(s)	4	39	5
Send Twitter messages	4	39	5

Note. *This student responded both yes and no.

Thirty-seven students reported having internet access in their homes, 10 said they did not, and one did not respond. Fifteen students used internet cafés, while 34 did not. One student answered both yes and no, a response that remained unclarified after we analyzed the data, but which may suggest his or her situation had recently changed. Upon closer analysis of the data, it emerged that 11 of the students who used internet cafés were female, which was a surprise to the instructors. Only six students out of the sample said they did not access the internet at home or at internet cafés; of those six students, two said they used WAP sites. In other words, close to eight percent were not connected.

Students were asked specifically about Twitter since this networking site was gaining popularity at the time of the survey. In addition, because observations had shown that students preferred SMS messaging to talking over the phone, we wondered whether they would use Twitter, which is similar to SMS in that users produce very short messages. However, our sample turned out not to be big users of Twitter.

Students reported two main reasons for using technology: (a) staying in contact with their friends and “group mates” (i.e., classmates) both at home and abroad, and (b) obtaining what they called “information”. Out of the 42 who responded to a question on the news, 100% indicated that they followed the news. Two of the students, however, wrote “TV” for question number six, “Do you use technology to read the news?” TV news may be tightly controlled by the government (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2001, February 15), depending on whether the students access external sources³ of news.

According to the results of the questionnaire, students seemed to place a high value on the news, as indicated by their responses such as “of course” or similar expressions indicating that news-seeking behavior was to be expected. Eight students specifically mentioned accessing news or knowing what was happening on a global level. One student said, “Yes, I always use [technology]” and mentioned that two of her favorite sites were the BBC and CNN. In other words, there was a contrast between the predominantly female sample and instructor observations of young men in town. While the data included anecdotal observations of young men using computers in internet cafés for entertainment purposes mainly, many students in the sample sought and valued knowledge that kept them connected to what was happening in the world.

Other popular sites among students varied, although they clearly favored three main sites. Those sites were: Facebook (14 responses), Google (12 responses), and the popular Russian e-mail service mail.ru (11 responses). Additionally, four students mentioned Wikipedia. The rest of the sites mentioned by

students were only named once or twice, but covered news, education, sports, and pop culture. Some students indicated that they used technology to support their studies. Furthermore, students accessed information in multiple languages for reading and listening (see Figure 1). The languages in which students reported accessing information included: Azerbaijani, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and Ukrainian. It was noted that three students did not access content for listening purposes in any language; these are indicated in Figure 1 by means of a zero score.

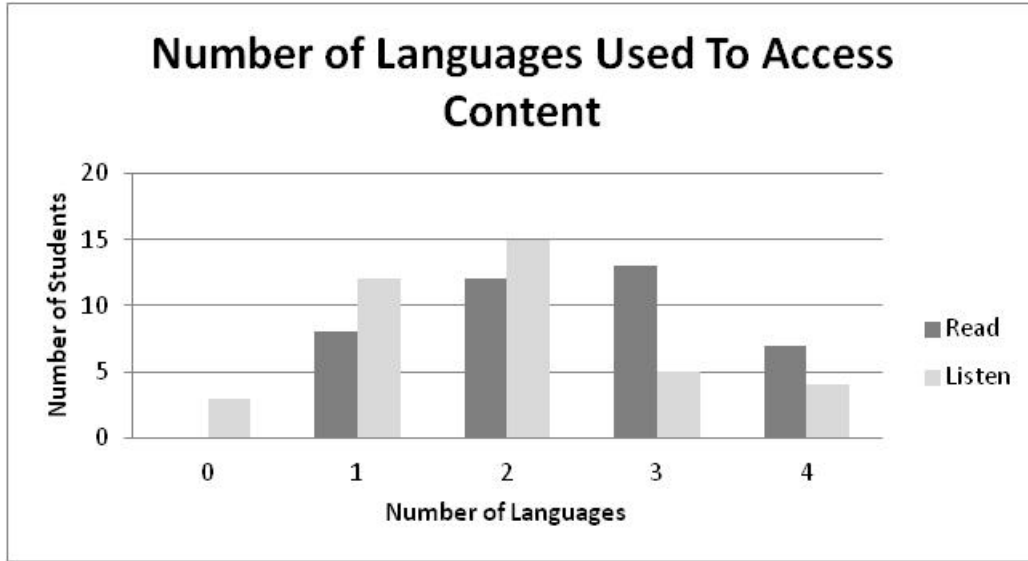


Figure 1. Number of languages used to access content.

Finally, in response to an open-ended prompt about other thoughts they wanted to share about technology use, students described technology as “easy”, “fast”, “simple”, and “comfortable”, and made comments such as: “we can’t live without [technologies]”, and “it is impossible to do anything without modern technologies.” One student even characterized technology as her “best friend”, while another expressed her appreciation: “I don’t know who invented technologies, but I thank him/she.”

In sum, the students were connected and utilized social networking sites. They also accessed content in multiple languages. The question remains, were the students linked to the WAP sites spray-painted around town and what kind of content was available?

WAPs

The third source of data came from the WAP sites, spray-painted around town and displayed on walls like advertisements (see Figure 2 shown below). In the course of analyzing the data, we learned that many of the WAP sites, seven out of fifteen, were no longer accessible.



Figure 2. Graffiti showing a WAP address.

Of those WAP sites that were accessible, with the exception of links to *namaz vaxti* (prayer time), most appeared to serve entertainment purposes. Sites included links to a TV guide; three television stations; fitness instructions; and telephone dialing codes. Another example with quite a few menu choices (*ciciwap.biz*) showed a sexy girl in the corner with Cyrillic writing: ‘ПІОПНО’ (porno, in both Russian and Azerbaijani). The site included links written in Azerbaijani (using the Latin alphabet) to: chat and meeting forums, mobile phone ringtones and sounds, different types of music like the national *xalq* music style, MP3s, comics, sites with live girls, wallpapers, pictures, and video and film clips.. One example of a film clip link included content relating to *Kurtlar Vadisi*, a popular Turkish television program. The last time this WAP address was checked, however, it was labeled “invisible”, with a notice explaining it was being “cleaned”. Another site had a link to the Eurovision Song Contest, an international singing competition.⁴

Was there a connection between the WAP sites and the students? Not according to our survey. What we did discover, however, was that many WAP sites did not appear to be fully accessible to users, some appearing to be under construction while others had short life spans. Additionally, student technology use appeared to be seamless. In other words, most students did not seem to distinguish between connecting to the internet via cell phones and handheld devices or computers, as evidenced by their responses to the survey. For example, the survey specifically asked about WAP sites, but only two students included “wap” in the address provided for their favorite WAP sites, while the rest of the students provided general internet addresses. In other words, students wrote *google.com* instead of an address that indicated accessing Google via a mobile device like *m.google.com*, for example. It appears that students are not aware of or do not care about the technical differences between devices, and that instead, they view what they are doing as *checking Google* regardless of the equipment used.

DISCUSSION

Based on the data, two hegemonic processes came together to limit the use of CALL in the classroom. First, the instructors' assumptions and their pedagogical choices reflected a western understanding of the local context, leading them to overemphasize the importance of certain kinds of technology, for example, computer labs, and to neglect the potential of the local students' preferred technologies. As the instructors had specific beliefs about computers with internet connections being *the way* to engage in CALL, the context that we have discussed was deemed by them to be limited even though 100% of the students had cell phones with texting capabilities, and they knew how to use these devices. They were in fact connected to the internet and could access authentic content and engage in authentic communication. Second, the local practice of locking up resources such as computer labs, reflecting local power structures, appeared to confirm teachers' assumption that no way was open to them for carrying out western-oriented CALL pedagogies. In this study, power relationships surrounded access to materials and information.

In addition to a limited, computer-based definition of CALL, it is possible that societal structures and hegemonic processes were limiting women's access to internet cafés outside the classroom as well. According to local tradition, public tea houses are a man's domain and women are either not invited or not allowed to visit them, as well as possibly reluctant to do so. While internet cafés are different from tea houses, they can be viewed as serving similar purposes: as places where men gather for what appears to be mainly recreational purposes. Anecdotal data showed that the instructors observed women in public internet cafés although the women sat in certain sections of particular cafés. As explained by one instructor, women did not frequent cafés that were located in basements, for example, locations that she described as "dirty", "poorly lit" and where males had been observed viewing pornographic material. In other words the hegemonic processes surrounding the use of internet cafés, and in our perspective, their potential for language education, are as yet unclear and could benefit from further research.

Despite instructor perceptions as well as the realities of technology and access, the data revealed some contradictions. First, the instructors did resist hegemonic practices by bringing their personal laptops to class, showing PowerPoint presentations and previously downloaded YouTube videos, for example. Second, technology other than computers may have been available to instructors (e.g., CD players), although the instructors did not appear to know how to access this technology or, alternatively, did not try to overcome local hegemonic processes that distributed resources in possibly less than democratic ways. In other words, some forms of technology were available to some local instructors, but it took extra effort, insider knowledge of the way things worked, and a commitment to include them in classroom activities. Third, the Dean unlocked resources one instructor could previously not access. The Dean may or may not have had the money, power, or influence at his disposal to make the room a fully functioning, connected computer lab. Outside the general country context of pervasive corruption (as evidenced by the need for an anti-corruption government campaign, documented in Abassov, 2011, Feb 23) the data does not reveal the specific processes at play. However, the Dean did have the power to open and close the room and he had chosen, until that moment, to keep it locked. This choice maintained hegemonic practices in the school, so that students' engagement with contemporary technology remained linked to their private lives and was not fostered as part of their school lives. The instructor, for her part, even after being granted access to the room, chose not to use the computers, either. She said, "I guess I haven't seen much of a need for them yet." as she did not want to artificially use technology just for the sake of it, given that it seemed limited for her purposes.

In sum, power relationships surrounded access to materials and information, impacting pedagogical choices and, consequently, student learning. Instructors worked within assumptions that they derived from their prior educational contexts, and chose tools accordingly. What this study shows is that educators need to deconstruct their assumptions and try to better understand the conditions that lead them to choose certain technologies for certain educational purposes. In this way they can become critical

educators and make choices that can lead to social change.

LIMITATIONS

The data, results, and interpretations here are limited in several ways. First, we used a convenience sample. While the students and the data may have similarities to other university students studying the same major in the capital, results cannot be generalized. Second, student volunteers filled in the questionnaire; volunteers may have certain characteristics that distinguish them from the rest of the students. Third, during the administration of the questionnaire, instructors observed that some students, in one group especially, were not fully completing the questionnaire; they said they were tired and left the open response prompts blank. Fourth, at the outset we had two host country nationals involved in the project to further illuminate some of our assumptions. Both of these individuals, however, became too busy to participate.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, the data reveal how hegemonic practices can hamper pedagogical choices and, in turn, student learning. While instructors may impose their own hegemonies, in this case, western-based ones, in the form of class-based roles, materials, and educational approaches, they are also well-positioned to interrupt local hegemonies. This study has revealed both the oppressive effects of hegemony and the possibility of resistance, and offers implications for practice and further research in CALL.

The instructors in this study worked to engage students in authentic learning activities according to the instructors' teaching and learning backgrounds and inherent assumptions, not the students'. For example, the instructors made assumptions about technology, namely, that not very many students had the kind of internet access they thought was required for CALL. However, upon closer investigation, the data revealed that students may be connected in ways that are different than we may anticipate; there may be pedagogical options that remain underutilized (Egbert, 2010). In this light, educators have a responsibility to deconstruct hegemonic practices and work towards emancipatory educational practices (McLaren, 1994). This includes challenging their own conceptualizations as well as the larger societal contexts within which they operate.

CALL teachers, whose primary responsibility is to teach language, recognize that CALL can open the world to students. While many students know how to use the available technology, they may not utilize it fully to both consume and produce language in authentic ways. Technological skills can transfer to multiple languages, providing students with the tools to counter hegemonic practices and work towards emancipation if they so choose. In this study based in Azerbaijan, students used technology to access various forms of information. In countries that have controlled media environments, technology may afford students access to external information. However, English-based media sources impose their own hegemonies and agendas. Therefore students must be taught to be critical consumers of information.

Currently, teaching plans by the instructors at University A are moving towards a radio journalism project through which students and teachers will resist local hegemonic practices. Students will conduct interviews and write essays about their experiences as young women or men in Azerbaijan, with the goal of broadcasting them via radio throughout the country. They will challenge classroom-based instructor/learner relationships as the students will also be considered *knowers*, which means that they will use language to write, edit, and produce authentic materials based on their own experiences instead of being passive recipients of information. Depending on the content of their essays, they could challenge other hegemonies and forms of oppression publicly via radio. The administration at University A has given its support to the project although it will not provide any materials. To make the project a reality, the instructors have already garnered the support of other organizations who will contribute such tools as voice recorders. By seeking support for the project outside the university context, the instructors will

disrupt power relationships and practices currently in place, especially those that relate to finances. However, in so doing, the instructors will simultaneously uphold the status quo by remaining complicit in practices that allow those in power at the universities to decline to fund educational activities or make materials available and/or accessible.

The outcomes of the radio journalism project are unknown. Time will tell what the consequences will be, both positive and negative, of implementing alternative teaching approaches that challenge practices and the status quo of current power relationships. This is an area rich for future research. As we proceed, we remember Freire's belief that transformative education must take place in true solidarity with oppressed peoples and through meaningful praxis (2000).

APPENDIX. Student Questionnaire

Sorğu # _____ (zəhmət olmasa, respondentin adını qeyd ETMƏYİN)

Birini qeyd edin:

Kişi və ya qadınsınız?	Kişi	Qadın		
Sizin mobil telefonunuz (-larınız) varmı?	Bəli	Xeyr		
Siz hansı tariff paketindən istifadə edirsiniz:	Sim Kart	Aylıq abunəçi		
Evinizdə internet varmı?	Bəli	Xeyr		
İnternet klublardan istifadə edirsinizmi?	Bəli	Xeyr		
Siz WAP saytlardan istifadə edirsinizmi?	Bəli	Xeyr		
Siz WAP saytlar yaradırsınızmi?	Bəli	Xeyr		
Siz Twitter yazısını (-larını) izləyirsinizmi?	Bəli	Yazının adı?	Xeyr	Bilmirəm
Siz Twitter-ə yazı(-lar) daxil edirsinizmi?	Bəli		Xeyr	Bilmirəm
Siz SMS göndərirsinizmi?	Bəli		Xeyr	

- 1) Sizin ən sevimli WAP-larınız hansılardır?
- 2) Hansı səbəbə görə siz məhs bu WAP-ları bəyənlirsiniz?
- 3) Hansı səbəbə görə siz WAP-ları istifadə və/və ya yaradırsınız?
- 4) Siz WAP-ları hansı dil(-lərdə) oxuyursunuz?
- 5) Siz WAP-ları hansı dil(-lərdə) dinləyirsiniz?
- 6) Siz xəbərləri oxumaq məqsədilə hər hansısa bir texnoloji vasitədən istifadə edirsinizmi?
- 7) Texnoloji vasitələrdən istifadə etməyinizin səbəbi nədir?
- 8) İstifadə etdiyiniz texnoloji vasitələrdən və onların siz tərəfindən istifadə yolları barədə bizə daha nə deyə bilərsiniz?

Survey # _____ (no names please)

Circle one:

Are you male or female?	Male	Female
Do you have a cell phone(s)?	Yes	No
Do you use:	Sim Card	Calling Plan
Do you have internet at home?	Yes	No
Do you use internet cafes?	Yes	No
Do you use WAP sites?	Yes	No
Do you create a WAP site?	Yes	No
Do you follow a Twitter feed(s)?	Yes Name?	No I do not know
Do you send a Twitter feed(s)?	Yes	No I do not know
Do you send SMS messages?	Yes	No

- 1) What are your favorite WAPs?
- 2) Why do you like these WAPs?
- 3) Why do you use and/or make WAPs?
- 4) In what language(s) do you read WAPs?
- 5) In what language(s) do you listen to WAPs?
- 6) Do you use technology to read the news?
- 7) What are the reasons you use technology?
- 8) What else can you tell us about the technologies that you use and the ways you use them?

NOTES

1. An organization may be considered a non-profit due to its legal business structure, but this does not preclude the possibility of government funding through contracts. For example, ACCELS administers the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX), which is funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. See <http://www.americancouncils.org/program/1j/FLEX/> for more details.
2. Authors and research participants were affiliated with these universities.
3. Accessing external content through satellite TV may not be an option for citizens in the future as government officials plan to forcefully remove the dishes and move to digital technologies which they can better control (Forrester, n.d.)
4. The start of the 2011-2012 school year was pushed back by government officials (from September 15 to September 1) so that the school year would end earlier than the previous year, in time for Azerbaijan to

host the Eurovision Song Contest in Baku in 2012.

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