

## English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of the Internet to Enhance their Learning

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### ABSTRACT

This study attempted to investigate the vital role of the internet in enhancing the learning of reading. In addition, the study aimed to measure the students' attitudes towards the internet and to identify to what extent the internet was employed in their reading classes. Moreover, the study aimed to explore the challenges that they encountered while using the internet in their learning of reading. In order to achieve these goals, the researcher used the descriptive analytical approach and used the questionnaire as the main data collection tool. The study sample comprised 50 Saudi EFL male students in the preparatory year at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study showed that students perceived that the internet is important in the process of reading comprehension learning and teaching with positive attitudes towards the internet. Results showed that the top challenges of using of the internet for reading learning/teaching are lack of students' knowledge to know what to read on the internet, the short time of the class, and the students' lack of the skills and knowledge to use the internet for academic purposes. Furthermore, the results showed that the students mostly used the internet for playing games, social networking, and learning vocabulary. It is recommended that English language teachers should be encouraged to use the internet in their language classes as it is valuable for their students to enhance their reading comprehension skills.

**Key words:** English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Educational technology, E-Learning, Instruction

### INTRODUCTION

The existence of the internet has changed the way we collect and exchange data. Nowadays, students are more familiar with Wikipedia than with World Book Reference Books. Indeed, even young learners are able to upload recordings to YouTube and download melodies from iTunes. Postgraduate students use long-range online contact sites, including Facebook and Twitter, to share notes and homework questions. The traditional model of training is stagnant and overdue for change, but the accessibility of online assets encourages us to accept another model of instruction that serves more as a substitute in a quicker, more accessible and more effective way than any other time in recent memory.

A Snappy web-based activity will reveal class schedules from all over the world, discussion notes, homework (and answers), test questions, video talks, and statements that are all readily available for free of charge. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) provides free lectures, assessments and documentation in an open-source platform for all to use without any cost. Now, more than 1900 courses are available on the MIT platform; there are wide ranges of

courses from air travel to unfamiliar dialects and music and theater (MIT Open Courseware, 2020).

An associate at the Carnegie institution for the Headway of Instruction shows that the "approach to the internet has the capacity to disperse excellent materials at virtually no cost, leveling the playing field" (Kamenetz, 2015, p. 1). However, the culture and awareness of learning that rely on collaboration and responsibility need to be motivated. As a result, the practitioner introduced different innovative ways that enhance the different learning styles in the classroom that rely on collaboration and technology. The aim is to explore approaches to use creativity to promote and enhance learning in the classroom. Organizations that are innovating different ways of learning in the classroom may miss the real students' expectation. For example, PowerPoint slides and hyperlinks mounted in a cursor shell are now considered to be outdated. Generation Z, or the generation of innovation, has never known a world without the internet. Generation Z are people born since 1990 and currently make up 18% of the total population (Kamenetz, 2015). This generation is tailored to imparting through the web, and they used to doing activities on the web. The normal teaching model has been modified in order to adapt to the learning styles

of these students. The educational program that captures the specialized knowledge and enthusiasm of the current students can help to overcome any hindrance between students' desires and the course objectives. The suggested solutions provided in most of the websites do not seem to be effective to enhance reading skills of EFL learners. This is why the researcher aims to examine the role of the web in enhancing the reading ability of the EFL students in Saudi Arabia.

The actual experience of teaching reading indicates that secondary school students in Saudi Arabia are challenged with a variety of reading problems. They have a lack of comprehension of the reading process and most of their reading practices do not contribute to the growth of their cognitive and metacognitive abilities. As we transition from an instructive system that increases training to one that encourages learning, additional teaching strategies will be needed. The web is a fast, competent, and promptly accessible methodology for advancing innovation-based adaptation that expands instructive access in this manner. The learning process changes in all associations since the technology is changing rapidly. For the most part, joint effort, intercultural correspondence, availability and importance are advanced ideas in associations including advanced education organizations. There is a push to build the learning efficiency and information exchange and assistance. Innovation enhanced learning conditions improve learning experience by increasing student engagement, mutual effort and independence. This study is also intended to use the web to see to what degree the undergraduates can solve their difficulties and develop their ability to understand. Ultimately, the exam fills a scholastic gap by exploring the effect of the internet on enhancing the learning of Saudi EFL undergraduates.

### Objective

This study aims to create awareness on the importance of utilizing the internet to enhance Saudi EFL Students' learning in the country. More specifically it aims to:

- investigate the impact of the web on the learning of Saudi EFL auxiliary school students;
- distinguish to what degree the web is utilized in their language classes to guide their understanding; and
- determine the difficulties that they experience while utilizing the web in their learning.

### Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the aim of the internet in enhancing Saudi EFL students' learning of reading?
2. To what extent is the internet used in the learning of reading for Saudi EFL students?
3. What are the challenges that Saudi EFL students encounter in using the internet in the learning of reading?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The Internet was once used solely for the distribution of data by the military. Scientists, governments and universities

used the network to exchange knowledge on research and development. Today, this global network serves as a data portal for various types of businesses and for private use (Joiner, et al., 2005).

In 2008, the number of internet users rose to 72.5 percent, with the United States ranked second among the number of internet users in the world behind China (Internet World Stats, 2008). Not unexpectedly, 86 percent of school students find themselves regular users of the internet and 76 percent report using multimedia while on the internet (Hughes & Dennison, 2008). The network is where college students are and what they use to communicate, socialize and assimilate knowledge. As educators, we should always develop and maintain a curriculum that appeals to today's visually focused student. The internet is one of the most spectacular developments of the past 50 years; indispensable to the way we live today. Thanks to the comprehensive and diverse usage of the network, companies in all sectors are introducing connectivity and workflow measures that require the benefit of the Net Education Institutions to make use of the large coverage and also a substantial return on the net's investment features to rapidly deliver a wide range of topics to their end users (i.e., students). This adaptation can involve the employment of multimedia and expose students to real-world technology skills within their classroom.

### Computer-Assisted Language Learning

The internet itself is essentially a network of interconnected computers. Multimedia on the web use a multitude of applications to transmit information including animation, slide-shows, instant messaging podcasts and video simulations; anything that incorporates text, graphics, animation, sound or video. Research has shown that multimedia have a positive impact on the websites (Ko & Ho, 2003).

As technology continues to advance, the integration of multimedia into college classrooms is not just a choice, but a requirement for core curriculum developers as they design courses for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Understanding how to incorporate multimedia broadens the classroom boundaries (Simkins, Cole, Tavalin, & Means, 2002). Students are no longer limited to learning content from static outlets, such as textbooks or outdated websites. Therefore, multimedia and the internet enable students to access a learning environment rich in information and experience.

### The Internet in Language Learning Utilizing Modern Technologies

The invasion of the new and evolving technology means changes inside the classrooms and among the students who occupy them. Curriculum and education need to be improved so that teaching and learning can be dynamic and interactive. New technology enables students to view meetings, training, seminars, homework assignments, grade reports and other documents from their notebook computer. Multimedia allow students to become directly engaged in the learning process. As the demand for multimedia in the classroom continues to expand, so has there been a rising pressure on manufacturers

to provide multimedia projectors specifically for classroom use versus the adaptation of business multimedia projectors (De Groot, 2002).

Many classrooms are now fitted with high-performance multimedia projectors that handle many connections over a long period of time. The generation of faculty students is more visually focused than their predecessors. Multimedia can help this community to understand abstract concepts by adding a visual component. Classroom instructors who do not rely solely on textbooks as their instruction delivery method may find that mixing multimedia within the classroom increase student awareness and focus, which could lead to increased satisfaction on the part of both the coed and therefore the instructor. Research has shown that there is little or no perceived difference between students' learning achievement in a multimedia classroom and a standard classroom, but scholars in a multimedia classroom score teacher teaching efficiency much higher in a multimedia classroom than average (Deng & Yuen, 2010; Zhang, 2009).

It is important for pedagogy to change in tandem with changing technologies. Many educational institutions also concentrate on the basic teaching skills of their instructors by ensuring that their instructors have advanced expertise in their subject areas. Although content awareness is definitely a significant component of teaching, effective teachers also need to build a classroom atmosphere that encourages learning. In today's college classroom, i.e. technology integration. Technology training for educators is most often a demonstration of how to use brand-new technology, but rarely a strategy for educators to use these technologies in classrooms to facilitate learning. Multimedia on the internet will be used in the curriculum to provide transparency and feedback to students (Lachs, 2002). Classrooms today are also built-in computer classrooms or have a self-contained mobile presentation device like a smart card. Curriculum that may allow students to incorporate text, pictures, sound and animation into their assignments will help prepare today's students for the technologically challenging careers they will face in their future.

### **EFL Reading in the Saudi Context**

The issue of L2 scrutinizing has been inspected in the Saudi demonstrating setting by different Saudi investigators. Alsamadani (2009) showed that there was no significant association between the Saudi EFL students' level of discernment and their use of frameworks. Al-Seweed (2000) found that users' level of language skills had an impact on the kind of word-dissenting strategies used by Imam University seniors in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the penchant of young and poor L1 users to use unmistakable control and counter-vailing frameworks.

Madkhali (2005) inspected the practicality of suggesting four techniques for evaluating the experience of the EFL Saudi female students and their reported use of these frameworks. The techniques taught were two "all around the world" methods: to find a law of contemplation and a gauge. The other two strategies were basic reasoning frameworks: assessment of words and theorizing of the ramifications of

words. The findings of the analysis showed that the two planning social affairs (worldwide and basic reasoning) had undergone only non-significant change in their post-test. This indicates that the testing of the process preparation did not necessarily enhance their observation. In general, the students showed a decline in their perspective on the use of methods either in general or non-basic, with the exception of two systems that used data snippets and desired settings.

Mushait (2004) coordinated a further report investigating the association in the scope of L1 and L2 in Saudi students' examining philosophies. This evaluation investigated whether the possible effects on L2 Reading Comprehension (L2RC) of L1 getting cap, L2 vocabulary, and L2 sentence structure on L2 Reading Comprehension (L2RC) had an influence on the linguistic inconvenience of the works being studied in L2, on the one hand, and on the other hand, on L2 Language Capacity (L2LP) of the students. The report showed that L2LP does not simply influence the consequence of L2 examining, yet what is more the technique. The result moreover displayed that top-down examining systems distinctly affect L2RC, while bottom-up up strategies unfavorably affect it.

Al-Nujaidi (2003) revealed that Saudi EFL's first-year undergraduates indicate a low level of learning and a typical small vocabulary size (500-700 word families). In addition to two or three mechanisms, for example, which are important for testing, gathering, using typographical aids and studying the characteristics of substances, individuals have been classified using highest and moderate frequency control systems. In addition, the broad review was seen as a detested activity among EFL learners in Saudi Arabia.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this section, the research design, data collection, variables definition with measurements, and hypothesis of the study will be presented. The data collection and analysis methods used in the study are presented.

#### **Research Design**

The current study used the descriptive analytical approach in order to describe and analyze the usage of the internet to enhance reading comprehension of Saudi EFL students. The study design constructed is cross-sectional following a survey method. The questionnaire was designed by relying on the literature and the researcher's observations.

The current study used the descriptive analytical approach in order to describe and analyze the usage of the internet to enhance reading comprehension of Saudi EFL students. The study design constructed is cross-sectional following a survey method. The questions of the survey were designed by rely on literature and researcher's observations.

#### **Participants**

The study sample comprised 50 male students whose ages ranged from 18 to 19 years old and were studying in the preparatory year at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia.

Participants studied reading as a part of their English language course. They were regular students enrolled in the academic year 2018-2019. Their native language was Arabic and they studied English as a foreign language.

### Instrument

To accomplish the primary targets of this investigation, the researcher utilized the survey as the fundamental information assortment technique. The five-point Likert scale survey is made out of three segments disseminated on 35 items targeting communicating the members' understanding. The survey was structured depending on the well-established literature related to the objectives of the study. In view of some of specialists' feelings and Pearson relationship coefficient, the instrument was validated to be a profoundly legitimate and appropriate instrument for application. The instrument was also tested for its internal reliability and an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was observed.

### Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, frequencies and percentages of the participants' responses were recorded for each statement in the questionnaire. Means and standard deviation for each statement were also extracted. The data were tabulated

in order to visually represent the responses in a clear way. Then, the findings were discussed and analyzed in light of the literature review.

## RESULTS

### Internet and Students' Learning of Reading

The first research question focused on the aim of the internet in enhancing Saudi EFL students' learning of reading. Table 1 shows the statistical analysis for participants' respective responses.

Table 1 shows that the Saudi EFL students have a positive attitude towards the use of the internet in enhancing their reading comprehension since the total mean is 3.94. Also, the majority of the participants agree that their reading skills are improved as a result of using the internet in their language class since they reach high acceptance rate of every statement.

### Use of the Internet in the Learning of Reading

The second question investigated the extent to which the internet was used in the learning of reading by the Saudi EFL students. Table 2 shows the statistical analysis for participants' responses to the survey.

**Table 1.** Internet and Saudi EFL students' learning of reading

No	Statements	Responses (%)					M	SD	
		Sa	A	Ns	D	Sd			
1	It is easy for you to read on the internet.	13.1	29.7	26.5	24.5	5.6	4.20	0.97	
2	The web expands your inspiration to understand more.	51.0	37.6	4.9	4.2	2.3	4.31	0.92	
3	The utilization of the web can make intelligent understanding conditions.	22.2	32.0	20.9	18.0	6.2	3.46	1.20	
4	The sight and sound utilized web is valuable for perusing.	53.9	33.3	8.8	3.3	.3	4.38	0.81	
5	Web expands your craving to peruse in light of the fact that it empowers you to pick your own sources and subjects.	56.5	28.1	6.9	6.2	2.0	4.31	0.98	
6	This web-based perusing task empowers you to build up your capacity to assess as you need to survey the data that you get from different sources to achieve the undertaking.	23.2	29.7	31.7	12.1	3.3	3.58	1.07	
7	The web empowers you to fabricate self-assurance as it enables you to control everywhere throughout the learning procedure.	46.7	40.5	7.5	4.6	.7	4.28	0.84	
8	Web expects you to peruse different genuine messages on the point that interests you in various sites, so it encourages you to build up your understanding abilities.	43.1	32.4	15.7	4.6	4.2	4.06	1.07	
9	Web empowers you to profit by pictures, photos, recordings, and so on so it causes you to comprehend legitimate perusing materials effectively.	36.6	39.2	8.5	10.5	4.9	3.92	1.15	
10	Web empowers you to work agreeably in gatherings, so it gives a chance to share and talk about what you read.	49.0	32.7	10.5	6.5	1.3	4.22	0.96	
11	You experience issues in perusing on the web as you don't realize well how to look on the internet.	6.9	15.0	16.0	32.0	29.4	3.38	1.24	
12	The undertaking is hard for you as you experience issues in arranging the all learning procedure (choosing the subject, deciding the internet-based assets, the item, and the procedure).	9.5	14.1	20.9	35.9	19.0	3.59	1.22	
13	You need to utilize the web in understanding class.	4.6	7.2	8.8	35.6	43.1	3.94	1.11	
14	You accept that the web is gainful to building up your understanding aptitudes.	51.0	37.6	4.9	4.2	2.3	4.31	0.92	
15	Perusing the web is agreeable.	51.3	35.9	7.5	4.2	0.3	4.35	0.82	
Total mean		3.94							

KEY: Sa= strongly agree, A= Agree, Ns= not sure, D= disagree, Sd= strongly disagree

Table 2 shows that the Saudi EFL students have a positive attitude towards the use of the internet for learning reading since the total mean is 3.77. Also, the majority of the participants agree that their reading skills are improved as a result of using the internet in their language class since they reach high acceptance rate of every statement.

**Challenges in using the Internet**

The third question dealt with the challenges encountered by the Saudi EFL students while using the internet in the learning of reading. Table 3 shows the statistical analysis for participants' responding to the survey which represent the response for

Table 3 shows that the Saudi EFL students have a positive attitude towards the Challenges in using the internet since the total mean is 3.75. Also, the majority of the

participants agree that they did not have a challenges in using the internet since they reach high acceptance rate of every statement.

**DISCUSSION**

Data were obtained from questionnaires collected from 50 students. The findings suggest that the web is helpful in building up students' capacity to learn, as it enables students to analyze trustworthy material and to carry out knowledge-based experiments in the convincing environment of the internet at home or at school. It can be assumed that students can feel convinced because they have a chance to think exclusively at their own rate. Likewise, they are enabled to benefit from the insightful open doors that the internet provides. For example, a few students indicated that when they experienced an obscure word, they looked it up

**Table 2.** Students' use of the internet for learning reading

No	Statements	Responses (%)					M	SD
		Sa	A	Ns	D	Sd		
1	The teacher gives you reading passages to read online.	35.3	45.4	14.1	3.6	1.3	4.10	0.87
2	The teacher use blogs and twitter messages as materials in your reading class.	26.8	34.3	21.6	13.7	3.6	3.67	1.12
3	The teacher asks you to send short messages and to read each other's comments (e.g. on Twitter).	30.7	41.2	12.4	11.4	3.9	3.84	1.11
4	In your understanding class, students utilize cell phones for interpersonal interaction in English (for example English social collaboration on Facebook).	51.3	35.9	7.5	4.2	0.3	4.35	0.82
5	In your understanding class, students utilize the cell phone for a language trade, for example, to talk in English on the telephone.	52.9	35.3	8.5	2.6	.7	4.37	0.80
6	You regularly utilize online lexicons for learning English jargon.	36.6	32.4	15.7	12.1	2.9	3.88	1.12
7	In your understanding class, you utilize the cell phone to mess around, similar to crossword bewilders.	30.7	39.9	15.7	10.8	2.6	3.86	1.06
8	The textbook activities require you to get information by reading on the internet.	34.0	30.7	22.5	9.5	3.3	3.83	1.10
9	The teacher asks you to summarize reading passages on the internet.	25.2	29.7	11.8	19.9	13.1	3.34	1.39
10	The teacher gives your audio and text materials in the class to read on the internet.	8.2	15.7	17.6	35.6	21.9	2.52	1.23
Total mean							3.77	

KEY: Sa= strongly agree, A= Agree, Ns= not sure, D= disagree, Sd= strongly disagree

**Table 3.** Challenges in using the internet

No	Statements	Responses (%)					M	SD
		Sa	A	Ns	D	Sd		
1	The teacher does not know how to use internet in the class.	7.8	11.4	11.4	31.0	37.6	3.65	1.28
2	There is no internet in the class.	6.9	15.0	16.0	32.0	29.4	3.38	1.24
3	Slow internet speed.	9.5	14.1	20.9	35.9	19.0	3.59	1.22
4	Internet connectivity problems.	4.6	7.2	8.8	35.6	43.1	3.94	1.11
5	Students' non-use of internet.	16.3	32.0	17.3	16.7	17.3	3.13	1.35
6	High costs of the internet.	21.2	21.9	12.4	25.2	18.0	3.03	1.44
7	The time of the lesson is very limited to learn and perform activities through the internet.	11.1	17.0	20.6	29.7	21.2	4.67	1.29
8	Students' lack of skill/knowledge to use the internet for academic purposes.	51.0	37.6	4.9	4.2	2.3	4.31	0.92
9	Students do not know what to read.	53.9	33.3	8.8	3.3	.3	4.38	0.81
10	Students do not like to use the internet in learning.	22.2	32.0	20.9	18.0	6.2	3.46	1.20
Total mean							3.75	

KEY: Sa= strongly agree, A= Agree, Ns= not sure, D= disagree, Sd= strongly disagree

online and checked how this word is used in a variety of settings.

Moreover, it was found that the internet can sometimes distract the EFL learners. As Zeng and Takatsuki (2009) contend, students and instructors ought to be aware of the distractive nature of online environment and seek approaches to overcome these hindrances. One of the difficulties that must be expelled by EFL instructors during the class is students' utilization of the web for non-scholastic exercises. This relates to what Chaka (2009) reasoned that EFL students need to realize how to manage web sources.

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that students have constructive attitudes towards all reading activities on the internet. They like internet-based activities and find them fascinating and enjoyable. In addition, students assume that all reading activities on the internet improve their desire to read and that these activities are helpful in improving their reading comprehension skills.

## CONCLUSION

The notion that technology should be integrated into the classroom is not a new phenomenon. When emerging technologies advance, educators are also willing to find ways to assimilate these advancements in their classrooms. Those same educators often find it challenging to connect emerging technology to the conventional view of learning in the classroom. In order to be effective in integrating technology into the classroom, teaching must be seen as a way to promote learning and to see learning as a set of processes that lead us to change behavior in the quest for new knowledge. Using the web as a distribution tool to deliver rich multimedia content from the facilitator to the learner is one way to build a dynamic classroom experience.

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