

English as a Foreign Language Students Attitudes towards the Utilization of iPad in Language Learning

[1] Dr., Assistant Professor, College of Science and Humanities- Rumaah/ Majmaah University
n.alzaidiyeen@mu.edu.sa

Naser Jamil Alzaidiyeen [1]

ABSTRACT

The role of educational technologies, in the current processes of teaching and learning is becoming more prevalent and accepted in terms of being a mainstream pedagogical tool. During the past three decades, ICT has found its way into English language classrooms. In this study, a quantitative design was used to examine the attitudes of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students towards the use of iPads. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to obtain data from participants. The sample of this research comprised 109 English language learners at Majmaah University. Gender, age, and students' academic year were selected as student demographic variables for this research. The data were analyzed by calculating frequencies, percentages and conducting t-test and One-Way ANOVA. The analysis revealed that most of the participants had positive attitudes toward iPad use in language learning. No statistically meaningful differences were seen in participants' attitude toward iPads with respect to gender, age and academic level. Some useful implications are discussed based on the research findings.

Keywords: *English as a Foreign Language Students, Attitudes, Utilization, iPads, Gender, Age, Academic Year.*

INTRODUCTION

Technology use in the learning and teaching process has been a central issue in second language acquisition, because it has a major positive effect on language learning (Ferlazzo & Sypniewski, 2012). Recently, increasing interest has been shown in incorporating iPads in different educational contexts, mainly in language learning (Colker, 2011; Itayem, 2014; Leis, 2013). It is well known that iPads can offer different forms of information during language learning. Positive attitudes are considered as an important indicator of technology integration. Previous research suggests that individuals' attitudes should be assessed because attitudes can influence technology acceptance and future actual usage behavior. The focus in this article is to examine the attitudes of EFL students toward iPad use in language learning. Users' attitudes are considered as an important indicator of technology integration. Previous research suggests that individuals' attitudes should be assessed because attitudes can influence technology acceptance and future behavior regarding the actual usage. Yet only a few studies have been conducted in the Arab World to investigate learners' attitudes towards the use of iPad in language learning.

Related Literature

Attitude towards technology use in language learning is considered as an important element. Greenwald (1989) defined attitude as "an individual's reaction to or evaluation of something or someone in a positive or negative fashion". Gardner (1980) reported that attitude is the overall feelings of a person toward any particular thing. Vishwanath et al. (2009) described attitude as the most important factor that affects the use of technologies. According to Agarwal and Prasad (2000), attitudes toward technology use represent the degree to which an individual likes various attributes of a given technology. Watson (1998)

believes that developing positive attitude towards technology use is a key element not only for enhancing technology integration but also for avoiding user resistance to technology use.

The previous researches have supported a claim that modern technologies have a significant positive impact on the learners' skills (Al-Zaidiyeen et al., 2010; Payne & Whitney, 2002). Technologies in general offer new possibilities for providing better learning experiences and more learning opportunities in education (Al-Zaidiyeen et al., 2011). One of these technologies is called iPad, which is considered as a new source of learning. The iPad can be defined as a portable wireless personal computer with a touch screen. According to Miller (2012), "The iPad is a multipurpose mobile computing device. The ability to read electronic texts, in particular, makes the iPad an attractive device for colleges and universities. With the average cost of a print textbook significantly higher than that of its electronic counterpart, the e-reading potential of the iPad is not lost on students, faculty, librarians, and higher education administrators". According to Sheppard (2011) the iPad has "the features of an eBook reader, it also allowed access to the myriad resources of the internet; allowing users to seamlessly switch from one text to another or to delve beyond the text itself".

Using iPads in the classroom can increase motivation to learn. Many researchers have examined the role of iPads in language learning. For example, Kim, Rueckert, Kim, and Seo (2013) conducted a study on TESOL students' perception of using mobile phones for language learning and they found that TESOL students were willing to adopt mobile learning in their language learning process. Harmon (2012) conducted an empirical study to investigate the impact of using of iPad on reading and writing. The results were in favor of the experiment group who used iPad in different ways such as students accessed their materials via iBooks, wrote journals, completed formative assessments, and used educational apps to collaborate with each other. The findings also revealed that the experimental group scored better in their reading comprehension, and language use tests.

Furthermore, McClanahan, Williams, Kennedy, and Tate (2012) also found a positive result in using the iPad in reading and writing. Likewise, Lys (2013) found the iPad very suitable to practice listening and speaking skills, and for enhancing learner interaction. The findings also showed a favorable attitude towards using iPad in their course. Dyer (2013) conducted a study to examine the impacts of iPads on college students in terms of their cognitive skills, motivation to learn, and organization. According to Dyer, the research participants reported various positive outcomes including: increased processing skills, improved memory of information, and faster information access. Recently, Wang, Teng, and Chen (2015) conducted a study to examine students' attitude toward the use of iPad in English Vocabulary Learning. The results showed that students had positive attitude toward using iPad in in English Vocabulary Learning.

Intent and Research Questions

A number of studies investigated people's attitudes towards technology. The release of the iPad is relatively new; therefore, only few empirical studies have been conducted to examine the role of iPad in education. The reason for measuring the attitudes of English language learners towards the use of iPad is related to the fact that attitudes play an important role in the actual use of iPad in language learning. The research concentrated on answering the following questions:

- 1) What are the attitudes of EFL students towards the use of iPads in language learning?
- 2) Are there any differences in the attitudes of EFL students according to their gender?
- 3) Are there any differences in the attitudes of EFL students according to their age?
- 4) Are there any differences in the attitudes of EFL students according to their academic year?

RESEARCH METHOD

Design of the Research

This study was carried out to examine the attitudes of EFL students towards iPad use in language learning. This study adopted a quantitative research method. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the research participants. After the pilot study, the questionnaires were distributed to the students in the classroom using random sample technique.

Sampling

The data were collected at Majmmah University during academic the Year 2015-2016. The participants for this study were 109 (male and female) students who study English as their major subject out of the approximately 500 population at Majmmah University.

Instruments

This is a quantitative study aimed at examining the attitudes of EFL students toward the use of iPad in language learning. Most questionnaire items were modified from previous researches, (such as Albirini, 2006; Itayem, 2014; Leis, 2014; Wang, Teng, & Chen, 2015). One hundred and nine EFL students had completed a survey containing 30 items. Answers were arranged in a five-point Likert-type scale. The survey contained two sections: (1) general information; and, (2) attitudes towards the use of iPad in language learning. The first section of the survey required respondents to provide basic demographic information such as gender, age and the academic year. The second part of the instrument is composed of 30 items. This measurement tool which was of the Likert type is made up of the following options; 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Undecided', 'Agree', and 'Strongly Agree'.

Validity and Reliability of Scales

The face validity and content validity of the questionnaire were assessed individually by four experts in educational technology. Also, pilot study was performed in order to detect the internal consistency and reliability of utilized questionnaire. Cronbach's reliability analysis was performed to test internal consistency of the variables. The reliability of the attitudes scale has been approved by Cronbach's alpha coefficient of around .85.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire items were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics, Sample *t*-test and ANOVA were used.

RESULTS

Tables 1 through 4 present the Means, Std. Deviations, and Percentages for the demographic variables contained in the survey instrument. EFL students characteristics are presented in terms of demographic information, including gender, age, and the academic year.

Demographic Variables

Table 1, shows the number of male and female EFL students participated in this study.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender Groups

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	62	56.9
Female	47	43.1
Total	109	100.0

In terms of age (28.4%; n = 31) of the respondents were within the 18-20 age range, 45.0% (n= 49) of them were within the 21-23 age range, 19.3% (n=21) of them were within the 24-26 age range, and only 7.3% (n = 8) of participants were above 27 years old.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Age Groups

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-20	31	28.4
21-23	49	45.0
24-26	21	19.3
>27	8	7.3
Total	109	100%

Participants' responses on their academic level showed that (20.2%; n=22) of them were first year students, (39.4%; n=42) were second year students, (26.6%; n=29) were third year students, and (13.8%; n=15) were fourth year students.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents according to the academic year Groups

Academic Year	Frequency	Percent
First Year	22	20.2
Second Year	43	39.4
Third Year	29	26.6
Fourth Year	15	13.8
Total	109	100%

Attitudes Toward iPad Use

Respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire items related to their attitudes toward the use of iPad. Table .4 reports the results of descriptive statistics (Means, and Std. Deviations).

Table 4. Means and Std. Deviations of the English language learners Attitudes

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Using iPad in language learning is a pleasant experience.	4.09	1.20
2. Using iPad in English Language learning is enjoyable.	2.96	1.64
3. Using the iPad gives me many benefits.	4.39	0.86
4. iPad enhances language learning.	4.25	1.02
5. iPad helps me take to control over the homework assignments .	4.01	1.24
6. iPad helps me quickly view the homework assignments.	4.05	1.15
7. iPad can be very useful to improve my writing.	3.60	1.27
8. iPad can be very useful to improve my reading.	4.05	1.09
9. iPad can be very useful to improve my listening.	4.23	1.26
10. iPad can be very useful to improve my speaking.	4.18	0.90
11. iPad is helpful to study the reading and writing materials.	4.05	1.16
12. iPad is helpful to study the speaking and listening materials.	4.05	1.03
13. iPad helps me to organize my work better.	4.35	1.02
14. iPad makes it possible to work more productively.	3.85	1.10
15. iPad saves time when I use it in English learning.	3.61	1.28
16. iPad is a fast and efficient source of getting information.	4.05	1.40
17. I frequently use the iPad during English language learning.	2.83	1.48
18. I use the iPad for my coursework most of the time.	2.92	1.53
19. I enjoy using the iPad in English language learning.	4.00	1.12
20. I use iPad in different context.	2.39	1.50
21. I am happy to use the iPad for English language learning.	3.96	1.16
22. I find it useful to have an iPad when I am studying.	3.67	1.22
23. I would like to learn more about the use of iPads.	3.76	1.14
24. I would recommend my friends to use the iPad.	2.91	1.41
25. I am satisfied with my iPad.	3.35	1.64
26. The iPad is useful.	4.00	1.23
27. The iPad is easy to use in English language learning.	3.93	1.40
28. It is useful to use the iPad to search for educational resources.	4.37	0.94
29. It is fun to use the iPad.	3.85	1.24
30. It is easy to download the English language books using iPad	3.25	1.64
Overall Mean and Std. Deviations	3.76	0.51

As illustrated in Table 4, the EFL students responded to 30 items related to their level of attitudes toward iPad. However, the most frequent positive attitudes towards the use of iPad were that, "Using the iPad gives me many benefits" ($M = 4.39$; $SD = 0.86$), "It's useful to use the iPad to search for educational resources" ($M = 4.37$; $SD = 0.94$), "iPad helps me to organize my work better" ($M = 4.35$; $SD = 1.02$), "iPad enhances language learning:" ($M = 4.25$; $SD = 1.02$), and "iPad can be very useful to improve my listening" ($M = 4.23$; $SD = 1.26$).

On the other hand, the most percent negative attitudes toward the use of iPad were, "I use iPad in different context" ($M = 2.39$; $SD = 1.50$), "I frequently use the iPad during English language learning" with Mean score ($M = 2.83$; $SD = 1.48$), "I would recommend my friends to use the iPad" ($M = 2.91$; $SD = 1.41$), "I use the iPad for my coursework most of the time" ($M = 2.92$; $SD = 1.53$), and "Using iPad in English Language learning is enjoyable" ($M = 2.96$; $SD = 1.64$). The overall average for the Means of English language learners attitudes towards the use of iPad was ($M = 3.76$) and the Std. Deviation ($SD = 0.51$) indicating that the English language learners have positive attitudes towards the use of iPad in language learning.

Table 5. Percentages of the Attitudes of EFL students

Items	% SD & D	% UN	% SA & A
1. Using iPad in language learning is a pleasant experience.	15.0	1.9	83.1
2. Using iPad in English Language learning is enjoyable.	46.3	13.1	40.7
3. Using the iPad gives me many benefits.	4.4	6.8	88.8
4. iPad enhances language learning.	7.5	11.3	81.3
5. iPad helps me take to control over the homework assignments .	15.1	13.1	71.9
6. iPad helps me quickly view the homework assignments.	11.3	11.9	76.9
7. iPad can be very useful to improve my writing.	20.6	22.5	56.9
8. iPad can be very useful to improve my reading.	8.8	18.1	73.1
9. iPad can be very useful to improve my listening.	14.4	4.4	81.3
10. iPad can be very useful to improve my speaking.	9.4	8.8	81.9
11. iPad is helpful to study the reading and writing materials.	8.8	18.1	73.1
12. iPad is helpful to study the speaking and listening materials.	10.1	16.9	73.0
13. iPad helps me to organize my work better.	6.3	6.9	86.9
14. iPad makes it possible to work more productively.	14.6	16.3	69.4
15. iPad saves time when I use it in English learning.	15.7	28.8	55.6
16. iPad is a fast and efficient source of getting information.	20.6	1.9	77.5
17. I frequently use the iPad during English language learning.	27.5	17.5	35.1
18. I use the iPad for my coursework most of the time.	46.9	13.1	40.0
19. I enjoy using the iPad in English language learning.	10.0	15.6	74.4
20. I use iPad in different context.	67.5	5.6	26.9
21. I am happy to use the iPad for English language learning.	13.8	14.4	71.9
22. I find it useful to have an iPad when I am studying.	16.9	23.1	60.0
23. I would like to learn more about the use of iPads.	10.6	30.6	58.8
24. I would recommend my friends to use the iPad.	47.6	13.8	38.8
25. I am satisfied with my iPad.	40.0	3.1	56.9
26. The iPad is useful.	14.4	13.1	72.6
27. The iPad is easy to use in English language learning.	20.6	8.1	71.3
28. It's useful to use the iPad to search for educational resources.	6.9	6.3	86.9
29. It's fun to use the iPad.	18.2	12.5	69.4
30. It is easy to download the English language books using iPad	43.2	5.0	51.9

As it can be seen in Table 5, the EFL students responded to items related to their level of attitudes towards iPad. However, the most frequent positive attitudes towards the use of iPad were that, "Using the iPad gives me many benefits" (88.8% of the participants answered "agree or strongly agree" with that statement), "It's useful to use the iPad to search for educational resources" (86.9% of the participants answered "agree or strongly agree" to that statement), and "iPad helps me to organize my work better" (86.6% stated they "agree or strongly agree" with that statement). The lowest percentages of the English language learners attitudes towards the use of iPad were scored for the items, "I use iPad in different context" (26.9% of participants answered "strongly disagree or disagree" to that statement), "I frequently use the iPad during English language learning" (35.1% answered that they "agree or strongly agree" with that statement), and "I would recommend my friends to use the iPad" (38.8% of the participants "agree or strongly agree" with that statement).

5.3 Differences in the Attitudes of participants according to the Demographic Variables

In terms of the differences in respondents' level of EFL students attitudes towards the use of iPads based on their gender, the results showed no statistically significant differences in respondents' attitudes towards the use of iPads in language learning. The male group reported a Mean ($M = 3.81$) with Standard Deviation ($SD=0.47$), while the female group reported a Mean ($M=3.78$) with Standard Deviation of ($SD =$

0.50). A *t*-test between the Means gave ($t(107) = 0.257$, at $p = 0.798$). The findings revealed almost no significant gender differences in attitudes toward iPad use. In other words, male and female students do not differ in their attitudes toward using iPad.

Table 6. Independent Samples *t*-Test Results According to Gender

	Gender	Mean	SD	N	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
Attitudes	Male	3.81	0.47	62	.144	.705	.257	107	.798
	Female	3.78	0.50	47			.255	96	.799

ANOVA test was used to determine if there was statistical significant difference in participants' attitude based on the different age groups. In terms of the differences on the respondents attitudes towards the use of iPads based on their age groups, the results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the respondents' attitudes towards iPads according to the age groups.

Table 7. Means, Std. Deviations, and ANOVA Results based on the Age Groups

	Age Group	Mean	SD	N	ANOVA
Attitudes towards iPad	18-20	3.74	0.54	31	{F(3,105)=0.214, p=0.886}
	21-23	3.81	0.50	49	
	24-26	3.84	0.44	21	
	More than 27	3.82	0.34	8	

The ANOVA test was used to find out if there were significant differences in the attitudes of participants according to the different academic year-groups. Results displayed in Table 7, show that there were no statistically significant differences in the mean of academic year groups in the respondents' attitudes toward using iPad.

Table 8. Means, Std. Deviations, and ANOVA Results According to Academic Year Groups

	University Level Group	Mean	SD	N	ANOVA
Attitudes towards iPad	First Year	3.85	0.44	22	{F(3,105)=1.716, p = 1.68}
	Second Year	3.82	0.43	43	
	Third Year	3.86	0.45	29	
	Fourth Year	3.54	0.69	15	

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of EFL students toward the use of iPads in language learning and to examine differences by gender, age and academic level in the attitudes of English language learners toward the use of iPads in language learning. The findings are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989) as a basis. The technology acceptance model describes the relationship between psychological variables such as attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intention and actual system usage (Davis, 1989). Results suggest that participants had positive attitudes with regard to using iPads in language learning. This result conforms with the findings from a survey research conducted by Brand, Kinash, Mathew, and Kordyban (2011). To explain in more detail, nowadays students are very familiar with iPads and they use iPads in their daily lives. Positive attitudes towards the use of iPads will lead to greater effort and desire to learn the language; also, it leads to higher intentions to

integrate technology in language learning. Moreover, the results showed that there are no statistically meaningful differences in the participants' attitude toward the use of iPads with respect to gender, age and academic level.

Technology will contribute to improving student achievement and performance; it will also increase their participation and interaction with their teachers. The present study has its limitations. Given the small sample size of the study, it is recommended that further studies with larger samples be undertaken to develop more understanding of students' attitudes toward using iPads in language learning. Since this research was quantitative in nature, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole population. Hence, replication of the present study with a larger number of participants may provide more reliable findings. It is recommended that future research investigate learners' attitudes toward the use of iPads in private colleges to see if there are any significant differences between government and private institutions. Furthermore, it is recommended that qualitative studies be done to find out the factors affecting attitudes of the English language learners toward iPad use in language learning.

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