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EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USE OF THE INTERNET AND STUDENTS' ABILITY TO LEARN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate if the use of the internet improves female students' ability to learn English. A total of 100 surveys were distributed in the Canadian Language Center (CLC) in Qatif city and 53 returned fully completed. An analysis approach on the collected data was applied using Microsoft spread sheet (Excel) software. The result of the analysis indicates that there is a relationship between the use of the internet and students' ability to learn English. Limitations of this work are also discussed.

Keywords: English Language, Language Learning, Ability to Learn English, Bahrani Hokroh

1. Introduction

One basic component of communication between humanities is language. The language which comes in many forms plays a vital role in society's education, knowledge and sophistication. As one language grows to become superior over others, it starts to be the deriving vehicle for the development of societies. Because of globalization, the language starts to become even of significant importance for civilizations survival. Undoubtedly, the English language has become a predominant internationally used language in business, education and technology. The modern technological advancement of the internet has played a major role in the transmission and spread of the English language. Many educational institutes around the world search for newer ways to improve the quality of education through the utilization of the internet. Saudi Arabia for example has taken steps towards improving education via the internet by launching several e-learning programs in major universities like King Faisal University distance learning program. Saudi Arabia has even created an Electronic University in an attempt to boost the education level and provide educational opportunities to all levels of the Saudi society (Saudi Electronic University, 2013).

The purpose of this research is to investigate if the use of the internet improves students' ability in learning English in small foreign language educational institutes. The research surveys students of the Canadian Language Center (CLC) in Qatif city to examine the effect of the internet in students' ability to learn English.

2. Literature Review

There are few studies that examine the effect of technology on education in Saudi Arabia. Alkhalaf et al. (2012) assessed the impact of e-learning on students of Qassim and King Abdulaziz University using Information Systems Success/Impact Measurement framework and concluded a positive impact of e-learning systems on students in terms of learning pace, productivity, and satisfaction. Alfahad (2012) conducted a study to investigate the usefulness, efficiency and efficacy of information technology in the College of Education at King Saud University. He surveyed 161 female college students selected randomly from a total of 400 students attending different courses. His study indicated that 61.5% of students used electronic devices in their course, 65.8% used information technology for blogging and 88.6% used Electronic Mail (E-Mail) for the purpose of their study. Another study conducted at King Saud University by Al-Harbi (2011) concluded that attitudes towards e-learning and e-learning systems qualities are critical determinants of students' intention to use e-learning technology. Al-Harbi (2011) reached to this conclusion after analyzing the perception and attitudes of 531 students via acceptance of e-learning survey. Abuzaid (2012) evaluated the use of electronic library resources at Al-Bayan Secondary School for girls in Jeddah. She found that electronic resources which are directly linked to the curricula are beneficial in achieving and navigating knowledge and understanding. Utilizing the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (a model of user acceptance of information technology), Al-Gahtani et al. (2007) surveyed 722 knowledge workers in Saudi Arabia. They found that

the model explained 39.1% of intention to use and 42.1% of usage.

As can be demonstrated from previous discussion, most of the work conducted in the literature was focusing generally on the effect of information technology on education. None of the previous work was aimed at examining the impact of the internet on students' ability to learn English as a foreign language. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to fill this gap in the literature by examining the internet effect on students' ability to learn English. By doing so, the significance of the research is appreciated.

3. Significance of Research

The significance of this research comes from the fact that the literature lacks a study that is focused on examining the internet effect on English learners. This study would help foreign language and academic institutes utilize the best use of the internet to improve academic performance and enhance the English language learning process. The research question is discussed next.

4. Research Question

Is there a relationship between the use of the internet and students' ability to learn English as a foreign language?

From the above question, the below assumptions were derived.

The null hypothesis (H₀): there is no relationship between the use of the internet and students' ability to learn English.

The alternative hypothesis (H₁): there is a relationship between the use of the internet and students' ability to learn English.

To test the above hypotheses, the next methodology was applied.

5. Research Methodology

A questionnaire survey methodology is used to test the proposed hypotheses in order to answer the research question. The survey has two sections. The first section of the survey contained the demographic questions used to capture data about participants' age, nationality, level of experience and English language experience. The second section contained the internet usage questions which are used to capture data about Internet usage and English learning patterns. A sample of the survey can be found in Appendix "A" enclosed with this research. The survey was distributed to female students in the Canadian Language Center (CLC) in Qatif city to examine the effect of the internet usage on students' ability to learn English. 100 surveys were distributed and 62 surveys were returned. After reviewing the received surveys, I found that 53 participants out of the 62 have fully completed the entire questionnaire while 9 participants didn't. After taking away the uncompleted surveys, the 53

survey results were analyzed using Microsoft spread sheet (Excel) software. The result of the analysis is shown in the result section.

6. Results

Table 1 shows the Demographic data results while table 2 shows the internet usage result.

Demographic Data Result					
Age Category	18-25	26-33	34-41	42-49	50 and above
Participants' Response	43	8	2	0	0
Nationality Category	Saudi			Non-Saudi	
Participants Response	53			0	
Education Level	High School	Diploma	Undergraduate	Graduate	Other
Participants Response	18	28	0	7	0
English Language Experience	None	1-2 years	3-4 years	5-6 years	More than 6 years
Participants Response	17	16	6	4	10

Table 1: Demographic data of the survey participants

Internet Usage Data Result	Number		Percentage	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
I use the Internet almost every day?				
Participants Response	46	7	87%	13%
I use the Internet at home?				
Participants Response	50	3	94%	6%
I use the Internet in my class?				
Participants Response	15	38	28%	72%
The Internet has helped me Learn the English language?				
Participants Response	51	2	96%	4%
The Internet has improved my English reading skills?				
Participants Response	50	3	94%	6%
The Internet has improved my English writing skills?				
Participants Response	42	11	79%	21%
The Internet has improved my English speaking skills?				
Participants Response				

Participants Response	42	11	79%	21%
The Internet has strengthened my English grammar knowledge?	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Participants Response	42	11	79%	21%
The Internet has expanded my English vocabulary?	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Participants Response	46	7	87%	13%
The Internet helps me in English translation process?	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Participants Response	48	5	91%	9%
I always read Internet (online) English books?	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Participants Response	20	33	38%	62%
I prefer the Internet over books to learn the English language?	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Participants Response	30	23	57%	43%

Table 2: Internet usage data of the survey participants

87% of the participants revealed that they use the internet almost every day. Although 94% of the participants agree that they use the internet at their homes, only 28% used it in the class. 96% of the respondents agree that the internet has contributed to their English language learning process. Below is a bar-chart summary of English language skills that have been improved due to participants' internet usage.

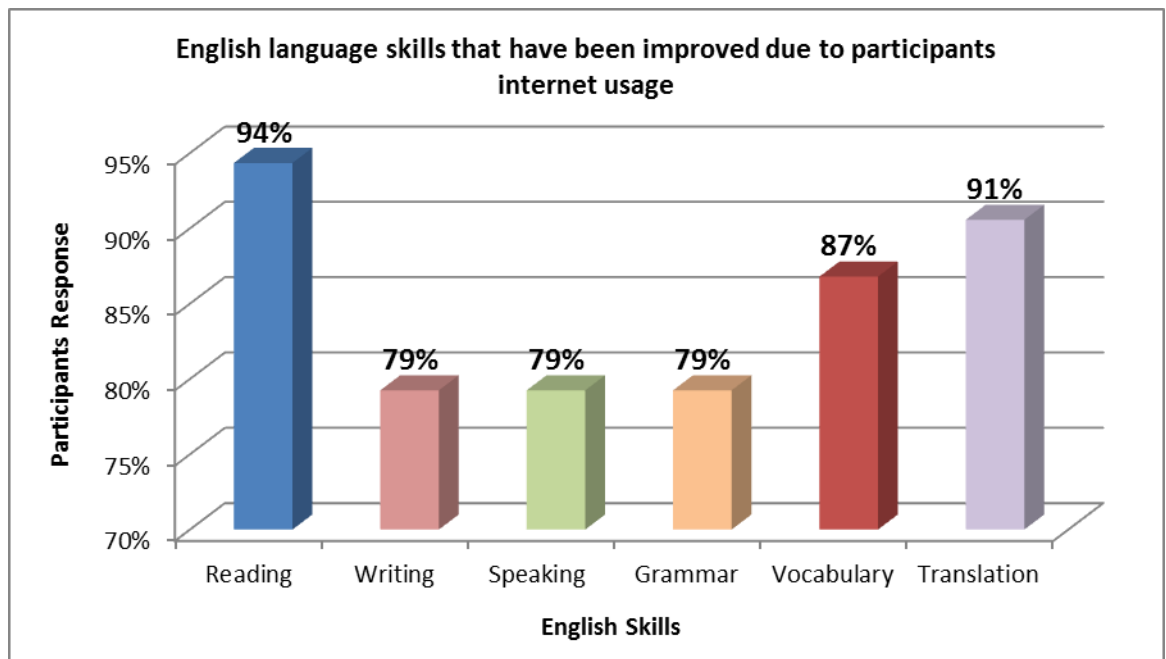


Figure 1: English language skills improved due to internet

Although the participants agree that the internet has improved their English language skills, only 38% read online English books. On the other hand, 57% of the survey participants prefer

the internet over books to learn the English language.

7. Ethical Consideration

This research has been carried out with cautions in regard to references, software usage and privacy of the surveyed participants. Every sentence of this research has been written carefully and references were indicated as required. The software used in this research (Microsoft Excel) was not pirated. The privacy of the female surveyed participants was maintained throughout the survey process. No personal details were required during the survey.

8. Limitations of the Study

This research is limited to the survey test done on the female English language students at the Canadian Language Center (CLC) in Qatif city. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized. Different results may be reached if the sample was selected randomly from more than one English learning institute and included male English language students. The research does not capture in details what web-sites or internet-based platforms helped improved students English language skills.

9. Conclusion:

The purpose of this research was to investigate if the use of the internet improves students' ability to learn English in small foreign language educational institutes. I surveyed female students of the Canadian Language Center (CLC) in Qatif. After data analysis I found that my alternative hypothesis (H1) stating that there is a relationship between the use of the internet and students' ability to learn English holds valid.

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