

The Role of the iPad as Instructional Tool in Optimizing Young Learners' Achievement in EFL Classes in the Saudi Context

Tariq Elyas,

European Languages Department
Faculty of Arts & Humanities
King Abdulaziz University,
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
telyas@kau.edu.sa

Basmah Al-Bogami,

English Language Institute
King Abdulaziz University
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
basmah-mahdi@hotmail.com

Abstract

The iPad tablets have been introduced into various educational sectors to facilitate learning and engage students in the classroom. However, little is known about the empirical evidence with regard to iPad usage in enhancing language achievement. This study set out to examine the effects of integrating iPad tablets as an instructional tool into the second language (L2) curricula to enhance young learner's academic achievement in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. It further endeavored to uncover the limitations that affect the utilization of the iPad in the classroom. To this end, forty Arabic first language (L1) young EFL learners enrolled in a middle school, were assigned as either an experimental group where they were exposed to study via iPad or a control group where they were taught in a traditional printed text across five weeks period. Language achievements were assessed through reading and vocabulary tests which were administered before the intervention and immediately after the intervention. To gauge the students' engagements during the intended task, their behaviors were assessed in both scenarios. Findings from quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the students who were exposed to iPad were found much engaged and significantly outscored their counterparts in language achievements in the post-tests. Furthermore, technical problems were found to be predominant impediments to the integration of the iPad usage followed by unfamiliarity with the application, and student distraction. These findings provide EFL teachers and policy makers with insight on how to better integrate the iPad into the EFL environment. Further pedagogical recommendations and research directions are also highlighted at the end of the article.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, iPad in education, mobile Learning, reading, vocabulary

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