

Lost in Digital Translation? Testing Web-Based Digital Literacy Assessment Tools with Arabic Speaking Internet Users

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Abstract

Many governments have embarked on ambitious programs to make information technology available to their citizens in attempts to decrease the global digital divide. For this strategy to succeed, it is not sufficient to simply make Internet connectivity available, as searchers must have some level of digital literacy to use Web resources. Measuring Web-based digital literacy is thus necessary to plan educational interventions. No such tools exist in Arabic, although Arabic speakers are the 4th largest group of Web users (Internet World Stats, 2014). Accordingly the main goal of this study was to test existing tools in English and Arabic with native Arabic speakers. We observed native Arabic speaker's Web searches, measured their Internet knowledge and their self-reported digital skill level. Regression analysis revealed that Internet knowledge is the best predictor of successful searches, although self-reported skill also predicts search success. The scale of Internet knowledge provides reliable tool for e-government planners to assess the Web-based digital literacy skills of their users and thus plan their ICT development accordingly.

Keywords: Arabic, digital divide, digital literacy, Internet use, Web use