

Needs and Obstacles of Using the Internet in Language Teaching from Instructors' Perspective; the case of the department of English at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University

Nasser Mohamad Freihat

English Department, College of Languages & Translation,
Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

This study investigated the instructors' perceived obstacles and needs in using the Internet for teaching English. Eighty-one instructors in the Department of English at Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) participated in the study. This study provides data related to the teachers' perceptions concerning Internet use, areas and barriers in language teaching. The study aimed to answer two research questions. Namely, what are the perceived obstacles to implementing Internet-based English as a foreign language teaching (EFL) teaching from the viewpoint of English Department instructors at IMSIU? And what are IMSIU English Department's instructors' perceived needs for training in using the Internet for language teaching? A survey and a semi-structured interview were used to collect the data. The survey involved three sections; the first section enquired about whether participants' need training on using the Internet in language teaching, the second section investigated the areas of potential training, and the last section investigated participants' barriers in incorporating the Internet in language instruction. The interviews involved three questions for further understanding. The findings showed that the perceived obstacles include cheating in online exams, lack of knowledge in using some applications, restricted time of some applications, and making online exams. The instructors demonstrated their eagerness to training. They also perceived presentation software, creating online exams, creating teaching materials, Videoconferencing, and teaching techniques, online classroom management, managing data sources, online assessment and evaluation, and basic knowledge of using technology as very necessary. The paper recommends designing a training course that considers the obstacles and needs suggested by the EFL instructors.

Keywords: EFL teaching, Internet language teaching, language needs analysis, language training needs and obstacles, instructors at Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University

Cite as: Freihat, N. M. (2020). Needs and Obstacles of Using the Internet in Language Teaching from Instructors' Perspective; the case of the department of English at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. *Arab World English Journal*, 11 (4) 163-180.
DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no4.11>

Introduction

The Internet has affected language teaching in many ways. Different Internet tools and application have been used in various aspects of the educational process to engage students in their learning. Many studies have tackled the influence of the Internet on the Saudi education systems. Al-Asmari (2005) points out that early investigations of Internet incorporation in higher education have shown that the instructors are in the early integration steps. Recent studies have revealed similar patterns and shown low adoption rates.

There has been a noticeable concern in the efficacy of the Internet on the economic and education systems. Various studies have investigated the use of Internet technologies in educational contexts. Early studies on Internet incorporation in Saudi higher education have reported that faculty members are in the initial stages of adoption. Recent studies have reported similar findings and low adoption rates.

The use of the Internet in the language classrooms has been increasingly the purpose of study in recent years. However, the use of the Internet is still in its beginnings in Saudi higher education. A variety of factors contribute to the hesitation in the use of the Internet in English learning in higher educational institutions, including time strains, individual computer skills and hardware issues, learner social-cultural backgrounds, previous knowledge, and learning experiences.

Saleh and Pretorius (2006) indicate that the past decade involved attention to the place of the Internet in language pedagogy. However, the use of the Internet in language teaching is a recent development. Because of the pervasive use of computers and the Internet in educational settings, language instructors should use to use this technology to facilitate language teaching and learning.

As teachers and instructors are the ones who transfer any innovation to the field, it is essential to recognize their role and to help them integrate technology effectively into their instruction (Pettenai, Giuli, & Khalid, 2001). It is also important to recognize the teachers' attitudes toward the use of the Internet. Therefore, their opinions and needs are of crucial importance. The success of language learning with the Internet depends mainly on the appreciation of the teachers' attitudes towards the Internet use (Teo, 2008).

It is essential to consider whether or not teachers are willing to incorporate the Internet into their classes. It still sounds entirely justifiable, then, to examine the perceptions and attitudes of EFL instructors towards the integration of the Internet in language classes before the actual application of any teaching program employing the Internet as teachers' and instructors' beliefs can profoundly affect and shape as well as direct their reactions to such a method of language teaching. Investigating EFL instructors' beliefs about Internet use in EFL settings can provide researchers with insights into the barriers to utilizing the Internet and, as a result, overcoming them.

Many institutes and universities attempt to provide instructors opportunities to develop their computer skills for their instruction. However, most technology courses are not designed according to real teaching situations or instructors' needs. Studies show that using the Internet in English language instruction in Saudi Arabia is still at its early stage. Very few studies have examined English language instructors' Internet needs and barriers in Saudi Arabia. Hence, this

study attempts to investigate English language instructors' needs and barriers to using the Internet as an instructional tool at IMSIU.

The limited use of the Internet in language pedagogy is mainly attributed to the lack of facilities, high price of Internet access, and teachers' inability to use the Internet for educational targets. This study investigated the employment of the Internet by English Language instructors at Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University focusing the instructors' barriers and needs. By conducting this study, EFL instructors and planners would facilitate the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language with the use of the Internet as a source of teaching materials and professional progress. The findings of this study will help researchers and administrators to comprehend the needs of English teachers in terms of Internet use. As such, this study is significant to encourage teachers to help remote students learn the English language without having to afford high expenses.

The current study investigated the perceived obstacles and training needs of EFL instructors in the English Department at IMSIU in using the Internet for language teaching and teaching English online. More specifically, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived obstacles to the implementation of Internet-based EFL teaching from the viewpoint of English Department instructors at IMSIU?
2. What are IMSIU English Department's instructors' perceived training needs for using the Internet for language teaching?

Related Literature

ICT in Saudi Educational System

Like all countries globally and the area specifically, ICT started to be used into the Saudi educational system in the 1980s. The introduction of ICT helped the MOE integrate it into the curriculum in 1991 (Oyaid, 2009). The MOE has taken several steps in utilizing ICT and computer applications to assist teachers and students in facilitating ICT literacy in society (MOE, 2005). ICT was fully integrated into the Saudi education system between the years 2000 and 2004 by the committee selected for the said programs to gradually train teachers to be knowledge sources and creators (Al-Omran, 2007).

The Ministry of Education (MOE) (2005) declared that "the objectives of educational policy in Saudi Arabia are to ensure that education becomes more efficient, to meet the religious, economic and social needs of the country and to eradicate illiteracy among Saudi adults" (MOE, 2005, pp. 26). On the contrary, these goals have not been practiced on the ground by teachers and principals.

Since 2007, several information and communication technology (ICT) uses and applications have been provided to students in the Kingdom despite the large size of the country and the growing population. These days, education in Saudi Arabia is witnessing a new phase, which focuses on quality of education, guaranteeing that students in the Kingdom's education system are qualified to cope with future economic changes and globalization. As for the utilization

of ICT in teaching and learning, Saudi Arabia did not leave this area behind. There has been well to progressing public education.

As for the higher education case in Saudi Arabia, universities were provided with the most current technologies. Most universities these days are equipped with computers, data-show devices, high-speed Internet connection, and smart boards at the classroom level and the language labs. In addition, the most recent learning management systems are used in all Saudi universities which has helped the universities to cope smoothly with the lockdown of the pandemic. However, the researcher has noticed that some students and instructors complain of the minimum use of technology in language teaching due to several reasons, including the lack of training and the relatively new mode of education.

Teachers' Beliefs

literature shows that teachers' and students' attitudes are integral in technology implementation (Mumtaz, and that these perceptions often have an essential role in the fulfilling educational goals (Alshumaimeri, 2008). A strong relationship was found between teachers' ICT use and their attitudes toward computers (Oyaid, 2009. However, Ageel (2011) indicated that most of the participants did not make use of ICT in their teaching, even though they were interested in learning about and undergoing ICT training. Almalki and Williams (2012) indicated that "teachers who were eager to improve their learning processes were more expected to employ technology into their teaching." (p. 44)

Literature indicated that successful employment of ICT in education requires identifying educational problems, what learners, teachers, and educational institutions desire to accomplish, and finally using ICT as knowledge construction tools. Alshumaimeri (2008) located a positive relationship between a teacher's attendance during training and positive attitudes towards using ICT in the Saudi classroom, both for computers and CALL.

Oyaid (2009) found that confident teachers conveyed positive attitudes towards ICT, whereas less confident teachers showed negative attitudes. A possible explanation was the influence of teachers' computer competence on their perspectives.

Alharbi (2013) examined teachers' attitudes and barriers towards integrating technology in Saudi Arabia and the United States. The study found that teachers from the two countries had optimistic attitudes toward technology integration in education. The study also showed some differences in teacher preparation for using technology.

Farooq and Soomro (2018) surveyed the opinions of EFL 100 teachers at the English language center in Taif University on technology-related competencies. The survey included four domains: planning and preparation, classroom management, classroom instruction, and professional duties. The results showed that many teachers were aware of the ICT and its uses in pedagogy. They showed that they use the available technological instruments in the classroom for only some activities. They use the university LMS for uploading certain activities and assessment; otherwise, they also hesitate to design technology-based activities for English language learners.

They indicated that they need training in integrating technology with the teaching and learning process.

Alswilem (2019) studied the attitudes of 76 English teachers in Al-Jouf district of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards the employment of ICT in secondary classes. The participants responded to a questionnaire. The study indicated that the participants held positive attitudes toward the employment of ICT in the classroom. However, the study demonstrated many barriers to use. These barriers included the lack of teacher training, the shortage of infrastructure, and the need for technology resources.

Saqlain, Qarni and Ghadi (2013) investigated English language teachers' readiness to integrate technology in Saudi Arabia. The researchers employed structured and semi-structured interviews to collect data from twelve Saudi teachers. The study concluded with five main themes, (a) Understanding of technology, (b) Use of technology for learning and motivation, (c) Types of technology, (d) Teachers' main concerns, and (e) Teachers' unawareness of Intel program. However, the participants complained about the lack of funding, shortage of technology in schools, and lack of proper training to use technology.

Barriers of ICT Use in Language Teaching

Much of the research related to ICT integration focused on the barriers of using technology in teaching and language teaching specifically. Knowing these barriers is an essential stage in improving the equality of education and the quality of the educational institutions. Alshumaimri (2019) indicated that Barriers that deter information and communication technology utilization differ based on context, environment, and location.

Gamlo (2014, 30) divided barriers of ICT use at Saudi universities into several sections, including, lack of access, lack of technical support, lack of time, lack of fit to the curriculum, and, lack of effective training. This proceed a section on second-order or teacher-level barriers: lack of teacher confidence, lack of teacher competence, resistance to change, age and gender differences, between teachers and, teachers' "perceptions of the value of ICT." Gamlo found that the most commonly perceived barriers to ICT use were related to lack of access, lack of confidence when using ICT, lack of belief in the value of ICT, unwillingness to make time to use ICT, and inadequate training.

Alkahtani employed an interview and an open-ended questionnaire to investigate the challenges of integrating ICT in teaching. This study presents two significant challenges: A shortage of training and a shortage of devices. The findings also indicate

"a lack of a basic understanding among both students and teachers of how the equipment functions; a lack of mastery of ICT teaching techniques—and a lack of teacher training to bridge the gap; a lack of mastery of electronic equipment; and problems with repairs — or the timeliness of them." (2017, 36).

The integration of ICT in the educational process has bright implications for Saudi schools. This implementation, however, is deterred by several constraints. Without first addressing these constraints, ICT employment in Saudi Arabian schools and universities will not be successful.

Utilizing the Internet for language teaching

The use of the Internet in language teaching has recently gained many researchers' attention (Al-Asmari, 2005; Chen, 2007; Baniabdelrahman, 2013; Shin & Son, 2007; Wu, Yen & Marek, 2011, to name but a few). In this regard, researchers have dealt with different aspects of the Internet, including the use of the Internet in language teaching and its effect on EFL learners' achievement, the use of the resources available online such as podcasts (Fox, 2008), teaching the language skills such as listening utilizing of online resources (Malteza, 2008) and writing, the use of such commonly visited websites as YouTube in EFL classes, use of online dictionaries in learning English (Dashtestani, 2013), among others. This section provides an account of the most recent and related research to incorporating the Internet in language teaching. Some recent studies focused on teachers' concerns about using the Internet in language teaching and their potential use for training. For instance, Yutdhana (2004) revealed teachers' use and the Internet needs in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). The results of the study showed that most teachers use Internet applications for their instruction for the purposes of teaching preparation and teaching in this classroom. Furthermore, the study showed that EFL teachers who use Internet applications have good opinions about using them for teaching EFL. The study also found that the teachers have some concerns about using the Internet for their instruction, including professional, infrastructure, and administrative problems. Therefore, they perceive that they need a training course in using Internet applications for EFL teaching. The current study is more concerned with the school level, whereas the current study is related to higher education and discusses more advanced Internet applications.

Other studies concentrated on the level of Internet adoption by Saudi Universities. Al-Asmari (2005) examined EFL teachers' Internet use at the colleges of technology in four Saudi Arabia cities. The findings of this study showed a low level of Internet integration by the instructors. The study also found some barriers to Internet including, limited access to the Internet and computer skills. In addition to the time gap between AL-Asmari's study and the present study, the present research tackled higher education and was more concerned with the barriers and needs of language instructors.

Another study was conducted by Chen (2007) to examine the factors affecting teachers in incorporating the Internet into their instruction. This study showed that teacher training is decisive for embracing the Internet by the EFL instructors and teachers in higher education. Furthermore, continuous training focusing on technology use in language instruction is essential. The current study instead focuses on specific needs related to Internet applications.

Similarly, Shin and Son (2007) studied the attitudes of Korean secondary school EFL teachers' towards the use of the Internet for teaching purposes. A total of 101 teachers took part in a survey. The study found that the factors affecting the use of the Internet in the classroom include, teachers' interest in Internet use, teachers' abilities to employ the Internet in classroom activities, and computer facilities and technical support in schools.

Not surprisingly, researchers have also displayed a great interest in teachers' needs of the Internet in language teaching. Külekçi (2009) explored pre-service English teachers' use and needs of the Internet. The researcher administered a questionnaire to 195 third- and fourth-year students from DEU Buca, the Faculty of Education, Department of English Language and Teaching constitute the sample of the study. The results indicate that most of the pre-service teachers are eager to use Internet applications, and they mostly have good opinions about using it. The study also points out that pre-service teachers have some concerns about using the Internet. They also need training in using Internet applications for EFL teaching.

Some studies have shed light on the level of incorporation of the Internet in language teaching institutions. For example, Kaliban and Rajab (2010) examined the internet integration by 274 EFL teachers in Gaza, concentrating on uses, practices, and barriers. The researcher gathered the data with a questionnaire. The findings showed that 130 teachers utilized the Internet for teaching English in classrooms as well as for boosting professional development, such as searching for information and sharing ideas with other teachers. Nevertheless, the study found that English language teachers in Gaza have not wholly used the Internet because of some constraints related to time, accessibility, and facilities.

Likewise, Al-Shawi and Al-Wabil (2013) examined Internet use by instructors from various majors in four Saudi higher education institutions: King Saud University, Imam Muhammad bin Saud University, Prince Sultan University, and Al-Yamamah College. Results showed that the Internet technologies were mainly used by the instructors for teaching purposes, communication, and research. In addition, the instructors' computer skills were strong indicators of their Internet use. Furthermore, Zhang (2013) explored Internet use in EFL teaching and learning in universities in Northwest China. The result showed that both teachers and students are not ready for employing the Internet in EFL pedagogy.

In the same regard, Sa'd (2014) studied the perceptions of 86 EFL learners towards the advantages of using the Internet for language learning. The results revealed that 66 participants (77.7%) believed that the Internet has no disadvantages. The significant disadvantages were enumerated to be: the possibility of language learners' misuse of the Internet, and its being time-consuming and tedious. The participants also maintained that it is possible to take advantage of the Internet with language skills, and age groups. They also mentioned the following as the major obstacles to Internet-based teaching a) the Internet filtering, b) its low speed, and d) lack of facilities as well as e) the profound sense of the authorities' mistrust toward the Internet.

Similarly, Javad and Leila (2015) compared the attitudes of 100 Iranian English teachers and 100 learners toward using the Internet for language learning. The findings demonstrated that most participants had positive attitudes towards using the Internet for language learning. Moreover, there was no difference between learners' and teachers' attitudes toward using the Internet for language learning.

Recently, Allehaibi (2019) studied Internet use by faculty members in Saudi Arabian universities. He examined qualities associated with the Internet usage in Saudi Arabian universities. The study administered a questionnaire to 500 faculty members randomly selected in

two Saudi universities. The findings demonstrated that the five innovation attributes are significant factors in explaining Internet adoption by Saudi Arabian faculty. The overall results indicate that the Internet technology diffusion among faculty members in Saudi universities is at the early proliferation stages.

As shown in this brief review of related research, various studies have been conducted regarding Internet usage by institutions, language teachers, and instructors. Some of these studies involved concerns and barriers to Internet utilization in language teaching (Al-Asmari, 2005; Kaliban & Rajab, 2010; Külekçi, 2009; Yutdhana, 2004; Zhang, 2013). These studies have reported several concerns and barriers: professional, infrastructure, administrative considerations, limited access to the Internet, the time factor, and lack of computer skills. Other studies have demonstrated the teachers' need for training and on-going development (Chen, 2007; Külekçi, 2009; Shin & Son, 2007; Yutdhana, 2004). Another group of studies reported a low level of Internet utilization among the teachers and institutions they studied (Al-Asmari, 2005; Allehaibi, 2019; Al-Shawi & Al-Wabil, 2013; Kaliban and Rajab, 2010). Moreover, another group of studies has shown the positive attitudes of teachers and instructors and their eagerness towards employing Internet use in language teaching (Javad & Leila, 2015; Külekçi, 2009).

As the literature shows, incorporating the Internet in English language teaching in Saudi Arabia is still at its beginning stages. No previous study has investigated EFL teachers' Internet obstacles and needs in Saudi Universities. Hence, this study investigates English language teachers' barriers and needs of using the Internet as an instructional tool in Saudi educational institutions. The findings of this study will assist language pedagogues in understanding the needs and barriers of English teachers in terms of Internet incorporation.

Methodology

The current study is a descriptive, mixed-method one; it involved qualitative and quantitative data collection tools and procedures. This section presents the participants of the study, research design, and the instruments, validity and reliability of the instruments, and analysis procedures.

Participants

A total of 81 faculty members in the English Department at Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University (67 males and 14 females) successfully completed the online survey. While the majority of the participants had more than 18 years of experience in English language education, 18 members had 12-17 years of experience, and the rest of the sample had less than 11 years of experience. The positions of the participants were teaching assistants, lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and a professor. Figure one shows the study sample according to their academic ranks. The participants of the study were all working in the English Department at IMSIU during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020. The figure shows that most participants were lecturers (64%) followed by teaching assistants (26%), then assistant professors (5%), associate professors (4%), and professors (1%).

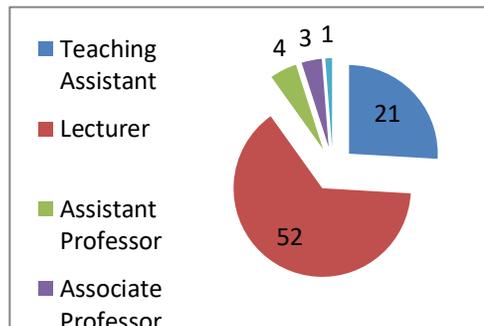


Figure 1. The distribution of the participants according to their academic positions

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-method approach to research because the blend between the quantitative and qualitative research approaches enables induction and deep understanding of the phenomenon under study and the use of the deductive method, which can lead to generalizations about the characteristics of the population after testing the hypotheses.

Instruments

The data were of this study collected by an online survey and a semi-structured interview. This section provides a description of the two instruments.

Survey

The online survey consisted of three parts. The first part inquired about whether the participants need training in the use of the Internet in language teaching. The second part investigated the areas where the participants felt they need training. Finally, the third part investigated participants' perceived barriers in incorporating the Internet in language instruction.

Interview

Following the administration of the survey, four participants were randomly selected for the interviews. The interviewees were then interviewed individually. The interview was a simple one. During each session, which usually lasted for fifteen minutes and was conducted in a private room, the researcher would record on the smart phone and a pen and paper just in case the cassette ever malfunctioned, which did occur once. Although they posed the same questions each session, each interview was different. Faculty members' interviews in many times led to valuable, new information. The interview format was not very formal, but usually turned into casual conversations, and the researcher firmly believes that it is an excellent way to gather qualitative information because it helps in reaching honest responses.

Data Analysis

The current study is a descriptive one involving qualitative and quantitative data. The data were gathered from the participants in the English department at IMSIU by using a survey and an interview. The survey was devised based on the researcher's own experience and the objectives of the study. Consequently, the interview questions were developed according to the participants'

responses to the survey items and were, therefore, aimed at delving further insight into the participants' responses. After the survey and the interview data were collected, the researcher coded the data according to the most recurrent theme(s) of the responses. The answers of each participant were examined to see the central theme of each response. This way, specific themes were found to be prevalent and emerged from the participants' responses. Besides, where appropriate, some interview transcripts have also been provided to shed further light on the participants' perceptions and attitudes. The interview consisted only of one single question, which aimed at a further understanding of the participants' perceived needs in using the Internet for language teaching. The participants answered the question: What do you think are the most needed skills for EFL instructors in using the Internet for language teaching?

Instrument Validity

The final version of the survey and the interview were validated by two experts in the field for their content; two EFL university professors in the English Language Department at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University checked the instruments. The instruments' items were reviewed and modified in response to their feedback and recommendations, and only small changes have been made.

Instrument Reliability

To estimate reliability, the researcher piloted the study instruments on 10 EFL instructors whose variables were similar to those of the original study sample. However, the researcher excluded this sample from the present study. The results of the test and the survey's reliability analysis showed that Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the survey was 0.81, which indicates acceptable reliability results, while Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the interview was 0.86, which is a highly satisfactory result for scientific research.

Findings

The current study investigated the perceived obstacles and training needs of EFL instructors in the English Department at IMSIU in using the Internet for language teaching and teaching English online. This section presents the findings of the study; the findings are presented according to the questions of the study. The results are shown under two titles, namely: "perceived obstacles to the implementation of Internet-based EFL teaching" and "instructors' perceived needs for training in using the Internet for language teaching." The first title presents the findings related to the first research question, whereas the second title presents the findings of the second research question.

First: perceived obstacles to the implementation of Internet-based EFL teaching:

This section provides the result related to the first research question, which sought to find out the participants' perceived obstacles in the incorporation of Internet tools and applications in language teaching. As this study was conducted during the lockdown of COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia, the survey was administered online. The participants were requested to indicate the most common obstacles they faced while using the Internet online instruction. The responses of the participants were categorized into nine obstacles. Figure two below presents the frequencies of the participants' responses regarding the obstacles they encounter in integrating the Internet in language classes as perceived by the participants.

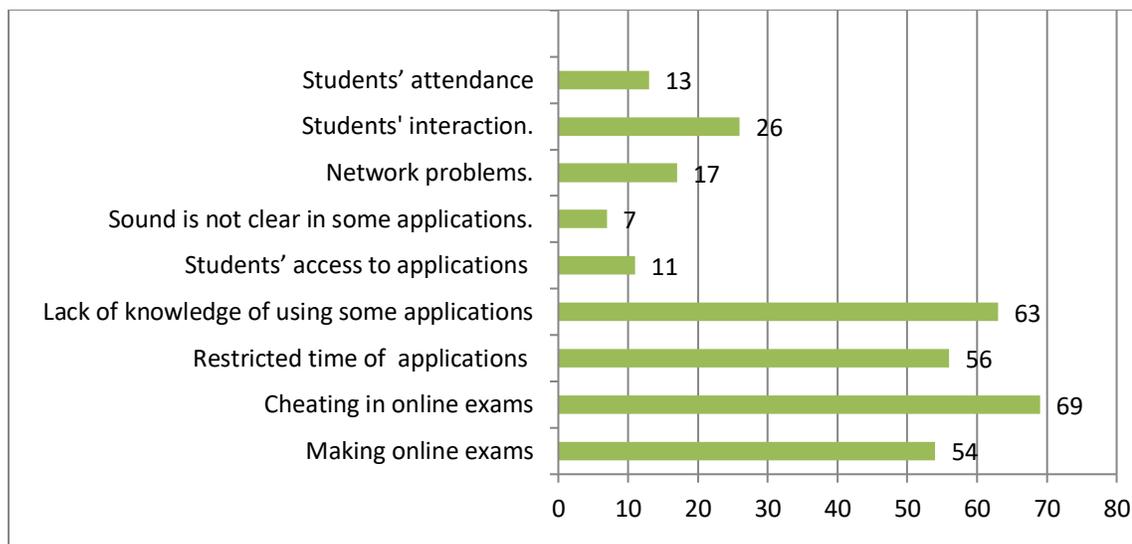


Figure 2. Obstacles of using the Internet as perceived by IMSIU's EFL instructors

It is interesting to see the number of concerns raised by the instructors. The participants' concerns reflect the current situation of Internet use in Saudi Arabia and in the related literature about Internet use in other parts of the world. Even though every obstacle matters, only four major obstacles including (1) cheating in online exams, (2) lack of knowledge in using some applications (3) restricted time of some applications and (4) making online exams are discussed in-depth due to their dramatically high number of frequencies. Figure 2 also shows that students' interaction is among the obstacles that were indicated by 26 participants. Other obstacles include network problems (F17), students' attendance (F13), students' access to the applications (F11), and sound clarity (F 7). The major four obstacles are intertwined. Cheating in online exams can be a result of the lack of knowledge in the proper way of using online testing applications. Moreover, the restricted time of some applications like Zoom, for instance, can result in the learners cheat in their exams. This cannot be split from the idea that many participants indicated their suffering in making online exams.

The four most frequent obstacles raised by the instructors are, in a way or another, related to training issues. Because many Saudi institutions, like other parts of the world, were bewildered by the efficacy of the Pandemic and the quick resort to online teaching, they did not have enough time for training their teachers on online teaching. In addition, some applications were more complicated than others and demanded extensive training, especially for those instructors with limited experience. In the context of the study, IMSIU uses Blackboard, which, as any instructors complain, entails sufficient training prior to the use. Since the university did not have the time for such training, the training was conducted in a hurry, making the instructors resort to more user-friendly applications. These applications are either paid and expensive or give restricted time access. For example, Zoom has a 40-minute meeting limit, then the meeting has to start all over. The interruption would certainly affect the quality of teaching and assessment.

In addition, another perceived obstacle is making online exams, which is also a trainable issue and intertwined with the other three major obstacles. The instructors considered themselves

lacking knowledge and training in the use of Internet applications, making online exams and managing these exams. These four obstacles reflect the current situation of education technology in Saudi Arabia. Although there have been rules, determination, and policies, the actual implementation on the ground is not sufficient according to the study's results.

Second: perceived needs for training in using the Internet for language teaching:

In addition to teachers' opinions about the obstacles they encountered in using Internet applications for EFL teaching, this study also examined instructors' perceptions of their training needs in using Internet applications for language instruction. To get this information, a closed-ended question and open-ended question were used. In the open-ended question, the participants were asked to indicate any topics they needed to train in using the Internet for their instruction. Figure three shows the content topics that the instructors feel they need training on.

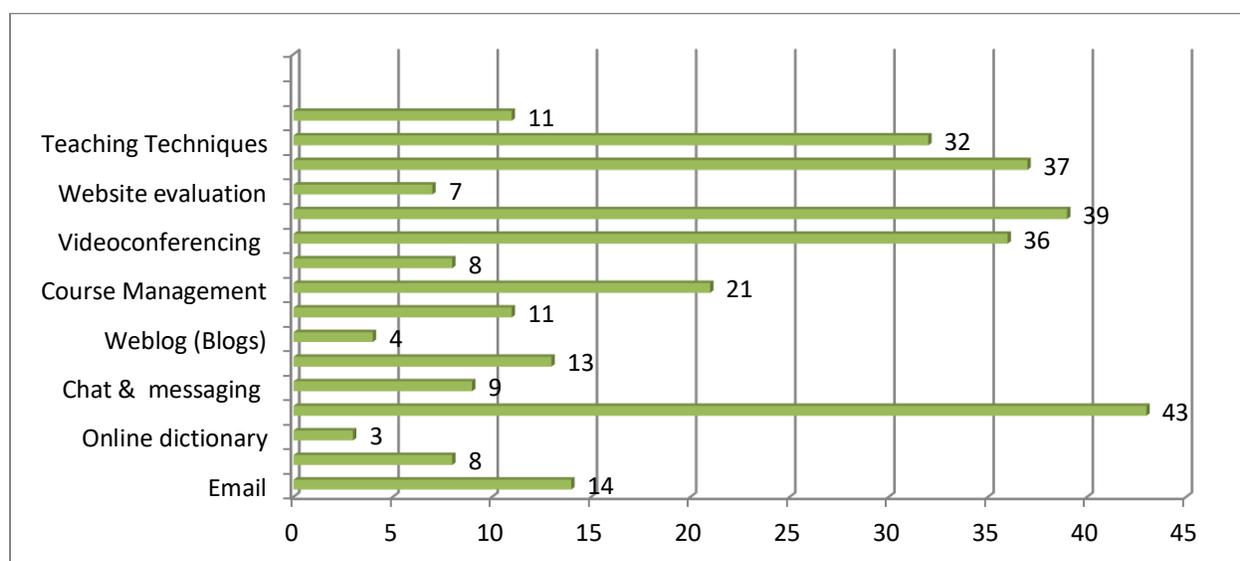


Figure 3. Instructors' determinations of their needs for training in using the Internet for language teaching

As Figure three shows, the participants reported their need to learn multiple skills and to use several types of applications. Not surprisingly, the results show that the participants reported that their most immediate needs are learning to use presentation software (F43), Creating online exams (F39), creating teaching materials (F37), Videoconferencing (F36), and teaching techniques (F32). A less frequent, perceived need is course management (F17). Another group of less frequent needs includes email (14), online translators (F13), online writing assistance, and designing audiovisual materials both (F11), chat and messaging (F9), web folios/ portfolios, and browsers (F8), and website evaluation (F7). The least reported group of needs include blogs (F4) and online dictionaries (F3).

In addition to the survey, some participants volunteered to be interviewed. The interview aimed to achieve an in-depth understanding of the instructors' needs concerning the implementation of the Internet in language teaching. The interviewees responded to the three questions below:

What courses have you taught, and for how many semesters?

Do you think that you need training in using the Internet for language teaching?

What do you think are the most needed skills for EFL instructors in using the Internet for language teaching?

The first question was utilized as an ice breaker and for the researcher's notes. Instructors who agreed to participate in the interview include four members of the English department faculty, all of whom had a Ph.D. The second question was used to measure the instructors' willingness to the training. A range of individual responses was provided to each question, but a pattern of similar types of answers emerged according to each group.

Every participant's first response to the item of the interview was to praise the express the need and show eagerness for training. According to most of the participants, the primary need is creating the teaching material. The classes are equipped with smart boards, PCs, Projectors, and an internet connection. However, some instructors reported that they have never used these facilities, *"But at this stage, we are in need to know how to create meaningful & engaging Internet activities, create teaching materials through the use of Internet, and develop Interactive content,"* said an instructor. She explained that this process was too easy for her to use the traditional way of designing and creating the martial. However, things turned out very demanding and time consuming all of a sudden.

Another training need that was raised by the majority of the instructors is classroom management. They all indicated that the online class is entirely different from the traditional one in terms of classroom management and students' engagement, *"You need to know how to plan and organize your online classes. You also should be taught how manage the time of class between using the internet and doing the other needs. Instructors also need to learn how to control and manage the classroom,"* pointed out an associate professor.

According to the subjects, one of the needs they all expressed is to know how to search and manage data sources. They all said that the sources needed at this level are entirely different and, therefore, require additional training, *"The instructors need to be trained in the skill of searching educational engines to supplement EFL courses and finding online teaching materials especially for pre-service teachers."* Reported an assistant professor. Participants also indicated that the process is also linked to the professional development of the instructor, *"They need to be trained on how to search either for research purposes or teaching purposes,"* added the same assistant professor.

According to the research, the faculty members reported their dire need for training in online assessment tools, *"I think instructors are very badly in need to be instructed how to use online assessment and evaluation tools. I believe a challenging need for me is evaluating students reading and vocabulary level."* Mentioned another assistant professor. She reported that assessing students' achievement makes a challenge for her and for her colleagues and that they are apprehensive of concerns like designing exams, exam-taking time, and students' cheating.

In addition to the mentioned needs raised by the majority of the participants, other needs were reported by some of the instructors. Some instructors indicated the need for training on basic knowledge of using technology and familiarity with common problems with plug-ins, connections, the Internet browsers, firewalls, etc. One of the instructors stated, *“I think the Saudi universities should pay more attention to preparing future language teachers for the new learning system, I mean the online learning system and using technological skills in the classroom.”*

Discussion

The findings of this study show the positive attitudes of the English language instructors towards the use of the Internet for professional development. This issue has been pointed out by previous studies. These results provide clear evidence that IMSIU EFL instructors are not lagging in terms of internet –related knowledge and professional development. With such use of the Internet, instructors and teachers have the chance to learn and get valuable competencies amongst which is the internet implementation (Kabilan 2005). It is evident then that the Saudi instructors in this study are aware of the Internet's potentials in language pedagogy.

The findings of the part of the study related to the obstacles of using the Internet in language teaching support other previous studies (Yutdhana, 2004; Al-Asmari, 2005; Kulekçi, 2009; Zhang, 2013; Kaliban & Rajab, 2010) which have reported several concerns and barriers including, professional, infrastructure, administrative matters, limited access to the Internet, the time factor and lack of computer skills. This study found that the major obstacles in using the Internet for language instruction are professional ones and are, therefore, trainable. This finding goes with the findings of Yutdhana (2004), who found that the teachers' problems about using the Internet for their instruction included professional, infrastructure, and administrative concerns. However, the significant problems of this study's participants are the professional ones. Furthermore, although Al-Asmari (2005) found that the teachers encountered some obstacles which agrees with the findings of this study, the barriers he found included limited access to the Internet and lack of computer skills, which were not part of the findings of this study. The conclusions of this section also support Kaliban and Rajab (2010), whose study reported barriers related to time factor, which is a significant obstacle as reported in the current study. In contrast, the findings of this study are against those of Sa'd (2014), who indicated the following as the major obstacles to implementing Internet-based teaching a) the Internet filtering, b) its low speed and d) lack of facilities as well as e) the profound sense of the authorities' mistrust toward the Internet. Fortunately, these obstacles are not among the ones encountered at IMSIU.

Even though every training need of the instructors is critical, only five content topics including (1) learning to use online presentation software, (2) Creating online exams, (3) creating online teaching materials, (4) Videoconferencing, and (5) online teaching techniques are discussed in-depth due to the dramatically higher numbers of their frequencies as indicated above. One thing about the most frequent perceived needs is that they all are related to imminent practice, teaching skills, presentation, and testing. The lockdown of COVID-19 was sudden, and several instructors have not tried their online teaching skills earlier. That's why these skills have been reported by the majority of the participants. On the contrary, the least frequently reported skills are the ones used even before the pandemic including the use of the emails, browsers, chat, and messaging; or ones that are rarely used and needed by the instructors in their classes like blogs, website evaluation and

designing audiovisual materials. The findings of this section support the findings of previous studies which have demonstrated the teachers' and instructors need for training and on-going development and their eagerness to using the Internet applications and they mostly have good opinions about using it (Yutdhana, 2004; Chen, 2007; Shin & Son, 2007; Külekçi, 2009).

As for the interview questions, the common thing among all instructors is that they all expressed their need for training to use the internet for language teaching. The most common needs reported by the majority of the instructors fall in creating teaching material, classroom management, managing data sources, assessment and evaluation, and basic knowledge of using technology. This finding supports the findings of the survey where the participants reported the need for training on presentation software, creating online exams, creating teaching materials, Videoconferencing, and teaching techniques. The findings of this part also support the findings of other recent studies (Yutdhana, 2004; Chen, 2007; Shin & Son, 2007; Külekçi, 2009).

Limitations of the study

Limitations are usually particular areas over which the researcher cannot control (Roberts, 2010). The limitations of this study are methodology constraints and sample size. First, the data were gathered by only using a survey and an interview. The survey employed in this study predisposes a range of responses. Some questions were predetermined with a range of answers, so the participants might not answer freely. Second, the findings are relatively not generalizable to other populations due to specific research focus. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies invite more participants to take part in the project before the beginning of the data collection phase.

Conclusion

For a long time, researchers have studied the positive impact of technology utilization in language teaching, showing a sophisticated process. Unfortunately, many language instructors have lacked success in utilizing technology into their teaching. This study examines the limited use of the internet by EFL instructors in the English department at Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University. This study investigated the employment of the Internet by English Language instructors at IMSIU focusing on the instructors' barriers and needs. The main objective of this study was to examine IMSIU English Department's instructors' perceived obstacles and needs of incorporating the internet in language teaching. The instructors perceived that they encounter significant obstacles and concerns, including (1) cheating in online exams, (2) lack of knowledge in using some applications, (3) restricted time of some applications and (4), and making online exams. The instructors perceive that they need training in utilizing the Internet for EFL teaching. They all demonstrated their openness and eagerness to such kind of training. At the same time, they see presentation software, developing online exams, creating teaching materials, Videoconferencing, and teaching techniques, classroom management, managing data sources, assessment and evaluation, and basic knowledge of using technology as very necessary. This indicates that basic knowledge of using the Internet is not their only primary concern. They feel that they need training in utilizing the Internet for language teaching.

Implications

The results related to the training needs obtained provide a guideline of what the EFL instructors in the study require to know. A right training course should be designed to meet the instructors'

needs. As this study already examined the instructors' needs, the next step can be creating a trainer course depending on the study's results. Additionally, this study informs leaders of Saudi universities of the instructors' openness and willingness to training in technology use and specifically the use of the Internet in language pedagogy. Furthermore, some of the concerns raised by the participants of the study should somehow be treated and taken into consideration. Finally, for leaders in English language departments, the study's findings are likely to open up prospects for cross-border cooperative teaching, making the best use of online and human resources.

Recommendations for further research

The results of this study indicate that some issues on which further research is needed. There is a need to study Internet skills of EFL instructors and students in a more individual manner so that individualized training plans can be prepared for different groups. In other words, a training needs analysis for students and instructors should be conducted for more precise results and better training conditions. Furthermore, undertaking a "training needs analysis" may show potential gaps in Internet use skills among the instructors and the students. Also, the current study only employed a survey and an interview for data collection. Other data collection techniques of data collection can make triangulation of a study and may, therefore, result in more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Classroom observation or online observation may provide authentic picture of how the teachers employ the Internet in their teaching. Similarly, a journal all through a semester or an academic year presents teachers' reflections on their own teaching. In addition, a portfolio will show what the achievement of the instructors in a year with regards to the phenomenon under study. Another area that needs further empirical study is how the educational institutions react to the rapid growth of online teaching resources and how they responded to the rapid change to online learning and teaching over a concise period of the time due to the pandemic conditions. An investigation like this may pave the way for immediate training in emergency times.

About the Author:

Dr. Nasser Freihat is an assistant professor of English language at Imam Mohamad ibn Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arabia. His research interests include cognitive reading strategies, second language practices and CALL. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9518-0670>

References

- Ageel, M. (2011). The ICT proficiencies of university teachers in Saudi Arabia: A case study to identify challenges and encouragements. *University of Southampton's Doctoral Research Journal. Hummingbird*, 2, 55-60.
- Al-Asmari, A. M. (2005). *The use of the Internet among EFL teachers at the colleges of technology in Saudi Arabia*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), The Ohio State University, USA.
- Albirini, A. (2004). Teachers' attitudes toward information and communication technologies: The case of Syrian EFL teachers. *Computers and Education*, 47, 373-398. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2004.10.013
- Alebaikan, R., & Troudi, S. (2010). Blended learning in Saudi universities: Challenges and perspectives. *Research in Learning Technology*, 18 (1), 49-59. doi:10.1080/09687761003657614
- Al-Ghabban, M. A., & Zaman, H. A. (2013). Mission differentiation in higher education between teaching and research. *The Saudi Journal of Higher Education*, (10), 11-38.

- Alharbi, A. M. (2013). Teachers' attitudes towards integrating technology: Case studies in Saudi Arabia and the United States. Masters Thesis: Grand Valley State University.
- Alkahtani, A. (2017). The challenges facing the integration of ICT in teaching in Saudi secondary schools. *International Journal of Education and Development using ICT*, 13(1)
- Allehaibi, M.M. *Faculty adoption of Internet technology in Saudi Arabian universities*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis). The Florida State University, Florida, USA.
- Almalki, G. & Williams, N. (2012). A strategy to improve the usage of ICT in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia primary school. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, 3(10), 42-49.
- Alshawi, A., & Alwabil, A. (2013). Internet usage by faculty in Saudi higher education. *International Journal of Computer Science Issues*, 10 (3), 1694-0814.
- Alshumaimeri, Y. A. (2008). Perceptions and Attitudes toward Using CALL in English Classrooms among Saudi Secondary EFL Teachers. *The JALT CALL Journal*, 44(2), 29-66.
- Alswilem, D. (2019). Saudi English Teachers' Use of Technology in Secondary Classrooms: Perceptions, Barriers, and Suggestions for Improvement. *ALLS* 10(6):168-178,
- Baniabdelrahman, A. A. (2013). Effect of using Internet tools on enhancing EFL students' speaking skill. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 3(6), 79-87.
- Chen, Y. L. (2007). A mixed-method study of EFL teachers' Internet use in language instruction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(4), 1015–1028. DOI:10.1016/J.TATE.2007.07.002
- Dashtestani, R. (2013). EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English. *Computer Assisted Language Learning Electronic Journal*, 14(2), 51-65
- Farooq, M. U., & Soomro, A. F. (2018). Teachers and Technology: Trends in English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, Vol. 8(5).
- Fox, A. (2008). Using podcasts in the EFL classroom. *TESL-EJ*, 11(4). <http://tesl-ej.org/ej44/a4.html>
- Gamlo, Nada. (2014). *EFL teachers use/non-use of ICT at a university in Saudi Arabia*. PhD thesis, University of Warwick.
- Javad, K.H., & Leila, A.A. (2015). Attitudes toward using the Internet for language learning: A case of Iranian English teachers and learners. *International Journal of Research Studies in Educational Technology*. 4(1), 63-78. DOI: 10.5861/ijrset.2015.1029
- Kabilan, M. & Rajab, B. (2010). The Utilization of the Internet by Palestinian English Language Teachers Focusing on Uses, Practices and Barriers and Overall Contribution to Professional Development. *International Journal of Education and Development Using ICT*, 6 (3), 56-72.
- Külekçi, G. (2009). Assessing the attitudes of pre-service English teachers towards the use of the Internet. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10(3), 153-160.
- Malteza, V. (2008). Practical tips on how to teach listening. *ISSUES*, 21, 6-8.
- MOE. (2005). *The Executive Summary of the Ministry of Education Ten-Year Plan 1425-1435 H (2004–2014)* (2nd ed.). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Ministry of Education.
- Nunan, D. (1988). *The learner-centred curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oyaid, A. (2009). *Education Policy in Saudi Arabia and its Relation to Secondary School Teachers' ICT Use Perceptions and Views of the Future of ICT in Education*. Ph.D. thesis, The University of Exeter, United Kingdom.

- Pettenai, M. C., Giuli, D., & Khaled, A. O. (2001). Information technology and staff development: Issues and problems related to new skills and competence acquisition. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 9, 153–169.
- Roberts, C. M. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin-a SAGE Company.
- Sa'd, S.H.T. (2014). Implementing Internet-based EFL Teaching in Iran: (Dis) Advantages, Obstacles and Challenges from EFL Learners' Viewpoint. *Dil ve Edebiyat Egitimi Dergisi*, Vol. 10, pp. 24-40. DOI: 10.12973/dee.11.232
- Saleh, S. S., & Pretorius, F. J. (2006). English as a foreign language: Teachers' professional development via the Internet. *PROGRESSIO*, 28(1 & 2), 111-126.
- Saqlain, N., Al-Qarni, F., & Ghadi, N. (2013). Are English language teachers in Saudi Arabia ready to integrate technology? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 103(13th International Educational Technology Conference), 146–153.
- Shin, H.-J., & Son, J.-B. (2007). EFL teachers' perceptions and perspectives on Internet-assisted language teaching. *CALL-EJ Online*, 8(2).
- Teo, T. (2008). Pre-service teachers' attitudes towards computer use: A Singapore survey. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*. 24(4), 413-424. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.1201>
- Wang, Y.M. (1993). *E-mail Dialogue Journaling in an ESL Reading and Writing Classroom*. (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation), University of Oregon at Eugene, Oregon, USA.
- Warschauer, M. (1996). Comparing face-to-face and electronic discussion in the second language classroom. *CALICO Journal* 13 (2), 7-26, DOI:10.1558/cj.v13i2-3.7-26
- West, R. (2001). *Needs-based Approaches in ESP. Unit 2 of the distance learning materials Teaching English for Specific Purposes*. Manchester: The University of Manchester.
- Wu, W.-C. V., Yen, L. L., & Marek, M. (2011). Using Online EFL Interaction to Increase Confidence, Motivation, and Ability. *Educational Technology & Society*, 14 (3), 118–129.
- Yutdhana, S. (2004). *A needs analysis of Thai high school teachers in using Internet applications for teaching English as a foreign language*, (published master thesis), Washington State University, USA.
- Zhang, C. (2013). A study of Internet use in EFL teaching and learning in Northwest China. *Asian Social Science*, 9(2), 48-52. DOI:10.5539/ass.v9n2p48
- Zhao, Y. & Cziko, G.A. (2001). Teacher Adoption of Technology: A Perceptual Control Theory Perspective. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 9(1), 5-30.