



Teaching and Learning in the Age of 'Just Google it'

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Abstract

The rapid increase in technological resources has a revolutionary impact on teaching English as a second or a foreign language (ESL/EFL). Although the majority of lecture-rooms at the Jordanian private universities are equipped with computers and Internet facilities, they are scarcely used in the teaching process. Moreover, faculty preparations and usage of IT in classrooms seem to be adjusting very slowly to the new educational revolution brought by the Internet at the age of "just Google it".

This paper describes some of the challenges that academic institutions in Jordan face with the widespread of uncontrolled E-learning. By analysing a Likert- scale questionnaire administered to tutors at Al-Zaytoonah, and Petra Universities, this paper demonstrates how teachers use e-resources in their classes. It also highlights the impact of using online resources on improving the educational research and teaching at the tertiary level in Jordan.

The findings of the data analysis indicated that teachers, in general, showed a positive attitude to implement computer assisted language learning in English classrooms. They agreed that Internet resources provide them with authentic material, yet they do not replace the textbook material. However, the majority agreed that they do not attend training courses to improve their IT ability or to acquaint themselves with the websites that include suitable teaching material. Based on the results, this paper presents some implications to EFL instructors to better embrace the educational changes imposed by the Internet technology.

Introduction

Tertiary education world has witnessed dramatic shifts in how we deliver our lectures, assess our students, and write our papers. Internet and communication technologies are changing education, taking it gradually out of the traditional classroom to a new world different in space and time, and making it open, dynamic, and affordable. Such a change imposes educational challenges on both teachers and learners. Today's students consider staying connected with the Internet as a central part of their lives which helps them find factual information needed at the moment instead of relying on their own personal knowledge. Priority of learning is shifting, and learning is accomplished through errors and trials rather than logical and rule-based methods.

This rapid increase in technological resources has also its impact on teaching English as a second or a foreign language (ESL/EFL). Although the majority of lecture rooms at the Jordanian private universities are equipped with computers and Internet facilities, they are scarcely used in the teaching process. Moreover, faculty preparations and teaching seem to be adjusting very slowly to this new educational revolution brought by the Internet at the age of "just Google it". This is due to a couple of factors related to the institute, the faculty themselves, and the students.

Firstly, university leaderships and decision-makers are risk adverse and traditional bound, which is why some of them overlook the advantages the Internet brings to the teaching and research process. In addition, the increased number of private universities and colleges has been accompanied by scarcity or lack of governmental financial support which has affected the availability of IT facilities in teaching classrooms.

Secondly, in response to the changes in the way we teach a foreign language imposed by the Internet, faculty members are put in a challenging situation on different levels. On the one hand, easy access to information in the age of 'just Google it' increases the expectations of university students of the information level of their tutors. Students can Google any piece of information, compare it, develop it, and may raise unexpected questions about it. So, faculty members have to accept the challenge, and broaden their knowledge about any topic in the syllabus to avoid unpleasant surprises. A big number of faculty members who belong to earlier generations are not very much skilled as net learners. Therefore, they must keep pace with, and actively develop their IT skills to embrace the new technology imposed by Google and E-learning.

Thirdly, students use the Internet resources most of the time inappropriately. On different occasions, they copy and paste sentences, or even entire articles when writing their assignments, projects, or translation tasks without acknowledging their sources or fearing academic penalty. They quite often seem to lack critical thinking skills, and adequate awareness of the issues of plagiarism, authenticity of information available on the Internet, or intellectual property rights, and this is another problem that faces the educational institutes and academicians.

In Jordan, and specifically at the Departments of English Language at Al-Zaytoonah and Petra Universities, the situation is somehow similar to what has been mentioned above. Although university teachers and students benefit from the instant access to the Internet, actual Internet usage takes place only in the computer labs. Digital libraries are available with limited access, and they could not replace the conventional ones. Online authentic teaching materials are enormously present, but tutors seldom use it them in teaching classes. Therefore, it can be said that some universities in Jordan must adapt to the educational challenges where technology

worldwide plays a bigger role than ever before. They have to cope with these changes as well as provide means for students and teachers to do that.

Despite this, the Internet rapid spread and easy access to all types of information has radically changed how we deliver our lectures, obtain our teaching material, or gain more insights about teaching methods. According to Park and Son (2009), the Internet "has become a useful tool for communication, a venue for experiencing different cultures and a mediator in diverse political, social and economical situations" (p. 80). The Internet technological tools such as discussion boards, chat rooms, audio and video material, have the potential to engage students at tertiary level in Internet process-based education. For example, it can help them access authentic information, understand different linguistic models, and read research papers samples (Linn, Davis & Bell, 2004; Songer, Lee & Kam, 2002; Krajcik, Blumenfeld, Marx & Soloway, 2000; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999). Discussion boards and websites such as LinkedIn also provide tutors like me from all over the world with a rich platform to share ideas about different pedagogical issues in ESL/EFL classes instantly.

The Importance of using technology in second and foreign language learning has been accentuated in the literature written on that concern. According to Thomas, Reinders & Warschaer (2013), technologies have increased in popularity during the last two decades. They are considered as one of the most effective areas in second language learning with a variety of tools. Day after day, the number of teachers and students using computers and the Internet for educational purposes is increasing for couple of reasons. Firstly, computers and the Internet are useful teaching tools because they allow students to access a wide range of materials in the target language such as blogs, videos, audios, and chat rooms. Secondly, they increase the opportunity to interact with native speakers of English (Dickinson, Brew, & Meurers, 2012). Thirdly, they can be fun and motivating for students who will have the opportunity of using the vocabulary or grammar of the second or foreign language they learned. Confirming this, Warschauer (2010) indicates that the use of computer and the Internet motivates students, and helps them communicate effectively with others in a less threatening environment.

Similarly, Gitsaki and Taylor (2001) state that Internet learning can expose students to rich input of English used in everyday situation, allow them to communicate with native speakers most of the time, and expose them to different online activities. Confirming this, Suh (2005) states that online collaboration can enhance learners' understanding and help develop critical thinking skills by exposing them to different perceptions (Lock & Redmond, 2006). Additionally, the Internet is an important source of authentic materials (Brandl, 2002) such as online resources that are more likely to reflect the complexities of real-life language (Bell, 2005). Nonetheless, careful attention should be paid to the selection of internet materials to weed out those that are linguistically inappropriate and poor in quality (Murray, 2005). Many researches and teachers have expressed their anxiety towards copyright violations, and the serious consequences for their institution, or even for them personally (Oliver et al., 1998).

In the Arab world and in the EFL context, different studies have been conducted to investigate the English product of Arabic-speaking students (Ghazzoul, 2008) in traditional classrooms. The findings of these studies indicate that students' product suffers from many problems that relate to the four skills of the language. However, it is expected that applying computer and Internet technology in the same classroom might lead to different results.

Methodology

This paper attempts to elicit some information about the teachers' perceptions of applying Internet-assisted teaching at Al-Zaytoonah and Petra Universities. It also tries to explore the type of obstacles which face university teachers when using the Internet for educational purposes to enhance their future English teaching.

Qualitative research method was employed for data collection. A Likert-scale questionnaire (LSQ) was administered to participants to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the use of the Internet in teaching classes. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first a section aims to get the participants' background information; the second section is a four-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (Strongly Disagree) to 1 (Strongly Agree), and the third section is an open-ended questions to gather further data on the participants' willingness to use the Internet, or to add more points that were not mentioned in the questionnaire.

To validate the questionnaire, and get more reliable results, I asked six senior colleagues to try it, and provide their comments. I was given comments on three items which were restructured again. The average time it took them to complete the questionnaire was 10-15 minutes.

Profiling the Participants of the study

The participants of the study were 20 English language tutors working at the Departments of English Language and Translation at Al-Zaytoonah and Petra universities. The rationale for choosing these two places was because I teach English at Al-Zaytoonah University and other colleagues who teach at Petra University helped me collect responses. At Al-Zaytoonah University there are 440 students at the Department of English Language and Translation, and 25 faculty members: fourteen males and eleven females. Similarly, at Petra University there are almost 500 students, and 28 faculty members: 16 males and 5 females. The age range of the teachers who participated in the study is between 25 to 70 years. Their teaching experience has ranged from more than 5 to 35 years. Analysis of the first section of the questionnaire indicates that 90% of the participants have Internet access at work and at home, and 85% of them acknowledged that they use Internet daily with the average of more than two hours a day.

Results of the Data Analysis

The LSQ was divided into three main sections based on themes. The first section (items 1-8) provides information on the value of the Internet as a teaching tool in English classes, and also attempts to infer the tutors' perceptions of their familiarity with the Internet usage. The second section (items 9-11) sheds light on the use of the Internet in writing research papers, and section 3 (items 12-16) relates to the value of the Internet as an educational instrument for students. The results of the analysis of the LSQ indicate that the majority of the English teachers actually believe that the Internet is useful for teaching purposes. The summary of the data analysis is shown in table (1) below.

| Item | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree | Not sure | Total |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------|----------------|----------|-------|
| 1. The Internet provides non-native teachers of English with rich authentic teaching resources. | 1 (5%) | 1 (5%) | 6 (30%) | 9 (45%) | 3 (15%) | 20 |
| 2. Internet tools can be useful for teaching purposes. | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 7 (35%) | 13 (65%) | 0 (0%) | 20 |
| 3. The Internet enhances our teaching practices, and facilitates difficult theories. | 0 (0%) | 1 (5%) | 10 (50%) | 8 (40%) | 1 (5%) | 20 |
| 4. Internet resources can be a rich base for preparing lectures. | 1 (5%) | 4 (20%) | 5 (25%) | 8 (40%) | 2 (10%) | 20 |
| 5. Internet resources can be used in classroom and replace textbooks for some courses. | 3 (15%) | 10 (50%) | 6 (30%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | 20 |
| 6. I use Google Translate and other translation websites in translation classes. | 3 (15%) | 11 (55%) | 5 (25%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | 20 |
| 7. I attend training courses for using computer and Internet and web resources. | 1 (5%) | 8 (40%) | 10 (50%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | 20 |
| 8. I am capable of using efficiently Internet-based materials in English classes. | 0 (0%) | 2 (10%) | 9 (45%) | 8 (40%) | 1 (5%) | 20 |
| 9. I use the Internet to write research papers instead of using hardcopy references. | 3 (15%) | 2 (10%) | 9 (45%) | 4 (20%) | 2 (10%) | 20 |
| 10. I am aware of the intellectual property rights and issues of plagiarism. | 0 (0%) | 2 (10%) | 4 (20%) | 14 (70%) | 0 (0%) | 20 |
| 11. I use social media websites such as Facebook as a discussion board with my students | 1 (5%) | 7 (35%) | 6 (30%) | 5 (25%) | 1 (5%) | 20 |
| 12. Students are encouraged to improve their oral skills by accessing authentic materials designed for teaching English as a foreign language. | 1 (5%) | 1 (5%) | 12 (60%) | 6 (30%) | 0 (0%) | 20 |
| 13. Students are encouraged to bridge their information gap by using Internet resources. | 0 (0%) | 2 (10%) | 10 (50%) | 7 (35%) | 1 (5%) | 20 |
| 14. I acquaint my students with important educational websites, and how to use them. | 1 (5%) | 2 (10%) | 10 (50%) | 6 (30%) | 1 (5%) | 20 |
| 15. Students are taught how to cite Websites to avoid plagiarism. | 1 (5%) | 4 (20%) | 8 (40%) | 6 (30%) | 1 (5%) | 20 |
| 16. Google has facilitated our educational tasks. | 0 (0%) | 1 (5%) | 10 (50%) | 6 (30%) | 1 (5%) | 20 |

Table (1) Summary of the Teachers' perceptions of the use of the Internet

The results of the LSQ indicate that participant with an average of 80% agreed that the Internet has provided non-native teachers of English with rich authentic teaching resources,

while only two persons disagreed on that. However, three teachers (15%) mentioned that they were not sure of the value of the Internet in the teaching process. Responses on items number two, three, and four indicated that the 70% of the participants considered Internet tools useful and helpful in the process of teaching English. However, 20% considered Internet resources not good enough to prepare for their lectures. This was related to the reliability of the websites, and to the fact that students feel safe when they deal with textbook materials rather than with Internet resources.

In response to item number 5, the results of the questionnaire analysis revealed that 65.% actually do not use the Internet in their classroom for teaching purposes, or as a replacement of the textbook, but 30% agreed that they could use it. 55% of the participants strongly disagreed and 15% disagreed that they use Google translate or any other translation tool in their classes. However, 30% of the participants agreed that they would use these tools in their translation classes. Of the 20 teachers, 10 (50%) agreed that they would attend training courses for using computer and web resources efficiently, but 8 others (40%) disagreed on attending such courses. In response to item number 8, 45% of the participants agreed and 40% strongly agreed that they are capable of using Internet material efficiently in their classrooms, however, 10% mentioned that they could not do that.

Most teachers (90%) agreed that they are aware of intellectual property right and issues of plagiarism, but 10% were not aware of that. In response to the third section of the questionnaire, the majority of the teachers (more than 80%) reported that they encourage their students to use the Internet to improve their skills and bridge the information gap. They also mentioned that they acquaint their students with important educational websites. In some cases, teachers' disagreement was found. 25% of the teachers mentioned that they do not teach their students how to avoid plagiarism, 5% reported that they are unsure of this, whereas 70% stated that they teach their students how to cite a website properly.

Furthermore, analysis of the open-ended questions indicated that teachers in general agreed that the advantages of using the Internet in the classroom are enormous. For example, they mentioned that it provides students with authentic and rich material. Nonetheless, some highlighted the disadvantages of using the Internet in the classroom and wrote about the obstacles and technical problems that may arise during in the lab or classroom. They also referred to the time wasted in finding appropriate or reliable materials. Finally, three teachers confirmed that nothing is better than textbook material and the traditional classroom interaction.

Discussion

Teachers at the Departments of English Language and Translation at Al-Zaytoonah and Petra Universities reported a positive overall attitude towards the use of the Internet in the classroom. The percentage of their agreement about the value of using the Internet was higher than that of their disagreement as shown in the following two figures. A total number of 80% of the teachers believed that Internet resources could be used for teaching purposes. They indicated that the Internet provides students with authentic resources, motivate them, and help them bridge the information gap.

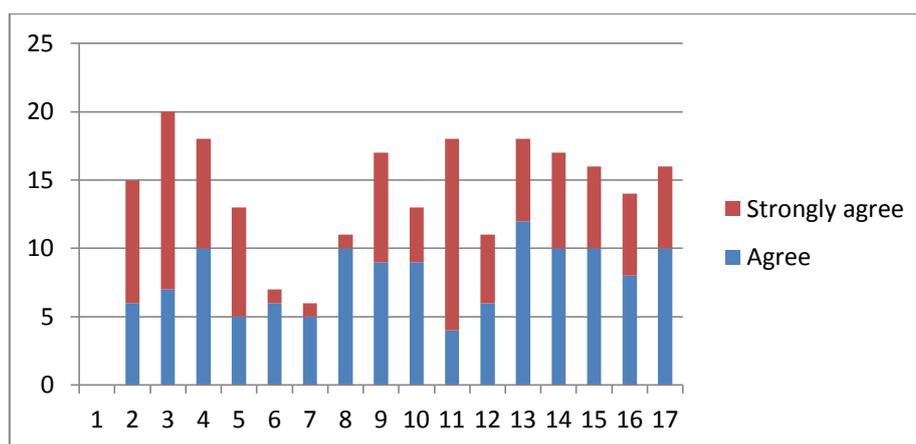


Figure (1) Teachers' agreement on the use of the Internet in the teaching process

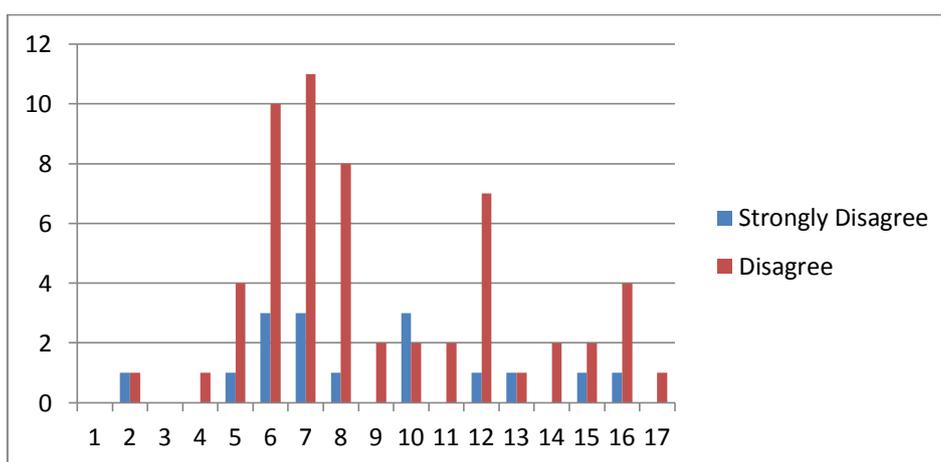


Figure (2) Teachers' disagreement on the use of the Internet in the teaching process

Most of the teachers in the study (90%) pointed out that Internet could improve the communicative and oral skills of the students through the use of chat rooms and social websites. Nonetheless, teachers seem to face some obstacles in using the Internet in the classrooms. Such obstacles include limited computer facilities in each classroom, Internet disconnections that can stop the lecture in most cases and limited technical support. Finding appropriate and well- designed Internet teaching materials can be also time consuming or difficult to the teachers who have limited time to cover the textbooks. Finally, more than 50% of the teachers showed enthusiasm for attending internet training courses, while 45% rejected that. This indicates that teachers need constant training to address the technical problems they might face whilst using the Internet; and this may possibly make them more confident and comfortable in using the Internet.

Conclusion and Implications

Technology has affected every aspect of modern life. In certain parts of the world the use of technology in teaching has bypass the classroom, but in other parts, it has not been fully integrated. As such, this paper has shed light on the teachers' perception on the use of Internet at tertiary level in Jordan. It has also shown how the use of computers and the Internet to meet the students' language needs is still a pending issue in the current context. Therefore, it

can be said that it is necessary for language teachers to examine how to integrate computer assisted language learning into the classroom.

Although the findings of the study cannot be generalized due to the small sample size, and particular teaching context, they still provide the field of teaching English with practical implications. First, in order to decrease the inconsistency between the existing curricula, and online teaching material, teachers should be trained carefully to pick and choose their teaching material. Second, it is suggested that teachers should be provided with on-going Internet training to provide them with sound pedagogy and practical skills. With proper training, teachers can use Internet teaching material, and make the necessary adaptations that will complement the teaching activities in and out of the classroom. Third, tutors should raise their students' awareness about the value of using the Internet resources for educational purposes. Fourth, all teaching classes should be equipped with computers and Internet access, so Intranet-based teaching can be actually delivered. Therefore, academic institutes and decision makers should make sure that such technology is present in every classroom.

Other suggestions for future research might include investigating the students' perception on the use of Internet resources for educational purposes. In addition, another research might like to investigate the impact of mobile technology on teaching in classroom.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to elicit the perceptions of teachers at Al-Zaytoonah and Petra Universities, Departments of English Language and Translation, about using Internet resources as educational tools. The responses will be used for research purposes only. Therefore, I would be grateful if you could respond to the following questionnaire which consists of three sections

SECTION 1

Please tick one of the choices:

1. Gender?

Male Female

2. Age?

25– 35

35 – 45

45 – 55

55 – 65

over 65

3. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

Less than 5

5 – 10

10 - 15

15 - 20

201 -25

more than 25

4. Do you have access to the Internet at home?

Yes

No

5. How many hours do you use the internet per day?

SECTION 2

Please tick next to the option that best represents your answer:

| Item | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Not sure |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|----------|
| 1. The Internet provides non-native teachers of English with rich authentic teaching resources. | | | | | |
| 2. Internet tools can be useful for teaching purposes. | | | | | |
| 3. The Internet enhances our teaching practices, and facilitates difficult theories. | | | | | |
| 4. Internet resources can be a rich base for preparing lectures. | | | | | |
| 5. Internet resources can be used in classroom and replace textbooks for some courses. | | | | | |
| 6. I use Google Translate and other translation websites in translation classes. | | | | | |
| 7. I attend training courses for using computer and Internet and web resources. | | | | | |
| 8. I am capable of using efficiently Internet-based materials in English classes. | | | | | |
| 9. I use the Internet to write research papers instead of using hardcopy references. | | | | | |
| 10. I am aware of the intellectual property rights and issues of plagiarism. | | | | | |
| 11. I use social media websites such as Facebook as a discussion board with my students | | | | | |
| 12. Students are encouraged to improve their oral skills by accessing authentic materials designed for teaching English as a foreign language. | | | | | |
| 13. Students are encouraged to bridge their information gap by using Internet resources. | | | | | |
| 14. I acquaint my students with important educational websites, and how to use them. | | | | | |
| 15. Students are taught how to cite Websites to avoid plagiarism. | | | | | |
| 16. Google has facilitated our educational tasks. | | | | | |

SECTION 3

Please answer the following questions:

1. Briefly, what are the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet in classrooms?

2. Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to add?

Thank you for your cooperation and for completing this questionnaire

Dr Nahed Ghazzoul