

Investigating Iraqi EFL Teachers' Attitude Towards the Use of the Internet in Language Teaching : A Case Study at Baghdad and Wassit Universities

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating Iraqi EFL teachers' attitude towards the use of the Internet in language teaching .The sample involved includes (40) Iraqi EFL teachers : (25) teachers teaching at the Dept. of English , College of Education , University of Baghdad for the academic year (2011-2012) and (15) teachers at the Dept. of English , College of Education for human sciences , Wassit University . For the purpose of data collection , a questionnaire was developed and distributed to the study sample . Surprisingly , it has been found that most of the participants (80 %) had rarely used the Internet for instructional purposes in their classes . Furthermore , results have shown that teachers don't encourage their students to use the Internet , and (73.4 %) of them agree that they need special training on how to integrate the Internet in language teaching .

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى استقصاء اتجاهات أساتذة اللغة الانكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية نحو استعمال الأنترنت في تدريس اللغة . يعتمد البحث الحالي في جمعه البيانات اللازمة على استمارة استبانة تم تصميمها لتفي بمتطلبات الدراسة وتم توزيعها على أساتذة أقسام اللغة الانكليزية في جامعتي بغداد وواسط لعام الدراسي 2011/ 2012 . توصل البحث إلى عدة استنتاجات أهمها ، و بما يثير الدهشة ، أن معظم من شملتهم استمارة الاستبانة لا يستعملون الأنترنت لأغراض تعليمية ، فضلا عن عدم قيام الأساتذة بتشجيع طلبتهم على استعمال الأنترنت لتطوير المهارات اللغوية واغناء مايمتلكونه من قابليات . كما أظهرت النتائج الحاجة الواضحة لزوج التدريسيين في دورات تدريبية الهدف منها إتقان مهارات الحاسوب والإنترنت .

I. Theoretical Part

1.1 Introduction

The Internet is a worldwide network of computers , which is often explained as the world largest computer network as well as the fastest growing system (Ciampa, 2000 : 18) .On the other hand, Mueller (1996:77) has defined the Internet as “ an information distribution system giving anyone connected to it instant access to an immense amount of information “.According to Krol and Ferguson (1995:36) the Internet is described as a vast collection of libraries of information ,all available online for retrieval and use. It is one of the greatest recent advancements in the world of information technology and has become a useful instrument that has fostered the process of making the world a global village. The Internet to Singh (2002:16) is a mechanism for information dissemination and a medium for collaboration between individuals and their computers regardless to the geographical limitation of space . It is noteworthy, that the word *Internet* is derived from the two words “ international “ and “ network “. It , therefore , can be defined as an international computer network of information available to the public through modern links (Bassey , 2004 : 40) .

1.2 Internet and Language Teaching :

Since its advent , in the second half of the twentieth century, the Internet has brought tremendous changes to the society and the world as a whole .Related literature has indicated that the Internet has an important role and great potential in foreign language teaching . Yang and Chen (2007: 114) outline the advantages of Internet use in EFL teaching / learning in a general sense :

The Internet enables English learners to access useful language resources and communicate directly with native English speakers Learners can practice applying information and overcome the decontextualized predicament of English learning. Students can learn listening , speaking , reading , and writing English integratively via real – world situations .

In addition to the afore mentioned statement , Kasanga (1996:23) argues that the Internet increases language use , and helps learners to use language in real communication situations . In sum , communication via the Internet allows learners practice and use their language skills (Kern , 1995: 12) . In other words , it changes teacher and student's roles (Peterson , 1997 :35) , making learning more student – centered , and increasing participation . Another important benefit of integrating the Internet into language teaching is that the Internet gives the opportunity to learn about target culture , improves creative thinking , and makes learners have a great variety of speech discourse through the integration of language skills ; thus, having the opportunity to practice them in meaningful contexts . Such technology gives teachers the chance to have appropriate content matter , sources of lesson-plans , assessment tools for teachers , in addition to new classroom dynamics . As we all know ,many English language classes are taught outside of English countries .This ,in turn, adds other obstacles to learning the new language . It is well-known that the environment plays a pivotal role in the development of the target language . Hence , with the aid of modern technology, more specifically , the Internet , real authentic English instruction can be brought to the classroom . Teachers are able to use the Internet to get information on topics that are introduced in the materials that the students have in hand . Students can watch up to date video clips in order to add more to a lesson . Activities like listening comprehension , can be assigned individually to the extent that students are able to listen to other English speakers from abroad in order to practice and , consequently , reinforce what they already know . Greenberg (2005 :) states that effective use of the Internet will improve teachers' creativity as well as reduce the time required to lesson-planning and at the same time , involve students in an immersive whole language learning environment . He argues that both teachers and students will be able to use technology as an instrument of creativity and empowerment (ibid) . If we are lucky enough to have technology installed and used properly in our classes , teachers and students will have the opportunity to publish and share their work instantly and interactively . This , in itself , constitutes a major advantage of integrating technology into our classes . Such integration , needs to be well mixed into the curriculum ; thus , creating learning activities that bring about sufficient linguistic and cognitive environment for the student (Warschauer , 1997 :) . As far as the skills that can be developed through Internet

activities are concerned , Al-Refaai (2006:25) outlines two types of skills :
Language skills which include :

1. Skimming and Scanning
2. Reading narratives , charts , and graphs ,
3. Writing : completing forms , emailing requesting information , etc.

And *Employability skills* which include the following skills :

1. Analyzing and evaluation information
2. Decision making
3. Problem solving .

1.3 Statement of the Problem :

The researchers , being members of the teaching staff at the Department of English , Wassit University , have observed that the majority of our colleagues use the Internet in various locations , i.e., at work place , at home , or elsewhere. Yet , they don't make use of it in their classes . In other words , they don't update their skills , activities with their students . It is well-known that most universities are introducing a variety of internet services in their facilities in order to cope with new technology .Indeed , the internet services have become available to all teaching staff and to students as well in most of the world . Yet , in most of our Iraqi universities , this is not the case ! . Still , Iraqi Departments of English are not yet equipped with such facilities . The researchers of this paper noticed that there are differences in terms of ability , training , and technical skills among Iraqi EFL teachers in their use of Internet during their teaching . This what gave rise to the present study . So , this paper tries to investigate how teachers use the Internet in teaching English as a foreign language ; it attempts to get to know teachers' opinions concerning the use of the Internet in teaching English , and to pinpoint the factors that govern Internet use in EFL instruction .

1.4 Aims of the Study :

1. The present study aims at investigating Iraqi EFL teachers' attitude towards incorporating the Internet in classroom instruction .
2. It also aims at encouraging Iraqi EFL teachers to enrich their knowledge and skills of cutting-edge technology like the Internet so as to develop their future teaching .

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study :

1. It is hypothesized that Iraqi EFL teachers do not make use of the Internet in their classroom instruction .
2. The absence of technological infrastructure in Iraqi Departments of English constitutes a major barrier in not incorporating the Internet in EFL instruction.

1.6 Limitations of the Study :

The present study is restricted to Iraqi EFL teachers at two Iraqi Universities: Baghdad and Wassit , Colleges of Education , Departments of English .

1.7 Significance of the Study :

The significance of the present study lies in the following :

- a. It gives an insight into how teachers use the Internet in teaching English .
- b. It explicates teachers' perspectives towards the use of the Internet in their classes .
- c. It sheds light upon difficulties faced by teachers when using the Internet in

teaching English .

- d. It provides a much – needed window into an area of the world that is important in the realm of EFL instruction .
- e. The data about the attitude of EFL teachers will give a clear idea to bridge the gap between the EFL teachers who incorporate the Internet in their teaching and those who do not .
- f. The finding(s) of the study might assist in making EFL teaching and learning more effective .

1.8 Related Literature

This section grounded the present study within the related literature to address the need for conducting it . The main purpose of the present study was to understand the use of Internet by Iraqi EFL teachers in their classroom instruction . Besides , the study explicated the relationship between teachers' use of the Internet and some selected factors thought to have effect on such use . To the best of the researchers' knowledge , no similar study has been conducted in the Iraqi Departments of English to pinpoint the extent of Internet use among Iraqi EFL teachers and difficulties faced by them in integrating this use in their classroom instructional purposes . However , there exist some studies conducted abroad touching upon the use of Internet by students , such as that of (Al-Refaai , 2006) , conducted in Saudi Arabia , in which he came to the conclusion that most of the students use the Internet in Arabic ; thus , the benefit they get from the Internet is very limited and (Rosen , 1996) whose results have shown that students are very interested in using the Internet for a wide range of purposes , such as learning purposes (e.g. to improve reading and writing skills) and to access a wide variety of information (e.g. information about the weather , health , travel , other cultures, etc. .

II. Practical Part

2.1 Study Instrument :

Data for this study was collected using a questionnaire , which was carefully prepared to cope with the aims of the present study . The study has used the method of gathering personal data and questions that are related to the level and percentage of Internet use in EFL instruction . The questionnaire consists of the following :

- a. Personal data .
- b. The percentage of using Internet among EFL teachers .
- c. The attitude of using Internet in EFL instruction .

To ensure validity and reliability of the questionnaire , it was presented to a number of specialized people in the field of applied linguistics , computer sciences , and measurement and evaluation in some Iraqi universities . Some items were modified to cope with the aim(s) of the present study .

2.2 Results

a. Percentage of teachers who use the Internet :

Participation in this study was a voluntary act ; therefore , out of (40) teachers , only (35) teachers returned the questionnaire . Table (1) shows that (30) teachers (85.7%) use the Internet , whereas only (5) teachers (14.3 %)

don't use the Internet.

Table (1) Percentage of Teachers who use the Internet

Total Number of Teachers	35	Percentage
Teachers who use the Internet	30	85.7 %
Teachers who don't use the Internet	5	14.3 %

b. Period of time teachers have been using the Internet :

The periods of time in which Iraqi EFL teachers use the Internet have been classified into three periods as follows : (1-2years) ; (2-4years) ; and (more than 4 years) . Results have shown that (14) teachers (46.6%) have been using the Internet for (1-2years) ; (10) teachers (33.3%) have been using the Internet for (2-4 years) ; whereas (6) teachers (20%) have been using the Internet for more than four years . Table (2) indicates these results .

Table (2) Percentage of years teachers have been using the Internet

Total number of teachers who use the Internet	30	Percentage
(1-2 years)	14	46.7 %
(2-4 years)	10	33.3 %
(more than 4 years)	6	20 %

c. Number of hours teachers use the Internet :

As far as this question is concerned , Iraqi EFL teachers were classified into three groups relevant to the time they usually spend using the Internet . Table (2) shows that (53.3 %) teachers use the Internet daily ; (40 %) of them use the Internet (2-4) hours a week ; while only (6.7 %) teachers use it (2-4) hours a month .

Table (3) Number of hours teachers use the Internet

Total number of teachers who use the Internet	30	Percentage
(Daily)	16	53.3 %
(2-4) hours a week	12	40 %
(2-4) hours a month	2	6.7 %

d. Locations where Iraqi EFL teachers use the Internet :

Results have indicated that due to the lack of Internet centres in most Iraqi Departments of English , Iraqi EFL teachers tend to use the Internet at home or in Internet Cafes ; this calls for the need to build a technological infrastructure (Internet Access) in the departments of English since it furnishes good bases for teachers and students alike to develop teaching skills and language use .

Table (4) Locations where teachers use the Internet

Total number of responses	78*	Percentage
Home	49	62.9 %
Place of Work	4	5.1 %
Internet Cafe	25	32 %

- The number (78) stands for the total responses supplied by (30) teachers ; every teacher can give more than one response concerning the location in which s/he uses the Internet .

e. Using the Internet for teaching purposes :

Surprisingly , very few Iraqi EFL teachers use the Internet for teaching purposes. Table (5) clearly shows this result where only (20 %) of teachers make use of the Internet for instructional purposes ; whereas (80) of the participants in the questionnaire do not use the Internet for instructional purposes . The high percentage concerning this question validates the first hypothesis set forth for the present study .

Table (5) Iraqi EFL teachers' use of the Internet for teaching purposes

Do you use the Internet for teaching purposes ?	30	Percentage
Yes	6	20 %
No	24	80 %

f. Websites teachers frequently visit :

Results have clearly shown that a noticeable percentage (%) of Iraqi EFL teachers consult Google as the main website for navigating to get information about various matters, such as weather forecast , you tube , reading online newspapers and magazines , etc . Participants answering this question can choose more than on choice .

Table (6) Websites EFL teachers frequently visit

Website	Number of responses	Percentage
Google	29	26.7 %
AltaVista	18	16.5 %
English Club	9	8.2 %
BBC	14	12.8 %
Nonstop English	6	5.5 %
CNN	11	10.2 %
Other	22	20.1 %
Total	109	100

g. Language areas teachers frequently make use of :

As far as this question is concerned , it has been found that most of the participants in the questionnaire have postulated a tendency to use the Internet for vocabulary (32.2 %) ; whereas the lowest percentage goes for reading (3.3 %) . It is noteworthy in this regard that participants can give more than one response ; a participant has the right to choose all language areas listed in the questionnaire . Table (7) illustrates this usage :

Table (7) Language areas teachers frequently consult

Language area	Number of responses	Percentage
Listening	5	8.4 %
Speaking	2	3.3 %
Reading	6	10.1 %
Writing	7	12 %
Grammar	12	17 %
Vocabulary	19	32.2 %
Other	12	17 %
Total	59	100

Part III this part of the questionnaire tackles Iraqi EFL teachers' attitude towards the use of Internet in language instruction . It consists of (10) statements where participants were asked to tick any of the following :

SD = strongly disagree

A = agree

D = disagree

SA = strongly agree

h. The Impact of the Internet on EFL instruction :

Table (8) The Impact of the Internet on EFL teaching

Statement	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
The Internet use has an impact on my	14	46.8	7	23.3	5	16.6	4	13.3

EFL teaching .								
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It has been very clear from table (8) that the highest percentage (46.8%) of participants strongly disagree concerning the impact of the Internet on their teaching ; while (13.3) of them strongly agree with this statement .

Table (9) *The increase of Performance and providing wider range of Activities through the use of Internet*

Statement(s)	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
1.Use of the Internet increases my Performance .	16	53.3	6	20	5	16.6	3	10.1
2. Using the Internet provides me with wider range of activities and skills .	17	56.6	6	20	4	13.3	4	10.1

Table (9) clearly shows that the highest percentage (53.3%) of participants strongly disagree with the statement that stresses the role of the Internet in increasing teachers' performance ; while only (3%) strongly agree with that opinion .

i. The role of the Internet in enhancing EFL instruction :

Table (10) indicates that (60 %) of participants strongly think that the Internet plays no role in enhancing EFL instruction ; whereas only (6.7 %) strongly agree with that statement .

Table (10) *The role of the Internet in enhancing EFL instruction*

Statement	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
The Internet enhances EFL instruction	18	60	6	20	4	13.3	2	6.7

j. The necessity to train EFL teachers to use the Internet in classes

Results obtained from the questionnaire obviously recommends enrolling EFL teachers in courses regarding the use of the Internet in EFL instruction . This, of course, presupposes mastering the skills in the use of computer . Most of the participants in this study strongly agree to this statement (86.7%) .This high percentage calls for paying considerable attention towards establishing Internet units in the Departments of English in Iraqi universities to facilitate the utmost benefit for both teachers and students in EFL instruction and learning alike . This is shown in table (11) :

Table (11) Teachers should be trained to use the Internet in their classes

Statement	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
EFL teachers should be trained to use the Internet in their classes .					4	13.3	26	86.7

k. Teachers' knowledge of of integrating Internet resources into classroom curricula .

It is clear from table (12) below that (56.8%) of the teachers taking part in the questionnaire have strongly no knowledge as to how they integrate Internet sources into classroom curricula ; whereas only (3%) answered positively to this statement .

Table (12) Iraqi EFL teachers' knowledge of integrating Internet sources into classroom curricula

Statement	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
I know how to integrate Internet resources into existing classroom curricula	17	56.8	5	16.6	5	16.6	3	10

1. The easiness of finding EFL materials on the web :

Table (13) The easiness of finding EFL materials on the web

Statement	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
It is easy to find EFL materials on the web	6	20	16	53.3	6	20	2	6.7

Table (13) illustrates that (53.3%) of the participants in the questionnaire strongly disagree with the above mentioned statement concerning the easiness of finding EFL materials on the web easily ; whereas only (6.7%) of the sample of the study have strongly shown their agreement as far as this statement is concerned .

m. The reason behind not using the Internet in classroom teaching

Most participants in the questionnaire of the present study (83.3%) strongly agree with the statement claiming that the reason behind not using the Internet in classroom instruction is attributed to the unavailability of Internet access at the Departments of English . This high percentage validates the second hypothesis set forth in the theoretical part of the present paper .

Table (14) The reason behind not using the Internet in classroom instruction

Statement	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
I don't use the Internet because there is no access to it at my Department .			2	6.7	3	10	25	83.3

n. The future use of the Internet in EFL instruction :

Table (15) below clearly shows that (80%) of the sample of the study strongly agree as to the future use of the Internet .This high percentage calls for giving too much attention and interest towards establishing Internet units in the Departments of English in Iraqi universities to facilitate the utmost benefit for both teachers and students in EFL instruction and learning alike .

Table (15) EFL teachers' future use of the Internet in classes

Statement	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
I will use the Internet in my teaching in the future .					6	20	24	80

Conclusion(s) and recommendation(s) :

The present study rounded up with the following conclusions : (a) in order to increase Internet use among Iraqi EFL teachers , more training in computers and Internet needs to be a priority , keeping in mind that Internet should be utilized as a tool for EFL instruction ; (b) taking into serious consideration the positive perceptions of the pedagogical use of the Internet expressed by the sample of the study , it was recommended that the computer and Internet infrastructure in the Departments of English should be increased and improved (if available) . From the results obtained , it is recommended that EFL teachers should encourage their students to use the Internet for learning purposes as it plays a positive role in enhancing and developing EFL learning through the interactive media it utilizes .

Suggestion(s) for further research :

The researchers of the present study suggest conducting similar studies to explore the following :

1. The impact of technology on EFL writing .
2. The role of Internet in teaching reading .

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Dear Colleague ,

The researchers aim at conducting a study concerning Iraqi EFL teachers' attitude towards incorporating the Internet in language teaching : A case study at Universities of Baghdad and Wassit , Colleges of Education , Depts. Of English. The attached questionnaire contains three sections , each includes various questions related to your opinion concerning the afore mentioned topic .

Please respond to all sections of the questionnaire

Thank you very much for your cooperation .

Google Altavista English Club BBC
Nonstop English CNN Other

9. Which of the following language areas you frequently make use of?

Listening Speaking Reading Writing Grammar
Vocabulary Other

III . Please indicate the level of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements , by ticking the choice that best represents your answer, where :

SD = Strongly Disagree

A = Agree

D = Disagree

SA = Strongly Agree

Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1. The Internet use has an impact on my EFL teaching .				
2. Use of the Internet increases my performance .				
3. The Internet enhances EFL instruction .				
4. EFL teachers should be trained to use the Internet in their classes .				
5. Using the Internet provides me with wider range of activities and skills .				
6. I know how to integrate Internet resources into existing classroom curricula .				
7. It is easy to find EFL materials on the web .				
8. I don't use the Internet because there is no access to it at my Department .				

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9. I will use the Internet in my teaching in the future .				
10. I encourage my students to use the Internet in EFL learning .				