ATTITUDES OF SAUDI ARABIAN LEARNERS TO ONLINE COMMUNICATION IN EFL

by

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I declare that ATTITUDES OF SAUDI ARABIAN LEARNERS TO ONLINE COMMUNICATION IN EFL is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Mr Mohammed Siddique Kadwa

20 June 2012
Abstract

The rapid pace with which internet technology has entered our daily lives provides an opportunity for English language teachers to incorporate some such platforms in their teaching. This study investigates the attitudes of Saudi Arabian learners towards online communication in EFL. It takes place in a university preparatory program at Taibah University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data pertaining to the attitudes’ of Saudi Arabian learners to online communication in EFL. In order to achieve its aims, this study uses both quantitative and qualitative data to inform EFL practitioners of learners’ attitudes towards English, online communication in general and online communication for EFL purposes.

Key terms

Online communication; E-learning (electronic learning); Attitudes; LMS (learner management system); EFL (English as a foreign language); Preparatory year; Saudi Arabia; CLT (Communicative language teaching); Taibah University
Dedicated to

*The children of Gaza*
Acknowledgements

All praise and thanks are due to the One and Only, Allah; Lord of the worlds and Master of the day of judgement. Salutations upon the beloved leader and final prophet to mankind, Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

I would like to take this opportunity to firstly thank my parents, for giving me the best upbringing. Their example, support and prayers have truly benefitted me.

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Last but not least, my family and beloved children. I pray that our love for each other only increases. I pray that my children’s lives be blessed with children as sweet as mine.

Mohammed Siddique Kadwa
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CHAPTER ONE
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Online communication is an essential part of the university graduate’s life. Whether it is in the form of e-mails, social networks, blogs or websites; a university student would need to interact with one or more modes of this communication for both professional and personal communication. This is one of the reasons why online communication platforms between teachers and learners have been introduced at universities in Saudi Arabia.

This study explores the attitudes of Saudi Arabian university learners to online communication in English as a foreign language (EFL).

1.1 Background
1.1.1 Taibah University

Located in the heart of Islam’s holy lands, Madinah Munawwarah is the second holiest city on earth after Makkah. Islamic tradition and customs are fundamental and education revolves around Islamic tradition and customs too. There are separate campuses for male and female learners, with male teachers for male learners and female teachers for female learners.

The University has eleven campuses and offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses in fields including Medicine, Engineering, Education, Psychology, Accountancy and Business Management. The official language of instruction is English, but entrants to the university have a very low command of the English language. This is mainly due to the
The fact that English is only taught in the secondary schools and not in primary schools. Another factor is that the language of instruction in both primary and secondary schools is Arabic. English is taught via Arabic in these schools.

The dramatic switch from school studies in Arabic to university studies in English was identified as a barrier to learners’ motivation and thus a high drop-out rate existed in first-year undergraduate university students. The Ministry of Higher Education has therefore applied a mandatory introductory course to all prospective university students called the Preparatory Year.

1.1.2 The Preparatory Year

As a pre-requisite for university entrants, all students at Saudi Arabian universities are required to complete a year of studies designed to bridge the gap between secondary school studies and university studies. The academic year begins in the month of Shawwaal (10th month of the Hijri calendar). There are two semesters per year with each semester comprising of sixteen weeks with a week-long mid-semester break in each semester.

Students are given a schedule and taught in a school-like fashion where the emphasis is on the teacher to teach, instead of the university fashion where the onus is on the learner to learn. Class sizes range from twenty to thirty learners per class. Students have to attend about thirty fifty-minute lessons every week. At the end of the preparatory year, colleges within the university accept students into their respective colleges based on the results of the preparatory year. For example; students who wish to enter the College of Medicine would need to obtain a minimum English score of ninety percent in the
preparatory year, whereas students who wish to enter the College of Humanities require a minimum English score of sixty percent.

English Language studies form the bulk of the preparatory year with elective subjects filling the remainder of the time. Every week, students attend twenty fifty-minute English lessons. Every class has two English Language teachers. Teacher A teaches two consecutive fifty-minute lessons, which is followed by Teacher B who teaches another two fifty-minute lessons.

Learners who intend joining a particular college would also need to take elective subjects which are pre-requisites of the respective college concerned. For example, the College of Medicine requires Medical Terminology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics.

The English Language Studies span two semesters and has a generic curriculum for all students, irrespective of the route of studies a student intends on pursuing.

1.1.3 The Subjects

Eighty six male students responded to a questionnaire (see appendix II) entitled Attitudes to Online Communication. A further three students were interviewed to strengthen the study as a whole.

In total, one hundred and seven subjects were used in this study. Eighty-nine subjects were used to gather the data in the main study, and eighteen subjects were used in the pilot stage of the study. All of the subjects were male Saudi Arabian students registered at Taibah University. The subjects were
between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one and were streamlined to go into the College of Medicine and the College of Humanities. The College of Humanities has the lowest entrance criteria (60%) whereas the College of Medicine has the highest entrance criteria (90%). This was done so that a range of subjects of mixed abilities and goals are used in the study.

1.1.4 The Curriculum

The Preparatory Year English Language (PYEL) programme is a four-level English language programme. The Middle-East edition of the Touchstone series from Cambridge University is used as the primary resource in the PYEL programme.

The PYEL programme has an online learner management system (LMS) called JUSUR. Learners and teachers log into the site with their usernames and passwords given to them at the beginning of the academic year. The LMS has discussion boards, chat-rooms, assignment and test features and an e-mail function. Teachers and learners are encouraged to communicate with each other using this platform. Statistics and patterns on an individual’s usage of the LMS are used to determine the bonus points a learner earns at the end of the semester.

In the first semester, learners study level one and level two. The breakdown of scores can be seen in the table on the next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Type of Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bonus</td>
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<td>Bonus</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1.1: Assessment plan

Learners who fail the first semester are able to repeat the first two levels in the second semester and attend a summer course to complete the remaining two levels.

1.2 Research context

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country governed by Islamic law. Islamic traditions and norms permeate in every sphere of life. In the educational context, Islamic traditions and norms are evident in the total separation of male and female teachers and learners. All classes, the academic calendar, weekends and public holidays revolve around Islamic prayers and rituals. Students are to be properly attired in Islamic garb at university. No teaching should go against the norms and customs espoused by Islam, which is why Cambridge University Press has a Middle-East version of their Touchstone series for English language learning.
English is taught as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, albeit the second official language. Arabic is the language of the region and English is very rarely used outside the classroom. This phenomenon could change as there is public and official debate on beginning English language teaching at an earlier age or even from elementary and kindergarten levels. Saudi Arabian school teachers are now offered bursaries to study in English-speaking countries like Australia, Britain, Canada, and the United States of America.

All students at the university are Saudi Arabian nationals and as such, qualify for a monthly stipend of around one thousand Saudi Riyals per month. The actual study at the university is offered free of charge to all Saudi Arabian students. The university has a library, computer laboratories, and offers free wireless internet connection on all its campuses. Any teacher or student is able to access the internet through a personal laptop, tablet computer, mobile phone or the desktop computers in offices and the computer laboratories.

All classes are equipped with a digital projector, with certain classes boasting smart-boards too. Teachers are strongly encouraged to effectively incorporate educational technology tools in their respective classrooms.

1.3 The research problem

The rapid pace with which internet technology has entered our daily lives provides an opportunity for English language teachers to incorporate some such platforms in their teaching. The question is: What are the attitudes of the learners of English towards internet technology? Providing answers to this question can help teachers to plan better for their lessons and
deepen our understanding of the environments in which our learners learn. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate learners’ attitudes to online communication.

1.3.1 Aims

This study seeks to elicit the attitudes of Saudi Arabian learners to online communication.

1.3.2 Objectives

This study utilizes questionnaires and interviews to gather data relating to Saudi Arabian learners’ attitudes to online communication for personal and educational purposes.

1.4 Hypotheses and rationale

This study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1.4.1 Hypothesis 1

University level Saudi Arabian learners use online communication for non-educational purposes.

1.4.2 Hypothesis 2

University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication in general.

1.4.3 Hypothesis 3

University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.
1.5 Testing procedures

Based on initial reports of learners’ usage of the LMS in teacher meetings, workshops and through personal interaction with students’ online, I had an impression that most students held positive attitudes to online communication. This observation was corroborated in the ‘previous studies on attitudes in EFL’ section of the literature review in the forthcoming chapter.

A questionnaire entitled ‘Attitudes towards Online Communication in EFL teaching’ (see appendix II) was designed and administered to test the initial assumptions. Furthermore, interviews were held to provide insight into the reasons why subjects held certain views and attitudes.

1.6 Research design

The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Nunan, 1992; Hofstee, 2006). From a quantitative point of view, questionnaires were used to gather data from the subjects. For the qualitative part, interviews were held with three randomly selected subjects who did not take part in the quantitative part of the study. Both the qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted at the end of the second academic semester.

Although a larger part of the study involves quantitative methods, using a combination of the two methods to this study was chosen for mainly two reasons. Quantitative aspects of the study are complemented with qualitative aspects.
Secondly, the use of many sources of data leads to a more informed conclusion.

1.7 Sources of data

1.7.1 Questionnaires and interviews

This study used questionnaires to provide numerical data for statistical analysis which is the quantitative part of the study. There are two sections in the questionnaire. The first section elicits data pertaining to internet accessibility and the amount of time spent by the respondents on the internet. The second section of the questionnaire gathers data related to the respondents’ attitudes to online communication.

This study also uses interviews to provide insight on the items addressed in the study. A questionnaire with open-ended questions is used for this purpose.

1.8 Procedures for analysing data

The quantitative data collated through the questionnaires was categorized according to the three hypotheses. The data was subjected to analysis using the SPSS (version 16) statistical software program. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to measure the degree of internal consistency in the questionnaire, and the Pearson-Product Moment correlations were used to compare the relationships between the different attitudes addressed in the study. The qualitative data collated through interviews was analysed by way of narratives.

1.9 Rationale

The reason for my interest in the field of online communication in EFL stems from the reactions of fellow EFL teaching
colleagues on the introduction of the LMS at Taibah University. Many teachers were not trained in using internet platforms in their many years of teaching and were reluctant to incorporate the LMS into their teaching. The university had then decided to implement teacher training workshops aimed specifically at the training needs in the LMS and basic computer literacy.

This study investigates the learners’ attitudes to online communication which could inform teachers on what learners feel about using online communication for English language learning.

Research conducted in Thailand (Hsu and Sheu, 2008) and Turkey (Aydin, 2007) suggested that young adults who used a particular learning website held strong positive attitudes to online learning. Although Aydin (2007) and Hsu and Sheu’s (2008) studies focued on using websites for learning while this study attends to online communication in EFL, the platform; the internet, remains the same.

Having a teacher as an online mentor (Nchindila, 2007), also seems to reassure the learner that the teacher is more than just a delivery-person but one who really has the learners’ concerns and goals in mind, if the teacher plays the part.

It seems reasonable to assume that learners would take a liking to or enjoy learning and practicing English online via communication with the language teacher. The interaction between the language learner and language teacher extends beyond the traditional classroom and into a newer platform
which is still developing, very much like the language learner who is also still developing.

1.10 Preview of the rest of the chapters

Chapter two discusses literature related to the three hypotheses addressed in this study. The study begins with a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of this study before examining the different types of Englishes. It then explores online communication and electronic learning before moving on to investigate the concept ‘attitudes’. The last part of chapter two looks into previous studies conducted on attitudes in EFL.

Chapter three describes the method used in the study. It also justifies the use of the measuring instruments, discusses data analysis, and explains the limitations and ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter four discusses the findings of the questionnaires and interviews.

Chapter five concludes the study by discussing the key findings of the study, the limitations and implications, along with suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter first discusses the theoretical framework upon which this study is built in section 2.2. This is followed by section 2.3., which deals with English as a language in Saudi Arabia, and an exploration of online communication and electronic learning in section 2.4. Then the complexities of the construct 'attitudes' are unravelled in section 2.5 and then the last section of the literature review (2.6) looks at previous studies on attitudes in English as a foreign language (EFL). A summary is provided in section 2.7 before the chapter is concluded in section 2.8.

2.2 Theoretical background

Prior to the 1970s, much of EFL research was directed towards the learning and teaching of linguistic structures (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:121). The weaknesses of such an approach to EFL began to surface in the 1970s and 1980s, when it became evident that the mere mastering of linguistic structures did not adequately enable the language learner to use the language (Hymes, 1971; Paulston, 1974; Wilkins, 1976). Hymes (1967, 1972), in particular, was not impressed with Chomsky's (1965) description of language competence. A “rule-governed” explanation of language competency was too restrictive and thus Hymes (1967, 1972) introduced the notion of “communicative” competence (Brown, 2000).
2.2.1 What is Communicative Language Teaching?

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is also called the Communicative Approach, emphasises the use of the target language, as opposed to the Grammar-Translation and Audio-lingual approaches (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). The goal thus shifted towards gearing the language learner to use the target language within a particular context.

Context, in CLT, was the focus of much of Cummins (1979, 1980, 1981) research. A distinction was created between Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communicative skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1979). Initially, the distinction between BICS and CALP was used to explain the different time periods required by immigrant children to obtain conversational fluency and academic proficiency. The acronym BICS is used to describe second language proficiency at a functional, social and conversational level. This differs from CALP which is used to explain second language ability for academic purposes (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). This distinction was later described as context-reduced and context-embedded communication (Brown, 2000). This had far-reaching consequences in that teachers, course designers and text-book writers began to change their approaches and incorporate this new contextualised approach. At Taibah University, where this research was conducted, the language is not taught as a second language as in Cummins’ studies (1979, 1980, 1981), but rather as a foreign language. Furthermore, it is studied by young adults within a single year and includes both general English and academic English which streamlines students into their respective elected colleges and programmes.
Whereas much of CLT has focussed on face-to-face contexts in EFL learning settings, Hadi’s (2007) study suggests the incorporation of computer mediated communication (CMC). The study also suggests that CMC can reduce cultural barriers, help reluctant students, provide authentic learning materials, provide native exposure of the target language to learners, and also help teacher in their teaching. Hadi envisages CMC to be effectively administered with proper planning and an ideal EFL classroom. Such a classroom requires technologically trained teachers and technological resources, such as computers and internet connection.

2.2.2 Versions of CLT

There appears to be different views of what Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is (Whitley, 1993; Larsen-Freeman, 1987, 2000). At a superficial level, CLT is about learners talking, group-work and role-playing. But on a deeper level, Bachman (1990) classifies language competence as the sum of “Organisational Competence” and “Pragmatic Competence”. Organisational Competence includes Grammatical and Textual competencies, while Pragmatic Competence consists of Illocutionary and Sociolinguistic competencies. These abilities are further sub-categorised below:

Grammatical Competence
- Vocabulary
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Phonology/Graphology

Textual Competence
- Cohesion
• Rhetorical Organisation

Illocutionary Competence

• Ideational Functions
• Manipulative Functions
• Heuristic Functions
• Imaginative Functions

Sociolinguistic Competence

• Sensitivity to Dialect or Variety
• Sensitivity to Register
• Sensitivity to Naturalness
• Cultural References and Figures of Speech (Bachman, 1990:87)

The communicative approach is interpreted differently by different researchers, and is also one that is still developing. The common view in the different approaches to Communicative Language Teaching, however, is that it is multi-faceted. The focus of language learning and teaching, within such an approach, includes a variety of skills and competencies. It is within this view that the concerns and inadequacies of previous approaches are appropriately dealt with.

2.2.3 Authenticity in CLT

A key feature of the communicative approach is its acknowledgement of authenticity (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Learning strives to be as authentic as possible. The learning, then, should thus try to occur in a real-life situation or a real-life platform for a real-life function.
In this day and age, technology has become part of the fabric of society and of our daily lives. Computers are used for business, finding information, communicating, banking, socialising and even entertainment. The learning, then, should match the purpose for which the learning takes place. Online learning provides learners with an authentic platform, the skills of which can be carried over to the learner, even after the English course.

2.3 English as a language in Saudi Arabia

The official language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic, which ranks fifth on the list of languages used by L1 speakers, with over one hundred and eighty-one million speakers of the language (Crystal, 1997). However, the medium of instruction at universities is English (Syed, 2003; Al-Hazmi, 2003). English is learned and taught as a foreign language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia, as opposed to English as a second language (ESL). The primary difference between EFL and ESL is that in an ESL approach, English is, to a certain extent, used in the learner’s environment; either by government, or in education; whereas in an EFL approach, English is largely absent from the learner’s environment (Matura and Jenkins, 2009:97).

2.3.1 The spread of English

Arguably, the biggest beneficiary of the internet is the English language (O’Neill and Buckingham, 2008). Sweeney (2005) estimated that in 2005, about 80 percent of websites were in the English language. This, to a large extent, contributes to the fact that there are more English second language (L2) speakers than first language (L1) speakers of English. Murata and Jenkins (2009: 175) explain that:
The English language now comprises the largest number of English bilinguals: Just the two countries, China and India, have over 533 million users of English, almost equal to the total population of the Inner Circle of English (e.g. the USA, UK, Australia and Canada).

Another major contributor to the spread of English was British colonisation. Countries like South Africa, India, Zambia and Kenya were colonised by Britain or the English speakers. Ironically, learners also tend to hold negative views of the English language. For example, Edge (2003) relates her own experience teaching in Jordan while the Iraq war was on where learners kept asking about why English speakers persist on war. However, it has to be pointed out that learners’ tendencies to associate English with war in this case is merely circumstantial as some participants in wars such as Germans, Russians and the French are not English speakers themselves.

2.3.2 Types of Englishes

The notion of circles in world Englishes is illustrated by Kachru (1985), who groups countries into three circles. The “inner circle” comprises countries where the principal language is English, for example: USA or UK. The “outer circle” includes countries where English is an official language along with one or more other languages, for example: South Africa or India. Lastly, the “expanding circle” consists of countries like Saudi Arabia, which recognises the impact of the spread and use of English, but do not afford it the status and importance that countries in the outer circle do.
Kachru’s (1985) description of world Englishes, however, is incomplete. It is rather simplistic and does not account for varieties of English. It also does not include an explanation for English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or English as an International Language (EIL). In her criticism, Jenkins (2007: 11) asserts that:

Kachru does not recognize the legitimacy of ELF varieties.

It is evident in Kachru’s (1985) circles that ownership of the English language seems to be heavily inclined towards the inner circle.

In a study entitled “Incorporating World Englishes in Teaching English as an International Language”, Matsuda (2003) suggests a paradigm shift with regard to the circles of Englishes. Since the second language (L2) speakers outnumber first language (L1) speakers of English, Matsuda (2003) insists that textbooks and teaching reflect this fact. This view is expanded by Alkire and Alkire (2007) who suggest using a bicultural approach to the teaching of English. Alkire and Alkire (2007) recommend that teachers should select books written by westerners about the Muslim world, or books written by Muslims about the western world. Online methods, can in this regard, be of major assistance, as numerous books, articles and blogs pertaining to the Muslim world are available online.

2.3.3 English in Saudi Arabia

The entire gulf region, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, Yemen and Qatar, face similar challenges. Syed (2003: 340) insists that:
The challenges EFL teachers face on a daily basis (motivation, literacy, underachievement, rote learning, and learning strategies) have their roots in the contextual framework of language education. The next few decades will be crucial in the ongoing development of ELT practice in the Gulf. In fact, a number of initiatives have already begun to address the above-mentioned constraints. Policy makers, administrators, educators, and professional organizations (e.g., TESOL Arabia) need to take on the challenge by getting all stakeholders involved in the process of structural change and real growth.

In a study conducted at King Khaled University in Abha, Saudi Arabia, Al-Hazmi (2003) investigated why the standard of English was so low in Saudi Arabia. Al-Hazmi points out that English as a university subject was taught to prospective teachers, in teacher-training courses at universities, using an Arabic-English translation method. This, he felt, did not benefit the soon-to-be English teacher, as he or she was not being adequately and appropriately trained to teach the target language. These challenges could be minimised with the introduction and incorporation of online communication methods in an EFL setting in that materials are available in English for teaching or teaching itself can be conducted in English online.

2.4 Online communication

Communication, in the past twenty-five years has evolved. Writing letters with a pen and some paper has been replaced with e-mails and short messaging services (SMS). People walk
around carrying cell phones, which allow people to be mobile and still reachable as opposed to being bound to a fixed-line telephone in an office or at home. Internet-relay-chat (IRC) has weaved itself into the fabric of society, changing the way people identify themselves and socialise with others. This has provided opportunities for online learning. Proficiency in the utilisation of information and communication technology has established itself as a necessity. This view is supported by O’Neill and Buckingham (2008: 378), who conclude that:

The use of information and communication technology—particularly in business education—cannot be optional. It is integral to current and future work environments, it may improve learning, and students find it motivating.

Although information and communication technology has cemented itself in most spheres of our daily lives, it has to be borne in mind that there are different modes of online communication.

2.4.1 Types of online communication

In a categorisation of computer mediated technology, Nchindila (2007) describes online communication in terms of its reciprocity. “Synchronous” communication refers to real-time communication whereas “asynchronous” communication includes blogs, web-sites and discussion forums.

Synchronous communication includes Internet Relay Communication, chat-rooms and web-cams which could create a “virtual classroom” (Raven, 2008). This type of communication during class hours requires learners to be using
computers at the same time as the teacher and would most suit a distance education project.

An anecdotal study carried out by Arena (2008), using an asynchronous mode of online communication, encourages the use of blogging, an online web-log similar to an online diary. The findings imply that the learners become twenty-first century literate by being introduced to an authentic audience. A similar study (Gonglewski et al., 2001) reviewed the types of activities surrounding e-mails. Gonglewski et al. (2001) identified pre-class e-mails, in-class e-mails, post-class e-mails, group e-mails, peer to peer e-mails and one to one e-mails and provides suggestions on how to use them efficiently.

2.4.2 The challenges of online communication in EFL

Many educational institutes have hurriedly jumped onto the band-wagon of being twenty-first century institutions by investing in computers, computer laboratories and computer software only to become disillusioned by the challenges posed by such a project (Fitzgerald, 2006). The equipment requires skilled administrators, and constant updating. It could be considered boring to learners, especially if computers and technology are not in keeping with the times, and even hamper the learning process.

Teachers themselves find it very difficult to meet institutional demands with regard to educational technology. As a result:

much of what is passed off as online learning or e-learning is little more than lectures that are delivered online in the form of text, audio and/or video (Alexander and Boud, 2001: 6).
This is not entirely the fault of the language teacher. It has to acknowledged that computer hardware companies are continually introducing “smaller, cheaper and faster” products and computer software companies are competing with each other so that their products “do more” (McBeath, 2008). This leaves the language teacher constantly chasing the IT sector in dire need of a few lessons in computers. Sometimes, the converse occurs when an IT administrator now has to teach a language class. In an ideal situation, the twenty-first century, friendliness means that the interface should be transparent to teachers and learners.

2.4.3 Electronic learning

The arguments for the introduction and use of electronic learning (e-learning) in EFL are vociferous. Various studies (Gonglewski et al., 2001; Nchindila, 2007; Arena, 2008; O’Neill and Buckingham, 2008) suggest that e-learning:

- promotes learner autonomy
- develops critical thinking skills
- encourages planning and organisation
- persuades the learner to synthesize
- prepares the learner for the real world
- allows the learner to use the target language in an authentic setting

Although many researchers claim that e-learning actually enhances learning, there is a fear held by some that perhaps e-learning is replacing teaching (Nchindila, 2007). Questions remain – Could the species called teachers become extinct? Would all education, one day, be offered online? The upside of
this is the emergence of Open Distance Learning (ODL) – to which the researcher owes his Bachelors degree, Honours degree and the Master’s studies degree. ODL seeks to break the barriers of learning with respect to time and accessibility.

2.4.4 Towards a theory of online communication in EFL

There certainly are very strong arguments for the use of online communication in learning, and some arguments against it. However, the most rational and adaptable theory to date surrounding e-learning in the EFL arena has to be that of the “Integrative approach” (Cundell, 2008; Moore, 2008) or “Blending” (Patronis, 2008).

The integrative approach does not disregard traditional classroom activities. It acknowledges the benefits of an e-learning approach as a supplement to the face-to-face classroom interaction. It also compensates for the shortcomings of an e-learning-only approach so that learning and teaching continues even in the face of technical difficulties (Cundell, 2008; Moore, 2008; Patronis, 2008).

2.5 Attitudes towards the second language

Language deals with a lot of issues which are internal, much like the concept of attitudes. It is intangible, complex and acquired. This section discusses the concept of attitudes, issues of second language identity, and language anxiety. We also discuss the findings of previous studies which investigate attitudes in similar settings to the one envisioned in this study.
2.5.1 Attitudes

Stereotyping and generalisations usually lead to the development of either positive or negative attitudes towards a particular “object, person, institution or event” (Azjen, 1988: 4). The evaluative nature of stereotyping inherent in the production of attitudes distinguishes it from other affective variables, like memory. Another key feature of the concept ‘attitude’ is its transformational nature. Attitudes are learned, and as such, can be modified or changed (Day and Bamford, 1998: 22). Brown (2000:180) describes the development of attitudes in humans as follows:

Attitudes, like all aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, develop early in childhood and are the result of parents’ and peers’ attitudes, of contact with people who are “different” in any number of ways, and of interacting affective factors in the human experience. These attitudes form a part of one’s perception of self, of others, and of the culture in which one is living.

Research shows that there does appear to be a link between attitudes and motivation. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) explain the concept of attitudes in learning as being composite parts of the construct “motivation”. In their explanation of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) identify five categories used to measure attitude and motivation:

- Motivation
- Integrativeness
• Attitudes toward the learning situation
• Language anxiety
• Other attributes (instrumental orientation, parental encouragement, and orientation index)

Language anxiety in second language acquisition, as identified by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) is the focus of much of Young’s (1991) study. Young (1991) collates second language anxiety research and presents pedagogical strategies and tips including playing games, stimulating interest by talking of something important, pair work and group work. Language attitudes might also have an effect on the acquisition of a foreign or second language, which is why the measurement of language attitudes is valuable in language planning and teaching (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

Mathewson’s (1994) Model of Attitude Influence upon Reading and Learning to Read can very well be used to explain the acquisition of second language attitudes. According to this model, second language attitudes comprise:

• First language attitudes
• Previous experiences with learning other second languages
• Attitudes toward the second language, culture, and people
• The second language environment

A major part of the model presented by Mathewson (1994), in some way or the other, deals with the conflicts arising in the learner’s identity, during second language acquisition.
2.5.2 Identity and the second language

Language and identity are so intricately woven that Brown (2000: 182) asserts that the second language learner, to a large extent, is also a second culture learner. This notion fits in with the teachings of the Communicative Approach, especially in Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale’s (1983) description of “sociolinguistic competence” as functional aspect of communication. Sociolinguistic competence is considered to be the understanding of the sociocultural rules of a language. According to this view, it is only when the language user fully comprehends the context of the interaction that he or she is considered to be sociolinguistically competent in that language.

The demands of the second language (L2) also have an impact on the second language learners’ language ego (Guiora et al. 1972b; Bekker, 2002). This might explain why adults find learning a second language so challenging. They have to incorporate a second language, which brings with it a second culture, into their self-identity. Children (until the age of puberty), on the other hand, are at a stage where their language ego is still developing, which explains why they are less afraid and more willing to take a risk in using or learning a second language. The defensive systems of children are not yet developed, whereas the defensive systems of adults are developed and resist challenges to the first language ego.

It seems reasonable, within the above-mentioned framework, to conclude that second language (L2) learners with an incomplete language ego, or still developing language ego would have different attitudes towards the learning of a second language. This has deep implications for the present study in that it involves adult learners. In this regard, the results and findings

[26]
cannot be applied to children in Saudi Arabia as my intended study focuses on adults’ attitudes toward online communication in EFL. It would be interesting to see what previous studies on attitudes have revealed.

2.6 Previous studies on Attitudes to EFL

There has been a fair amount of research conducted around the topic of attitudes in EFL. In this, the final section of the literature review, I explore the methods, settings and findings of previous studies surrounding attitudes in language learning and teaching.

Aydin (2007) conducted a survey using questionnaires to elicit the attitudes of Turkish EFL learners towards the internet. The study included ninety male and twenty-five female subjects who were studying English at the Balikesir University in Turkey. All subjects were young adults between the ages seventeen and twenty-four. Background information was obtained using a questionnaire, and twenty-one items were used with a five-point Likert-type scale to measure the attitudes of the subjects. The background questionnaire and survey were not conducted at the same time; in fact there was a week span between the two administrations.

Findings from Aydin’s (2007) study suggest that EFL learners hold positive attitudes towards the internet, and acknowledge its benefits in education. Subjects in the study did, however, recognize the harms of the internet. This included internet addiction, lack of real socialisation, and unsafe shopping. The study also found that there was a difference in the responses based on gender. Male respondents held more positive attitudes than females in terms of using the internet as a means of
cultural exchange. This has an implication for my projected study as it focuses only on male subjects. During staff meetings and observations at the male campus at Taibah University, teachers felt that students do not like using the internet for their studies. Aydin’s (2007) study dispels this myth, and this study reinforces this notion.

In research conducted in the discipline of language attitudes, but in the field of a language other than English as second or foreign language, Bekker (2002) investigates the attitudes of first language African students towards the issue of using their mother-tongue as the language of learning and teaching. The study was conducted at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data elicitation techniques. A five-point Likert-type scale was used to find the attitudes of two hundred and fifty-two UNISA students, and interviews were conducted with eight subjects. Additionally, the study was longitudinal, in that it was conducted over a period of two years. The study found that the attitudes of L1 African language students towards the use of African languages as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) were informed by practical considerations. These included the use of African languages as the LoLT, attitudes towards English as the language of socioeconomic advancement and unity, as well as the integrative orientation participants had to the particular L1.

Bekker (2002) encourages the use of multidimensional measuring instruments to get a truer sense of understanding, especially when it comes to concepts such as attitudes.
Although the target language and contexts between the present study and Bekker’s (2002) study differ significantly, the five-point Likert-type attitude scale and multidimensional approach greatly influences my research design.

In the pilot of the present study carried out at Taibah University, it was found that Arabic-speaking male EFL university students in Saudi Arabia were internet active, and held mostly positive views towards internet communication. The study was conducted using a combination of methods. Qualitative data was sourced through interviews, while quantitative data was elicited through the means of a questionnaire which included a Likert-type scale. However the present study is limited to a small sample size of 15 participants. A similar study to Bekker (2002) using a larger sample size would enhance our understanding of the attitudes and views of EFL University students in Saudi Arabia.

In a study entitled *Motivation and Attitudes towards Learning English: A study of Petroleum Engineering Undergraduates at Hadhramout University of Sciences and Technology*, Al-Tamimi and Suhib (2009) used an eight-item questionnaire with a three-point Likert-type scale including the following: “Agree”, “Disagree”, and “Don’t know”. The subjects, who numbered eighty-one in total, were all male students between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-six. The study was strengthened by interviews which used ten subjects from the group that responded to the questionnaire. It identifies four key areas with regard to the term “English”, namely:
1) The use of English in the learner’s social context
2) The use of English in the learner’s educational context
3) The English language
4) The culture of the English-speaking world

The identification of different sub-categories of the term “English” contributed greatly towards the designing of questionnaire items, particularly with regard to the removal of ambiguities. The findings indicated that subjects were more instrumentally motivated and were not greatly concerned with the use of English outside the classroom, with the exception being for work purposes. Nevertheless, these findings cannot be generalised, as it has to be borne in mind that the subjects were all male students fulfilling requirements in order to gain employment in the petroleum engineering sector in the Middle-East.

In a Taiwanese setting, Hau and Sheu (2008) investigated the attitudes of two hundred and forty-seven (n= 188 males and n=57 females) low-English proficiency students to online learning after a three-month course. The study employed the use of an eight-item questionnaire which included five items that used a five-point Likert-type scale and an open-ended question at the end.

Hau and Sheu (2008) reported that more than seventy percent of the respondents agreed that the website created for the project assisted them. Furthermore, using correlation analysis, it was found that the more students frequented the website, the more favourable their attitude became towards online learning.

A Saudi Arabian study (Al Shammar, 2008) conducted at the Institute of Public Administration probed EFL learners’
attitudes towards Computer Assisted Learning (CALL), with particular focus on gender and geographical location. A total of five hundred and seventy-eight subjects (n= 452 males and n= 126 females) from Dammam, Riyadh and Jeddah participated in a survey by providing demographical information and responding to a thirty-item Likert scale questionnaire. The research instrument, called the Scale of Attitude toward CALL (SACALL) was translated into Arabic to ensure that learners understood the items completely.

A t-test of means was conducted on the data, and the findings suggested that female EFL learners had significantly more positive attitudes towards CALL than their male counterparts in Riyadh. Another finding made by Al Shammari (2008) was that the geographical location of learners within Saudi Arabia had no effect on their attitudes to CALL. However, the finding related to learners’ attitudes towards CALL contradicted those of Aydin (2007) which suggested that male EFL students had more positive attitudes than females.

In another Saudi Arabian context, Doll (2008) investigated whether ethnicity, and learners’ level of English had any impact on their attitudes towards the use of technology for EFL purposes. A fifteen-item questionnaire; consisting of (a) multiple-choice questions for demographic information and learner level, (b) a Likert scale for attitudes and (c) an open-ended question for student comments; was administered to three hundred and ten students (n= 187 males and n= 126 females) enrolled in the preparatory year at Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University. The survey was conducted using the Majlis method (Walters, Walters, Jendli and Graber, 2006)
which required the administrator to negotiate the meanings of each question on the questionnaire.

The findings of Doll’s (2008) study suggested that ethnicity did not affect learners’ perceptions of educational technology. Learners’ level of English, however, did have an impact on their perceptions of educational technology. The study suggested that educational technology be gradually integrated into the learning so that it had a scaffolding effect.

In Jordanian public school settings, Awad (2008) looked into high-school students’ attitudes towards the introduction of e-learning. The subjects were three hundred and six Arabic-speaking EFL students (n= 184 males and n=122 females) from twelve public schools in Jordan. Using random interviews and a questionnaire involving responses to yes-no questions and a four-point Likert scale, the following results were obtained:

- Learners held positive attitudes towards the use of computers in general
- Learners held positive attitudes towards computers in EFL classrooms
- Age affected attitudes to computers
- Gender affected attitudes to computers

These findings mostly corresponded with those of other studies, with particular reference to the “age” factor (see 2.5.2 in this chapter) wherein age and puberty were key factors in an attempt to describe the development of the language-ego (Guiora et al. 1972b; Bekker, 2002). Within such a framework, younger learners had incomplete language egos and had not yet built up their defences with regard to attitudes. This may
explain why younger learners hold slightly different attitudes towards the use of computers in general.

In a study entitled “Female Emirati students’ perceptions of using a chat-room to learn English” (Mynard and Troudi, 2008) used an “interpretive approach” (ibid: 251-252) to evaluate learners’ online writing abilities. Data was collected primarily with interviews, but also included questionnaires, observation, transcript analysis and examinations of actual chat-room writing activities. The subjects were ten foundation year female students who had Arabic as their first language (L1).

The study reported that learners found the chat-room activities enjoyable. The chat room was also considered to be helpful in the learning of English, with particular improvement noted in grammar and spelling. The most interactive activities were found to be linked in some way or the other with cultural exchange. These activities involved students making comparisons with aspects of their culture with the other cultures.

2.7 Summary

The reviewed studies provide the background theories and describe key concepts surrounding the study. English as a foreign language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia is changing. With the advent of the internet, the “foreign” tag associated with the English language is being transformed. The evolution of online communication, with its various types, points towards an integrative theory of online communication and e-learning. Research indicates that the construct ‘attitudes’ is a complex one. Therefore, descriptions of attitudes towards online communication in EFL should include its sub-categories.
The last section in this chapter deals with previous studies conducted in similar settings, corroborates the hypotheses mentioned in the introduction chapter (see 1.6 in Chapter one), and suggests that learners held positive attitudes towards educational technology. The literature review also indicates that a questionnaire which includes a Likert scale is very popular in the investigating of attitudes. Another highly encouraged and acceptable trend in the exploration of attitudes is the use of more than one method. The research design, methods and measuring instruments employed by the various researchers provide an unyielding foundation upon which this study unfolded.

2.8 Conclusion

In the next chapter, the methodology of this study is explained. This includes a discussion of research concepts, research design, the pilot study upon which this study expanded, and an explanation of the data elicitation techniques employed in this study.
CHAPTER THREE
3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter begins with the method part (section 3.2), followed by the research design (section 3.3) wherein the process in which the study was conducted are discussed. Section 3.4 discusses the pilot study, section 3.5 discusses the limitations of the study, and section 3.6 closes the methodology chapter.

3.2 Method
Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study. Quantitative studies employ procedures that gather numerical data, such as surveys, experiments and correlation studies. Qualitative data, on the other hand, employ non-numerical data, such as observations, interviews and case studies (Richards and Schmidt 2002; Brown, 2000 and Hofstee 2006).

The dichotomous relationship between qualitative and quantitative research can be viewed as “naive” by some researchers (Nunan, 2008: 3-5). However, Nunan (2008) argues,

I still believe that the distinction is real, not an ostensible one, and that the two ‘pure’ paradigms are underpinned by quite different conceptions of the nature and status of knowledge.
The quantitative part of this study gathered numerical data for statistical purposes, whereas the qualitative part of this study focused on the non-numerical data. The idea of using more than one method is supported by Lightbown (1985) and Nunan (2008), who recognise that the use of multiple methods can strengthen the study and compensate for some of the shortcomings of a single-method approach. This is what Nunan (1991:4) considers “classroom oriented research”, and more recently, “action research” (Nunan, 2008: 17). This is when the researcher is also the teacher. Furthermore, the research is collaborative and aims at changing things in the learning and teaching process.

3.2.1 Validity and reliability of the research

Fundamental to any research in the teaching of languages, are the concepts ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’. This section explains each of these concepts and identifies the different types of validity and reliability used in EFL research. This is followed by a revisiting of the research questions outlined in Chapter one, along with their research sub-questions.

3.2.1.1 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a particular study measures what it set out to investigate (Nunan, 2008). Mackey and Gass (2005) identify the different types of validity as content validity, face validity, construct validity, criterion-related validity, predictive validity, internal validity and external validity. This study addresses content validity and face validity in that it uses a questionnaire to measure the attitudes of subjects. The questionnaire poses direct statements and requires the subjects to choose from a set of responses.
3.2.1.2 Reliability

Reliability concerns the regularity or consistency of the results a particular study achieves (Nunan, 2008). Mackey and Gass (2005) identify two types of reliability; rater reliability and instrument reliability. Reliability is viewed differently depending on the research method used. It is a requirement in quantitative research which aims at objective findings. In qualitative studies which are said to be subjective, it may not be required. The present study uses the Cronbach’s Alpha method of reliability measurement, as a test for internal consistency, which falls under the instrument reliability category for the quantitative component of the study.

3.2.2 Research questions

In Chapter one, the questions that drove the study were mentioned. In this subsection, questions are posed with their research sub-questions along with a plan on how data relating to the particular research sub-questions was elicited. The research questions emerge from the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1**

University level Saudi Arabian learners use online communication for non-educational purposes.

**Hypothesis 2**

University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication in general.
Hypothesis 3

University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.

These hypotheses were further translated into the research questions. Each research question is followed by research sub-questions.

Question One:

What are Saudi Arabian English language learners’ attitudes to online communication?

Q.1.1. Are Saudi Arabian English language learners’ internet active?

Q.1.2. How much time do university level Saudi Arabian language learners spend on the internet?

Q.1.3. What are the attitudes of Saudi Arabian English language learners to online communication in general?

Q.1.4. Why do Saudi Arabian English language learners hold their particular views to online communication in general?

The research sub-questions Q.1.1, Q.1.2, and Q.1 were investigated by means of a questionnaire. The question which required reasons and an explanation (Q.1.4) was investigated by means of an interview.
Question Two:

What are Saudi Arabian English language learners’ attitudes to online communication for educational purposes?

Q.2.1. What are Saudi Arabian English language learners’ attitudes to the English language?

Q.2.2. Why do Saudi Arabian English language learners hold certain views of the English language?

Q.2.3. What are Saudi Arabian English language learners’ attitudes to online communication for learning purposes?

Q.2.3. What are some of the reasons why Saudi Arabian English language learners hold their particular views to online communication for learning purposes?

The research sub-questions which attempted to identify the attitudes of learners (Q.2.1, and Q.2.3) were addressed through the use of the questionnaire. The remaining two questions (Q.2.2, and Q.2.4) were examined through the use of the interview.
3.3 Research design

This study builds on previous studies into the attitudes of learners in EFL, and the research design reflects common practices in this regard. The literature review section (Chapter two) concludes with the identification of the most widely used approaches in investigating attitudes in EFL, namely: (a) questionnaires, (b) interviews, and (c) both interviews and questionnaires. This study adopts an approach wherein both questionnaires and interviews were used to measure the attitudes of EFL learners towards the internet, online communication, and online communication for learning EFL.

3.3.1 Research instruments

As stated earlier, this study employed questionnaires to elicit data for quantitative purposes and interview questions for qualitative purposes.

3.3.1.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire designed for this study comprises three sections. The first part asks for information related to the subjects’ computer and internet usage. The second part focuses on attitudes towards English, online communication and online communication for EFL learning. The last section of the questionnaire consists of an open-ended question.

The questionnaire entitled “Attitudes towards online communication in EFL teaching” begins with an introductory paragraph. This provides a brief description of the purpose of the questionnaire and assures that respondents’ information would be confidential and used for research purposes only.
The section entitled “Internet use” consists of four questions. The questions deal with the respondents’ access to a computer, internet and internet on a mobile phone. The first three questions employ a three-point scale including “always”, “sometimes”, and “never”. The fourth question asks respondents to choose a category which best describes their weekly internet usage on an eight-point drop-down scale which ranks time.

A common feature in previous studies into attitudes (Bekker, 2002; Aydin, 2007; Mynard and Troudi, 2008; Awad, 2008; Doll, 2008; Al Shammary, 2008; Hau and Sheu, 2008; and Al-Tamimi and Suhib, 2009) is the use of a Likert scale. A Likert scale is a widely employed scaling tool in questionnaires. The Likert scale is used to capture the respondents’ level of agreement or disagreement to a statement. This is a commonly used psychometric tool in the study of attitudes. A 12-item questionnaire was designed to measure subjects’ attitudes on a five-point Likert scale in the second section of the survey. On the positive side of the Likert scale was “strongly agree” and “agree”. Neutrality formed the middle part of the scale and was labelled “undecided”. The negative side of the scale included “disagree” and “strongly disagree”.

The statements included under the section “Attitudes to online communication” deal with the three sub-categories of the study into attitudes and would be used for correlational purposes. It includes statements that deal with (1) attitudes towards English, (2) attitudes towards online communication, and (3) attitudes towards online communication in EFL.
The last part of the questionnaire consists of an open-ended question asking respondents to write down any comments that they have. In this way, the questionnaire employs both qualitative and quantitative data.

The questionnaire was administered on five class sections at the main Madinah campus. Five teachers were asked if they would like their students to participate in a survey. They happily obliged.

The Cronbach’s Alpha model was used to measure the degree of internal consistency. Cronbach’s Alpha is a statistical measurement of reliability. In the questionnaire, items which measured attitudes to English show a fairly strong positive level (.513) of internal consistency. Items used to measure attitudes to online communication in general also indicated a fairly strong positive degree (.595) of consistency. Items which measure attitudes to online communication for EFL purposes point towards a strong positive level (.773) of internal consistency.

3.3.1.2 The interview

The interview was intended to complement the quantitative part of the study. A set of eight questions was designed to gather insight and the reasons behind why subjects responded in a particular way. An open-ended question requesting the subject to share any comments or suggestions concluded the interview.

The purpose of the interview was to elicit an explanation as to why subjects held particular views. Furthermore, the study as a whole was strengthened with the use of multiple sources and forms of data. In total, eighty-six learners participated in the
quantitative part of this study by responding to the questionnaire.

3.3.1.3 Interview procedures

The interviewees were randomly selected by asking students to pick a number from a box. The person with a pre-specified number was invited to share a snack with the interviewer. Three subjects from three different classes were chosen for this purpose. The subjects were not part of the survey aspect of this study.

The interviews were conducted in a neutral area within a relaxed atmosphere. For this purpose, the university cafeteria was chosen as the venue for the interviews.

The interview questions were given to the interviewees two days prior to the day of the interview. The interviewees were asked to think about the questions that were given in the interview sheet, make notes if they wanted, and were allowed to bring it to the interview.

3.3.2 Data

Data gathered quantitatively through the use of the questionnaire was coded and given numerical values for statistical analysis. For the data in the Likert scale, the following codification technique was used.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Likert scale (positive codification)
The codification technique was reverse-encoded for statement 5, statement 7, statement 10 and statement 11. The reason for their reverse-encoding lay in the fact that these statements were posed in the negative. The table below illustrates the reverse-encoding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Communicating in English is not important.</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Internet should not be used.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am afraid of the internet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Learners should not be allowed to communicate with teachers online.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Likert scale (negative codification)

The data gathered by means of the interview was collated through the taking of short-notes during the interview. A reflection session after each interview allowed the interviewer to ponder over and elaborate on the points collected in short-notes form during the interview.

3.3.3 Analysis

Analysis of the data collected for the first two sections of the questionnaire, entitled “Internet use” and “Attitudes to online communication in EFL” is presented in terms of percentages. This was done by using a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel 2007).
The second section of the questionnaire required a further form of analysis. The codified data firstly needed to be grouped into categories. The three categories; (1) attitudes to English, (2) attitudes to online communication, and (3) attitudes to online classroom communication in EFL; would consist of the sum of the codified data. This was subjected to further analysis through the use of computerized software (SPSS v.16). The Pearson’s Product Moment correlation was employed for establishing relationships between variables.

The data collated via the interview and the open-ended comments section at the end of the questionnaire was subjected to interpretive analysis via reflection.

3.4 The pilot study

In a pilot study into the attitudes of learners towards online communication in EFL, questionnaires and interviews were administered on Preparatory year university students in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire elicited information pertaining to the subjects’ (N= 15) computer and internet usage. The results can be seen in the table on the next page.
The results of the data indicated that learners were internet active and spend more than three hours per week on the internet.

The second part of the questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale to survey the attitudes of learners towards (a) English, (b) online communication and the internet, and (c) using online communication for learning English. The results can be seen in the table on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have access to a computer at home.</td>
<td>11(15)</td>
<td>4(15)</td>
<td>0(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to the internet at home.</td>
<td>13(15)</td>
<td>2(15)</td>
<td>0(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to the internet on a mobile phone.</td>
<td>6(15)</td>
<td>4(15)</td>
<td>5(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much time do you spend on the internet?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 hours per week.</td>
<td>0(15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hours per week.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 hours per week.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9 hours per week.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 hours per week.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-15 hours per week.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18 hours per week.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 18 hours per week.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Pilot study – Internet access
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Now that I’m in University, I use the internet more.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I communicate with my teacher at least once every week via the internet.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I like to communicate with my teacher via the internet.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I keep in touch with my classmates via the internet.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I want to use English after I finish my studies.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6*</td>
<td>Communicating in English on the internet is unnecessary.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I benefit from communicating with my teacher online.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Internet should not be used.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>It is important for people to know how to use the internet.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10*</td>
<td>I am afraid of the internet.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I like English.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12*</td>
<td>Learners should not be allowed to communicate with teachers online.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Pilot study – Descriptive statistics
The data was then grouped into three categories, and calculated using the Pearson’s product moment method of correlation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>AI: Attitude to Internet</th>
<th>AE: Attitude to English</th>
<th>AOCC: Attitude to Online classroom communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Pilot study – collated attitudes

There was a strong correlation (.665) between attitudes to online classroom communication (AOCC) and attitudes to English (AE). Average levels of correlation (.424) were obtained when the variable attitudes to internet (AI) was correlated with attitudes to online classroom communication (AOCC) and Average levels of correlation (.371) were obtained when the variable attitudes to internet (AI) was correlated with attitudes to English (AE).

To provide explanations for the results obtained in the quantitative part of the study, interviews were also conducted. The interviews were held with three subjects and elicited some
of the reasons behind learners’ attitudes towards (a) English, (b) online communication and the internet, and (c) using online communication for learning English.

Results from the questionnaire and interviews suggested that a positive relationship existed between subjects’ attitudes to English and attitudes to using online communication in EFL.

The items in the attitudes section, once collated, were further subjected to a test of internal consistency using Cronbach’s Alpha model. Statements related to the subjects’ attitudes to the internet were of a fairly strong positive level (.595). Statements related to the subjects’ attitudes to online communication for EFL purposes were found to have a strong positive level of internal consistency (.773). The statements pertaining to the subjects’ attitudes to English were also found to be of a fairly strong positive level (.513).

A limitation identified in the pilot study was that the number of subjects used in the study was too small. It is suggested that the study be carried out on a larger number of subjects to give strength to the findings.

3.5 Ethical procedures

The gathering of information from human subjects requires certain moral standards to be adhered to (Mackey and Gass, 2005). This study conformed to ethical standards in that prior permission was sought, the subjects’ confidentiality was assured, and the subjects were informed that their participation in the research would not affect their grades.
3.5.1 Permission for the study

The study was conducted at a university in Saudi Arabia. The laws of the university, as well as those of the country are much different from the laws in Western countries. This is why particular mention of this fact while gaining permission for the study is imperative. Prior permission was sought from the then Assistant Director of the English Language Centre. After a brief oral presentation on the studies goals, written permission was obtained. The results of the study would also be made available to the university’s management.

3.5.2 Confidentiality

All participants in the study were given assurances that their responses would be kept confidential. Subjects were not required to fill in any identification clues on the questionnaire. The interviewees were also assured that their identities would be kept confidential.

The Hawthorn effect was also taken into consideration. The Hawthorn effect occurs when the subjects of a study answer more positively in order to appear more favourable in the sight of the administrator (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). To counteract this scenario, the administrator reiterates that the subjects’ participation and responses have no bearing whatsoever on the subjects’ grades.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodology of this study. This study built upon a pilot study and used both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the investigation of attitudes.
This approach made use of a questionnaire and interviews to gather data. Both interpretive and statistical analyses were conducted on the data, and efforts were made with regard to maintaining ethical efficacy.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study using the methods described in the previous chapter. Section 4.2 discusses the quantitative part of this study. The sub-categories are portrayed in the following format: first, the research findings are presented, which is followed by an analysis of the data, and a discussion of the sub-conclusions. Section 4.3 discusses the qualitative part of this study before the chapter is drawn to its conclusion in section 4.4.

4.2 The quantitative study

The quantitative part of the study employed a questionnaire to elicit data pertaining to the focus of the study. A total of eighty-six subjects responded to the questionnaire. The research findings below are categorized according to the presentation on the questionnaire. The presentation begins with item analysis and descriptive statistics for each sub-section, which is followed by the correlation of attitudes and a discussion on the responses to the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire. The Hypotheses and null hypotheses related to the research questions are presented below. The data obtained from the questionnaire was used to address the subsequent research questions.

The data which follows, attempts to answer the four research questions mentioned above. In so doing, the data would need to
disprove the null hypotheses pertaining to each of the three hypotheses that drive this study.

4.2.1 Internet use

The data in this section relates to the first hypothesis and research question 1.

Hypothesis 1
University level Saudi Arabian learners use online communication for non-educational purposes.

Null Hypothesis (Ho) 1
University level Saudi Arabian learners do not use online communication for non-educational purposes.

Question 1
What are male Saudi Arabian learners’ internet usage patterns?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I have access to a computer at home.</td>
<td>69.7% (N:60)</td>
<td>29.1% (N:25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have access to the internet at home.</td>
<td>71% (N:61)</td>
<td>25.5% (N:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have access to the internet on a mobile phone.</td>
<td>32.5% (N:28)</td>
<td>40.8% (N:35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Internet use

The data shows that more than two thirds of the respondents to the questionnaire always have access to a home computer. A further 29.1% have access to a home computer, “sometimes”. Only one respondent does not have access to a home computer.

With regard to having access to the internet at home (statement 2), most respondents (96.5%) either “always” or “sometimes” had access to the internet at home. Only 3.5% of the
respondents showed that they had no internet access at home. As such, the null hypothesis was rejected.

In statement 3, which focuses on internet-access on a mobile phone, the results were different from those of the previous two statements. The majority of the respondents (40.8%) sometimes use the internet on their mobile phones; while close to a third of the respondents always use the internet on their mobile phones. A relatively large proportion of the respondents never use the internet on their mobile phones.

Results portraying the amount of time spent on the internet can be seen in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. How much time do you spend on the internet?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 hours per week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hours per week</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 hours per week</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9 hours per week</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 hours per week</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-15 hours per week</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18 hours per week</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 18 hours per week</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Time spent on the internet

When ranked, the largest proportion of the respondents (22.09%) spends an average of more than eighteen hours per week on the internet. Only 3.49% of the respondents spend no time on the internet. This result is very similar to the result
obtained in statement 2, with only 3.5% of the respondents showing that they had no access to the internet at home.

Looking at the data above, and relating it to the first hypothesis of this study, it appears that not all Saudi Arabian learners use online communication. There is a small proportion of learners who still have no access to the internet. On the other hand, of those who do have access to the internet, the majority of respondents to the questionnaire (more than two thirds) spend an average of at least an hour or more on the internet daily.

4.2.2 Attitudes to online communication

The data in this section relates to the second hypothesis and research question 2.

Hypothesis 2
University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication in general.

Null Hypothesis (Ho) 2
University level Saudi Arabian learners do not hold positive attitudes to online communication in general.

Question 2
What are male Saudi Arabian learners’ attitudes to online communication in general?

The questionnaire used two positive and two negative statements to extract data related to the subjects’ thoughts on online communication. The statements also used a five point Likert scale to quantify the attitudes.
Table 4.5: Attitudes to online communication – (positive statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I keep in touch with my classmates via the internet.</td>
<td>19.77% (N=17)</td>
<td>41.86% (N=36)</td>
<td>26.74% (N=23)</td>
<td>8.14% (N=7)</td>
<td>3.49% (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>It is important for people to know how to use the internet.</td>
<td>58.14% (N=50)</td>
<td>26.74% (N=23)</td>
<td>6.98% (N=6)</td>
<td>6.98% (N=6)</td>
<td>1.16% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Attitudes to online communication – (negative statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Internet should <strong>not</strong> be used.</td>
<td>5.81% (N=5)</td>
<td>3.49% (N=3)</td>
<td>5.81% (N=5)</td>
<td>20.93% (N=18)</td>
<td>63.95% (N=55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I am afraid of the internet.</td>
<td>4.65% (N=4)</td>
<td>8.14% (N=7)</td>
<td>15.12% (N=13)</td>
<td>25.58% (N=22)</td>
<td>46.51% (N=40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data obtained from the statements pertaining to attitudes to online communication reject the null hypothesis and indicate that around sixty percent of the respondents to the questionnaire answered positively with regards to keeping in touch with their classmates through the internet. A small proportion (11%) held negative views in this regard while a significant proportion of subjects (26.74%) was undecided.

With regards to the importance of peoples’ ability to use the internet, most subjects held positive views, with the majority (58.14%) of subjects declaring strong views.

When compared with the data obtained through the statements posed in the negative, the findings are quite similar. More than
eighty percent of subjects disagreed with the statement “internet should not be used”, with a very large majority of those holding strong views in this regard.

Although there was a large majority of subjects (46.51%) who strongly disagreed with the statement “I am afraid of the internet”, there was a small number of subjects who indicated a fear of the internet.

Sub-conclusions of the data can be reached by relating it to hypothesis 2:

**University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication in general.**

The data suggests that while most learners hold positive attitudes to online communication, there is a small but significant amount of learners who feel that the internet should not be used and are afraid of the internet.

**4.2.3 Attitudes to English**

The data in this section is related to the third hypothesis and research question 3.

**Hypothesis 3**

University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.
Null Hypothesis (Ho) 3
University level Saudi Arabian learners do not hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.

Question 3
What are male Saudi Arabian learners’ attitudes to English?

The questionnaire uses four statements to elicit data pertaining to subjects’ feelings towards the English language. Three of the statements are posed in the affirmative and one statement comes in the negative. A five point Likert scale is used to measure the attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I want to use English after I finish my studies.</td>
<td>52.33% (N=45)</td>
<td>25.58% (N=22)</td>
<td>9.3% (N=8)</td>
<td>8.14% (N=7)</td>
<td>4.65% (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I like studying English.</td>
<td>36.05% (N=31)</td>
<td>33.72% (N=29)</td>
<td>16.28% (N=14)</td>
<td>6.98% (N=6)</td>
<td>6.98% (N=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>English learning should start from the first grade in schools.</td>
<td>68.60% (N=59)</td>
<td>13.95% (N=12)</td>
<td>10.47% (N=9)</td>
<td>4.65% (N=4)</td>
<td>2.33% (N=2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Attitudes to English (positive statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Communicating in English is not important.</td>
<td>2.33% (N=2)</td>
<td>3.49% (N=3)</td>
<td>12.79% (N=11)</td>
<td>36.05% (N=31)</td>
<td>45.35% (N=39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Attitudes to English (negative statements)
Data relating to attitudes towards the English language indicate that most subjects hold positive attitudes towards the English language, with sizeable proportions of respondents possessing strong positive feelings towards the English language. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

When the data above is tested for internal consistency, it can be seen that statement 5 below (which is posed in the negative rather than the affirmative: as in statements 4, 10 and 12), reflects the results obtained from statements 4, 10 and 12. Preliminary conclusions from this data can be made while relating the findings to hypothesis 3:

**University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.**

Although the results do not tackle the online communication aspect, they do indicate that a significant amount of learners who responded to the questionnaire hold positive attitudes towards the English language. Most notable is the data obtained from statement 12. More than eighty percent of respondents feel that English language learning should start from the first grade, with 68.60% portraying strong views on this issue.

### 4.2.4 Attitudes to online communication in the EFL classroom

The data in this section relates to the third hypothesis and research question 4.
Hypothesis 3
University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.

Null Hypothesis (Ho) 3
University level Saudi Arabian learners do not hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.

Question 4
What are male Saudi Arabian learners’ attitudes to online communication for EFL purposes?

I use three positive statements and one negative statement to extort information associated with subjects’ opinions to online communication for EFL learning purposes. Once again, a five point Likert scale was used to enumerate students’ attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I would like to communicate with all subject teachers via the internet.</td>
<td>18.60% (N=16)</td>
<td>33.72% (N=29)</td>
<td>26.74% (N=23)</td>
<td>11.63% (N=10)</td>
<td>9.3% (N=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I like to communicate with my English teacher via the internet.</td>
<td>19.77% (N=17)</td>
<td>30.23% (N=26)</td>
<td>30.23% (N=26)</td>
<td>18.6% (N=16)</td>
<td>1.16% (N=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I benefit from communicating with my teacher online.</td>
<td>15.12% (N=13)</td>
<td>36.05% (N=31)</td>
<td>24.42% (N=21)</td>
<td>15.12% (N=13)</td>
<td>9.30% (N=8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Attitudes to online communication in the EFL classroom – (positive statements)
Data pertaining to attitudes towards online communication for EFL learning purposes clearly reject the null hypothesis. Furthermore, they indicate that the majority of respondents hold positive attitudes to statement 1, while more than a quarter (29.74%) of respondents was undecided. Interestingly, around twenty percent of respondents did not like to communicate with all subject teachers via the internet.

A similar result was obtained with statement 2 which focused on online communication for particularly EFL learning purposes. About twenty percent of respondents disagreed with the statement “I like to communicate with my English teacher via the internet.” A further 30.23% were undecided, whereas the remaining half of the respondents held positive views towards the use of online communication for EFL learning purposes.

Concerning the statement “I benefit from communicating with my teacher online”, nearly a quarter of all respondents disagreed, and nearly a quarter of the remaining respondents were undecided. Around 50% of the subjects responded positively with 15.12% of those holding strong views in this regard.
Through a comparison of the data from statements posed in the affirmative and statement 11 which is posed in the negative, similar results were obtained. Over a quarter of respondents remained undecided, whilst about 60% of respondents disagreed with the statement “learners should not be allowed to communicate with teachers online.” The remaining 15% agreed with the statement with 5.81% of those agreeing strongly.

Sub-conclusions are drawn by relating the data obtained from this section of the questionnaire with hypothesis 3:

**University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.**

From the results, it can be asserted that although the majority of learners who responded to the questionnaire held positive feelings towards the implementation and use of online communication practices for EFL learning purposes, a significantly large portion of the respondents hold contradictory views. Therefore, going by the data obtained above, implementation of online learning platforms should not hastily be done. The negative views are very significant and require further investigation as to why some learners do not want to incorporate online learning practices with traditional methods. One possible explanation is that learners are placed with an additional burden with online learning platforms.
4.2.5 Correlations of attitudes

The attitudes were collated and grouped under three headings: (1) Attitudes to English (AE), (2) Attitudes to online communication (AOC), and (3) Attitudes to online classroom communication in EFL (AOCC).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AE</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>2.703</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOC</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>2.340</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOCC</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>3.281</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Descriptive Statistics

The results showed that statements related to attitudes towards English (AE) had a mean of 4.57 and a standard deviation of 2.7. Attitudes to online communication (AOC) had a mean of 4.47 and a standard deviation of 2.34. Attitudes to online classroom communication (AOCC) had the lowest mean score (1.97) with a standard deviation of 3.28. In all three instances, positive scores were obtained for the mean, which indicates positive feelings towards the constructs. Each of the grouped attitudes (AE, AOC and AOCC) was then correlated with the other using the Pearson’s Product Moment correlation technique using the SPSS (v.16) software application.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AE</th>
<th>AOC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.445**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOC</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.445**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<th>AE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.440**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOCC</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.440**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AOCC</th>
<th>AOC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AOCC</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.301**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOC</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.301**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.10: Correlation of attitudes

At the outset, strong levels of correlation were set at (0.50) and above. Average levels of correlation were set to range between (0.31) and (0.49). A correlation of less than or equal to (0.30) was considered to be a weak correlation (deVaus, 2002).
When the data related to attitudes to English (AE) was correlated with the data pertaining to attitudes to online communication (AOC), reasonably average positive scores (0.445) were obtained. When the same construct (AE) was correlated with the construct attitudes to online classroom communication (AOCC), once again, a fairly average positive score (0.440) was attained. When the construct ‘attitudes to online communication’ (AOC) was correlated with attitudes to online classroom communication (AOCC), a disappointingly weak correlation (0.301) was reached.

The correlations indicated that the constructs (AE, AOC and AOCC) had fairly average to weak relationships with each other. Although the descriptive statistics pointed towards positive attitudes in all three constructs, there was no significantly strong relationship between any two of them.

This study found that learners reacted differently with their attitudes to online communication in general, and their attitudes towards online communication for learning purposes beyond the classroom walls.

### 4.2.6 Responses to the open-ended question

The last section in the questionnaire asked the subjects if they had any comments. Twelve responses were obtained in this section. They are listed below:

1. Apply learning English from first grade school.
2. We should study English with English family language teacher, not study with Arabic teacher.
3. Thanks for this survey. Fix the classroom first!
4. Fix the classroom first!
5. It would be better if the internet is available in class.
6. I really want to use the internet in the university, especially wi-fi.
7. If you can put the internet in the study time, it will be great.
8. We need training in using JUSUR and OASIS.
9. We need to make the website better.
10. I think you should teach us by internet.
11. I think that internet in teaching is something great and make the teaching easier.
12. I want to become degree better. (better in my studies/ score higher marks)

The first two responses dealt with the English language and the English teacher. There is the notion amongst learners in Saudi Arabia that if learners begin the English studies from grade 1, there would be no need for a preparatory year. Another pertinent point is the one made about the non-native English teacher. Some students feel as though they are being short-changed by having to study English from a non-native English teacher. A few Arabic-speaking English teachers are to be blamed here too. Under-qualified and untrained teachers often teach English through the medium of Arabic. This practice is not allowed at the university and disciplinary action can occur if it is found to be true, yet the practice still goes on. During lesson observations which are held twice every semester, an observation form has the following statement: “Teacher uses English to deliver the lesson” followed by a rating of 1-4, with 4 being “excellent”, 3 being “good”, 2 being “satisfactory” and 1 reflecting “unacceptable”.

[66]
The third and fourth responses dealt directly with classroom maintenance. The lights, air-conditioner and digital projector could not function in this particular classroom for over a week and students were extremely frustrated. This problem was resolved the next day as the electricity in the classroom was successfully rewired.

Responses five, six and seven dealt with the availability of the internet at the university. Although there are computer classrooms and wireless networks available on the campus, learners cannot access the internet in their spare time on university. This is due to the fact that the computer classrooms are for computer studies and the wireless network signal is very weak and restricts users from many websites.

Response number eight asked for training. JUSUR is the learning management system which allows teachers and learners to interact with each other online. OASIS is the online academic management system that deals with student attendances and student grades. It seems as though this particular student did not attend the previous training session. Generally, training is offered at the beginning of each semester on both OASIS and JUSUR.

Response number nine would like the website to be more user-friendly. Currently, users have to navigate through many pages to eventually get to where they wanted. Perhaps a more user-friendly interface would benefit all users. It is also evident that this particular respondent uses “we”, to show that he would like to be part of this process and probably frequents the platform quite often.
Responses ten and eleven felt that it is good to teach English online. Although respondent number eleven thinks that it makes teaching easier, many teachers do not feel the same way. Maybe, a study into teachers’ perceptions of using online communication for EFL purposes in a similar setting will shed more light on this issue.

Response number twelve could have more than one possible interpretation. It could mean that the subject wants to be better in his degree or studies. However, a more possible interpretation is that the subject wants to get better grades. In Arabic the word درجة is used to refer to scores on a test. However, its literal meaning is ‘degree’, which could explain this statement.

The data acquired through the means of the open-ended question provides an insight into the learners’ context and an opportunity to update the learning environment, both physically and online. It also provides a chance for teachers to rectify their practices with regard to using the L1 in the classroom.

4.3 The interview

Three subjects were selected randomly from different classes. They were asked the following questions:

1. How often do you use the computer at home?
2. How often do you use the internet at home?
3. How often do you use the internet on your mobile phone?
4. How much time do you spend on the internet?
5. Now that you are in university, have your patterns in internet usage changed? How?
6. What are your views towards English?

7. What are your views towards the online communication?

8. What are your views towards communicating with your teacher through the internet?

Concerning question 1, “How often do you use the computer at home?” it was found that all three interviewees have a personal computer in their bedrooms. Interviewee 1 has “a desktop computer” whereas interviewees 2 and 3 have laptops. With regards to the amount of time spent on the computer, while not on the internet, all three of the interviewees responded that they only use the computer for assignments and homework tasks. Interviewee 1 uses the computer offline “only for studies”, interviewee 2 does “projects for university” offline, and respondent 3 uses his computer “for games, movies and homework” when he’s offline.

In relation to question two and four of the interview, it emerged that two of the three interviewees spent more than three hours per day on the weekdays, and up to eight hours per day on weekends and holidays. The third interviewee spends an average of about an hour on the internet, mostly checking e-mails both “on weekdays and weekends”. Although this was a very small sample, it can be argued that most of the participants for more than three hours per day, which has been classified in previous research as constituting addiction to internet.

Question three brought out the same answer from all three subjects. None of them used the internet on their mobile phones due to its high cost. At home, their parents were paying for the internet, whereas their mobile phones were being paid for with their monies. One interviewee, however, acknowledged that he
sometimes connected to the internet in wireless zones or wi-fi hotspots.

Question five yielded different results for each interviewee. The first interviewee spends more time on the internet now that he is in university. The second interviewee finds that there is no difference in his internet usage patterns now that he is in university. The third interviewee, however, claims to spend more time on the internet now that he is in university, citing the huge study load as an excuse for his decrease in internet usage.

With reference to question six, all three of the interviewees responded with positive feelings towards the English language. It was found to be very beneficial, especially for online communication with friends in different countries. Another reason was that they were able to enjoy English movies without reading the subtitles. One interviewee claims that English is his favourite subject at university.

Pertaining to question seven of the interview, all three of the interviewees indicated strong positive feelings towards online communication. Some of the preferred websites were the social networking site Facebook, chat sites like Yahoo chat and Google chat, and video chat sites like Skype and YouTube.

The final question in the interview, pertaining to online communication with the English teacher for EFL learning purposes, two of the students responded favourably, while the third responded with some reservation. He said that it was too “taxing”, although he does find benefit in its usage.
The interview was designed to complement the quantitative aspect of this study, and provide background knowledge and insight into why student held certain views. The results mostly mirror the results obtained via the questionnaire, but also points towards the negative aspects of internet usage. Internet addiction is a relatively new phenomenon and requires parents, learners and teachers to be more aware of this issue.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings regarding internet activity indicate that while most learners involved in this study had access to a computer and the internet, a small proportion of learners did not have access to a computer or the internet. Therefore, it would not be wise to implement and sustain an online learning programme without catering for these learners. A possible solution, and one that emerged from the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire, is that learners be allowed access to a university computer laboratory in their free time on campus, or access to wireless communication on campus.

The attitudes section of the questionnaire suggests that learners hold fairly strong positive feelings towards the English language. A point of note is the large proportion of learners who feel that English learning should begin from grade one in school.

Attitudes to online communication were fairly positive with the most striking result obtained from the statement which deals with internet literacy. More than eighty percent of learners acknowledge that it is important for people to know how to use the internet. When compared to learners’ attitudes towards online communication for EFL learning purposes, attitudes to
online communication did not yield similar results. It was also found to have a fairly weak relationship between the two attitudes.

The interviews corroborated the results of the data obtained in the quantitative part of the study and provided much insight into the learners’ contextual framework by eliciting very useful information surrounding the reasons why learners held certain views. The harmful and negative aspects of the internet were highlighted. Internet addiction was found to be a major point of concern. Another point of concern is that learners do not necessarily want to transfer their strong positive views towards the internet to their attitudes to online communication for EFL learning purposes.

In the next chapter, I conclude the study with a discussion on key findings and limitations of the study. This is followed by a section outlining suggestions for future studies. The study closes with the implications of the study for learners, teachers and policy makers in the EFL arena.
CHAPTER 5
5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presented and discussed the findings of the study. This chapter concludes the study. Firstly, the key findings of the study are revisited in section 5.2, followed by the limitations of the study in section 5.3. Then suggestions for further research are provided in section 5.4 before the chapter closes by offering recommendations for EFL teachers, learners and policy makers in section 5.5.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The aim of this study was to inform EFL teachers at Taibah University about Saudi Arabian learners’ attitudes to online communication in EFL. Three hypotheses and their research questions were formulated.

5.2.1 Summary of quantitative findings

The hypotheses and research questions were investigated using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative part used a questionnaire, whilst the qualitative part used an interview and the open-ended section of the questionnaire. The quantitative part of this study contributed to the EFL field in four major issues; (1) Learners’ internet patterns, (2) Attitudes to English, (3) Attitudes to online communication, and (4) Attitudes to online communication for EFL learning purposes.
5.2.1.1 Learners’ internet patterns

The findings regarding learners’ internet patterns indicate that the majority of Saudi Arabian University level learners have access to a computer and the internet at home. Furthermore, the average learner spends more than one hour per day on the internet.

Findings from the present study also highlight the negative aspects of the internet. Although not the initial intention of the present study, the study found that internet addiction may be a serious cause of concern for learners, teachers and parents. Many previous studies that encouraged the use of online communication in EFL appeared to neglect the harmful effect of internet use. In a review of studies into internet addiction, Chou, Condron and Belland (2005) indicated that between 20 and 39 hours of internet use per week is similar to a full-time job and the internet user is categorized as a high risk user. Because the findings from the present study indicate that participants used a lot of internet hours, it can be concluded that they were addicted to the internet.

5.2.1.2 Attitudes to online communication

The findings in this section relate to Hypothesis 2 stating that University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication in general.

Although it was found that the majority of learners in this study used the internet as a mode of communication in their personal lives, this information has to be treated with caution. There still
exists opposition to and fear of this mode of communication in Saudi Arabia. This should be taken into consideration when designing or introducing an online component to the EFL learning and the findings are consistent with those of Fitzgerald (2006) who argued that learning needs should be prioritized, not the implementation of educational technology in isolation.

5.2.1.3 Attitudes to English

The findings in this section relate to Hypothesis 3 that states that University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.

With respect to the third hypothesis “university level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls”, and the research question “what are male Saudi Arabian learners’ attitudes to English?” this study found that the majority of respondents held positive views towards the English language with a sizeable proportion possessing strong positive views towards English.

Contrary to the findings of a study conducted in a similar context Al-Tamimi and Suhib (2009), the majority of subjects in this study were found to have strong positive views of the English language.

Another finding that relates to learners’ attitudes to English is the information which emerged from the interview aspect of this study. Movies and television programmes in English were identified as things which had a positive relationship with the learners’ attitudes towards English. This information challenges
previous studies (e.g. Matura and Jenkins, 2009; Kachru, 1985) that placed Saudi Arabia in the ‘outer circle’ when describing World Englishes. With the advent of the internet or information age, the obstacles to interaction between people from distant lands are being removed.

5.2.1.4 Attitudes to online communication for EFL learning purposes

The findings regarding attitudes to online communication also related to Hypothesis 3 which stated that University level Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls.

With regards to the third hypothesis, it was found that the majority of respondents held positive views, with a substantial number of respondents holding negative views towards the use of online communication for EFL purposes.

Findings from the present study confirm those of Aydin’s (2007) study into the attitudes of learners towards internet education which indicated that a weak relationship existed between attitudes to online communication and attitudes to online classroom communication for EFL purposes. This could be explained by the fact that learners do not want to take on the additional task of working online at home. However, most learners hold positive attitudes towards an online approach to EFL learning and teaching.

When compared with Awad’s (2008) study into learners’ attitudes towards the introduction of e-learning, the present study confirms that learners hold positive attitudes towards e-
learning. The study, however, expands on the introduction of e-learning from the classroom to beyond the classroom. It was found in the present study that although the subjects in this study held strong favourable views towards online communication in general, their views towards online communication for EFL learning purposes beyond the classroom walls were not as strong. The fact that the learning and communication takes place in non-contact learning time possibly explains the weak correlations between the two attitudes.

5.2.2 Summary of qualitative findings

Findings from the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire suggest that English be introduced from the first grade in school. Most other suggestions are concerned with the repairing, maintaining and upgrading of infrastructure related to the learning environment.

Findings from the interview provided insight and reasons for the learners’ internet patterns and attitudes towards English, online communication and online communication for EFL purposes. The reasons for internet use ranged from playing games, downloading movies, chatting, surfing the web and checking e-mails. The interview results also pointed towards positive attitudes towards English and strong positive attitudes towards the use of online communication in general. Two interviewees held positive attitudes towards online communication in EFL with the third interviewee finding it to be too burdensome.
5.3 Limitations of the study

A possible limitation of the present study is that although Taibah University has more than seven thousand male and female students enrolled in the preparatory year, the study only investigated male students’ attitudes. Because the Medinah male campus was easy to access for me as a male teacher, the study was conducted on the Madinah male campus which caters for students who are streamlined towards the medical and humanities colleges. The engineering college students were not included as they are housed on a different campus called Abyar Ali.

Gender, was found to be a factor that leads to differences in learners’ attitudes in previous studies (Aydin, 2007 and Awad, 2008). It is assumed, based on the studies conducted by Aydin (2007) and Awad (2008), that learners in the female campuses would hold stronger positive attitudes towards online communication for EFL purposes beyond the classroom walls. However, to give a truer picture, it would be important to include female participants to future research samples.

This study was conducted once at the end of the second semester. Perhaps a longitudinal study, spread out over the two semesters would have been a more appropriate way to gather the changes or shifts in students’ attitudes. In this way, students’ attitudes would be collated pre and post course to measure the change that occurs during instruction.

The subjects used in this study are those that had progressed into the second semester of their English studies. It does not
include students who had failed their first semester, or those that are repeating the first semester. An alternative, in future studies could avoid this by conducting the study at the end of the first semester because, at that stage, students are still together in their studies. Another alternative would be to extend the study to include respondents from the ‘repeaters’ group.

This study was conducted at the end of the second semester of the subjects’ preparatory year. All the subjects were from the group of students who progressed from the first semester into the second semester. Perhaps a better reflection of learners’ attitudes towards online communication for EFL purposes would be to include some learners from the group of students who did not proceed into the second semester and are therefore repeating the first semester studies.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

The differences between male and female learners’ attitudes to online communication in EFL, is of some concern. This is borne out of the findings of previous research into attitudes (Guiora et al. 1972b; Hau and Sheu, 2008). A possible replica study on female learners’ attitudes towards online communication in EFL would go a long way in expanding the research already conducted in the present study. The findings from such a study, when compared to the findings of this study would either confirm or negate Awad (2008) and Aydin’s (2007) conclusions that gender plays a role in explaining the differences in learners’ attitudes.

Another idea for possible further studies is on teachers’ attitudes towards online communication for EFL teaching purposes. The findings in the present study suggested that a
substantially large proportion of learners have fairly positive views towards online communication for EFL learning purposes. It would be interesting to know whether EFL teachers feel the same way. Further studies should thus focus on the teacher and not the student. The results of such studies would be able to explain if at all, teachers’ attitudes affect learners’ attitudes.

5.5 Recommendations for EFL teachers, learners and policy makers

Through informal observations of teachers’ assumptions of learners’ attitudes towards online communication in previous studies, it was concluded that learners were not keen on using online communication platforms. Furthermore, it was concluded that learners were not internet active. The present study dispels those views as myths, as a substantially large proportion of the subjects in this study were found to hold positive attitudes towards the use of online communication for EFL learning purposes beyond the classroom walls. The majority of learners were also found to be internet active.

It is therefore imperative for EFL teachers to update their technical skills, especially with regard to online communication platforms and learner management systems. However, the introduction of e-learning tasks should not be done just for the sake of meeting a common teaching requirement. This should be done purposefully by complementing the course with learning objectives. Learners too, should not be made to log-on the Internet for a certain amount of time, merely to claim bonus marks or meet some requirements. There should be meaningful learning taking place online.
Using the information in this study to the advantage of EFL teachers, learners could be given more opportunities to interact with native speakers of English, especially through the use of online communication platforms. Internet websites, including Facebook, Skype and YouTube, allow learners to communicate with and befriend people across the globe. In this way, learners would be using the language for practical purposes in a foreign language environment.

From a pragmatic approach to the data revealed in this study, the introduction of online methods to teaching would be highly recommended, as learners are already internet active. A possible hurdle would be the fact that a very small but substantial population of learners still do not have access to the internet or computers at home. To overcome this, the university can make open computer laboratories. These computer laboratories should be equipped with the internet and made available to learners in their non-contact times.

If the learning is envisioned to go online, the learner would have to spend much more time on the internet, which would merely aggravate the undetected problem of internet addiction. Perhaps, making the learner cognisant of the harms of internet addiction and similar computer related diseases would be beneficial in the EFL classroom.

Universities and EFL institutions should not, however, hastily embark on educational technology projects without prior research. This could lead to a wasted investment and a waste of time for learners and teachers. Before embarking on such a project, the EFL policy-maker has to take into consideration the
learners’ internet access. The findings from the present study indicate that not all learners have access to the internet at home.

The results and findings of the present study strongly encourage EFL policy-makers at Taibah University to establish open computer laboratories for learners to log on to the internet to complete learning tasks. Learners should not be at a disadvantage for not having a computer at home.

Finally, training needs should be an on-going practice. Both types of users; teachers and learners; should be trained appropriately for the proper implementation of an online learning project. The findings from the present study suggest that the use of online communication platforms can be used to reinforce classroom based learning.

In conclusion, this study into the attitudes of male Saudi Arabian learners’ attitudes to online communication in EFL found that learners use online communication for non-educational purposes. Furthermore, the study indicated that male Saudi Arabian learners hold strong positive views towards online communication. It was also found that university level male Saudi Arabian learners hold positive attitudes to online communication for English language learning beyond the classroom walls. In addition, the study points towards an integrated or blended approach towards the introduction and application of online learning programmes.
5.6 References


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5.7 Appendices

5.7.1 Consent from Taibah University

Consent Form

Dear Sir,

I, Mohammed Siddique Kadwa, hereby request permission to conduct research in the EFL field. The study is entitled ‘Attitudes of Saudi Arabian learners to Online Communication in EFL’. The study uses questionnaires and interviews to survey the attitudes of learners towards online classroom communication.

The study will abide by:

- the laws of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- the rules and regulations of Taibah University and the English Language Center
- accepted academic ethical norms.

For further information and details, please feel free to contact me on:

Mobile: 0560592712

E-mail: mskadwa@gmail.com

Thank you.

[Signature]

Researcher

Date

I, Dr. Gamal Shehattah, hereby grant permission to Mohammed Siddique Kadwa to conduct research in the ELC at Taibah University.

[Signature]

Dr. Gamal Shehattah

Date
5.7.2 Declaration of adherence to ethical considerations

Name: Mohammed Siddique Kadwa
Institution: University of South Africa
Student number: 35492252
Degree: MA (with specialization in TESOL)
Topic: Attitudes of Male Saudi Arabian learners to online communication in EFL

I declare that this research proposal is my own work. Where secondary material has been used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the department’s policy in this regard. I have not allowed anyone to borrow or copy my work.

During the course of the study, all reasonable attempts were made and precautions taken to abide by University accepted ethics.

MSKADWA..
Signature: .............................................

15 May 2012
Date: ..................................................
5.7.3 Attitudes towards online communication in EFL teaching

Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. This questionnaire is part of a study into the attitudes of learners towards the internet and online communication between teachers and learners. The responses are confidential and would only be used for research purposes having no impact on your grades. Your answers to the following questions should be based on the past 16 weeks.

A. Internet Use

1. I have access to a computer at home. Always ( ) Sometimes ( ) Never ( )
2. I have access to the internet at home. Always ( ) Sometimes ( ) Never ( )
3. I have access to the internet on a mobile phone. Always ( ) Sometimes ( ) Never ( )
4. How much time do you spend on the internet? (tick one)
   - 0 hours per week.
   - 1-3 hours per week.
   - 3-6 hours per week.
   - 6-9 hours per week.
   - 9-12 hours per week.
   - 12-15 hours per week.
   - 15-18 hours per week.
   - More than 18 hours per week.

B. Attitudes to online communication in EFL

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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
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<td>I would like to communicate with all subject teachers via the internet.</td>
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<td>I like to communicate with my English teacher via the internet.</td>
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<td>I keep in touch with my classmates via the internet.</td>
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<td>I want to use English after I finish my studies.</td>
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<td>Communicating in English is not important.</td>
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<td>I benefit from communicating with my teacher online.</td>
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<td>It is important for people to know how to use the internet.</td>
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<td>I am afraid of the internet.</td>
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<td>I like studying English.</td>
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<td>Learners should not be allowed to communicate with teachers online.</td>
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<td>English learning should start from the first grade in schools.</td>
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C. Do you have any comments?

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Thank you for taking part in this research.

[94]
5.7.4 Interview

Attitudes towards online communication in EFL teaching

1. How often do you use the computer at home?
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2. How often do you use the internet at home?
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3. How often do you use the internet on your mobile phone.
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4. How much time do you spend on the internet?
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5. Now that you are in university, has your patterns in internet usage changed? How?
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6. What are your views towards English?
7. What are your views towards the online communication?

8. What are your views towards communicating with your teacher through the internet?

Comments:
### 5.7.5 Encoded data used for correlations

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