دور الأدباء في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية وتعليمها كلغة أجنبية في مدارس المدينة المنورة

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الملخص
لقد أبرزت تكنولوجيا العصر تطوراً متسارعاً في ميدان التعليم، وقد أدى هذا التطور، واتسع فوائده، ليشمل تدريس اللغة، فحظى إصلاح المناهج الدراسية بصورة عامة، وبرنامج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كليّة أجنبية (TEFL) بصفة خاصة، حظي باهتمام التربويين في المملكة العربية السعودية في سعيهم نحو استغلال التكنولوجيا الحديثة لتحقيق هذا الهدف. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى معالجة أوجه القصور المقصودة في برنامج (TEFL) والتحقق من تصورات معلم اللغة الإنجليزية والطلاب حول جدوية استخدام التطبيقات التعليمية لجهاز الآيباد لتسهيل تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية. تمت الاستجابة على استبانات على الإنترنت من مدرس اللغة الإنجليزية (ن = 107) والطلبة (ن = 120)، وشملت العنوان جميع مراحل التعليم من المرحلة الإبتدائية إلى الجامعية. أظهرت النتائج ملوكية جهاز الآيباد واستخدامه على نطاق واسع، ولكن نادراً ما يكون ذلك الاستخدام لأغراض التعليم. القيم العظمى كانت لصالح استخدام الآيباد في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية في دعم مهارة الاستماع والترجمة. كما كشفت النتائج أن أهم العقبات كانت عدم وجود البيئة التحتية في المدارس، وغياب تطبيقات محددة للمناهج الدراسية. وقد قدمت الدراسة عدة توصيات لاستغلال جهاز الآيباد وتطبيقاته في الفصول الدراسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الآباء، تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كليّة أجنبية (TEFL)، التطبيقات التعليمية، مدارس المدينة المنورة.
iPad Role in Teaching and Learning English As a Foreign Language in Madinah Schools

http://www.slideshare.net/mikechui/using-google-docs-for-quality-feedback, retrieved on 7-10-2014.


Suggestions to Use iPads in Classrooms

Based on the findings of the study, below are some suggestions and ideas for teachers and presenters on how to use smart phones and iPads or other tablets in classrooms:

- IPads can be used as a means to search the web through any search engine.
- They can capture images as a way to take notes and record what is shown on the interactive whiteboard.
- Electronic books and digital resources can be used to alleviate students’ burden and relief them from carrying heavy-weight books and school bags.
- Free educational applications are available to practice the four language skills as well as other aspects of the language.
- Free messages’ applications can be used to create chat rooms with students, encourage brainstorming and reinforce critical thinking.
- Sharing images and videos to transform a real image into a virtual one can help students form a mental image of imaginary scenes close to real life.
- Students can pose questions to their teachers via text messages to be answered later; shy students can, therefore, overcome the difficulty to communicate with their teachers.
- The organization of work and reminder of tasks emphasize that students can be supported through a variety of applications such as app FREE myHomework Student Planner, which can be downloaded for iOS devices or Android.
- Students can be monitored with the aid of several applications, such as Behaviour Tracker Pr, teacher kit and go class.
- Teachers or students from other schools can be invited to interact with a particular lesson on video, e.g. Skype or tango.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This descriptive study provides empirical evidence on how to use iPads in language learning and teaching. It provides practical suggestions for decision makers in their endeavors to optimize Saudi curriculum. Two questionnaires were administered to explore teachers’ and students’ perceptions regarding the use of iPads in teaching and learning. Both teachers and learners demonstrated high enthusiasm and support for the idea to use iPads in their classrooms, but have expressed concerns regarding a number of issues; mainly the school’s poor infrastructure.

It is recommended to raise teachers’ and students’ awareness of iPad high educational benefits and secure a proper school environment allowing the use of the iPad and its educational applications. Lack of electronic tablets, computers, fast wired and wireless internet connections and tailor-made programs are some of the present limitations preventing Madinah TEFL classrooms from using such powerful technological tools. As suggested by this study, these are primordial prerequisites that can substantially enhance students’ TEFL learning experience.

The power to develop innovative pedagogy in teaching and learning language depends on the use of technology to support and train teachers as well as students on how to use iPad apps and educational apps to develop the four language skills along with other language aspects.

References

Chui, M. (2010). Creating online questionnaires with Google drive for quality feedback. Available at
In addition, boys spent significantly more time on social networks, watched more videos on-line and tended to post more information about themselves on-line. In contrast, most girls did not put any information about themselves on-line. The least used applications were education apps (see Figure 3).

![Figure (3): The applications most used by students](image)

Nevertheless, 60% of the students indicated that they used iPads for learning English as a foreign language. 90% of the students were interested in using the devices and favoured using iPads in learning. They thought that iPads encourage motivation, facilitate learning English and develop creativity.

Students, like teachers, were asked about the basic skills and other aspects of the language for which they used the iPad. Most participants used iPads for listening and translation. A few used them to support other aspects of the language (See Figure 4).

![Figure (4): The basic skills and other aspects for which students used iPads](image)

It is clear that students, like teachers, used iPads to develop listening and translation more than other language skills and language aspects.

**Comments on the Results**

It is clear from the results that most teachers owned iPads, but did not use them in teaching. Teacher interest and proficiency are prerequisites for iPads and necessitate the provision of training opportunities for teachers, which is consistent with Pegrum et al. (2013), Huber (2012) and Heinrich (2012).

The fact that 89.7% of the teachers supported the idea of using electronic contents and believed that it would ease carrying textbooks and facilitate access to various references is in line with Burden (2014), Marmarelli and Ringle (2011) and Al-Jarf (2012).

Regarding the use of iPad in TEFL, both teachers and students were using them for supporting listening and translation. A few of them used them to support other aspects of the language. This result matches that of Malala (2012) who concentrated on the role of the iPad in translation.

Regarding the benefits, the majority of teachers and students perceived the iPad as an effective tool to heighten motivation, foster interaction and facilitate teaching. However, the main limitations were the lack of devices and curriculum applications at schools. This is in conformity with the findings of Marmarelli and Ringle (2011), Heinrich (2012), Huber (2012) and Pegrum et al. (2013).

iPad cost, lack of use and difficulty in downloading applications appeared to be limitations of less importance for teachers than lack of devices in the school and provision of curriculum applications.
participants used iPads for developing listening and translation. A few of them used them to develop other aspects of the language (See Figure 1).

As for the use of educational applications for developing teaching English, 66 (61.7%) participants used them, while 39 (36.4%) did not. When asked about the preferred educational applications for use in teaching English, they listed several common applications, as follows:

On the other hand, Table 6 highlights several limitations in using iPads.

It is clear that the main perceived limitations were the lack of devices and curriculum applications at schools.

2. Students' Questionnaire

Students reported using smart phones and iPads for leisure activities (86.7%) more than other activities. Girls said that they used such devices for 3 hours a day and boys for 4 hours a day. Both boys and girls stated that they did not even use computers or watch TV. Their answers regarding the use of iPads indicate the possibility of using such devices in learning English as a foreign language.
The second questionnaire, directed to students, contained general questions formulated to assess their views regarding the use of iPad in learning English.

**Format of the Questionnaire**

Most of the questions were Yes/No questions and multiple-choice questions, which were set to explore the views of the study sample. The questionnaire was developed as an on-line questionnaire using Google documents to facilitate and accelerate data collection. It is free, web-based, collaborative, hosted by Google server; responses can be exported to csv format (Chui, 2010). Having created a Gmail account, the researcher created a new forum with a description and a title, selected the proper question type, entered information for each question and completed the process with a Thank You letter addressed to respondents.

**Validity**

Both questionnaires were shown to a group of professors from the Faculty of Education, Curriculum and Instruction Department. They agreed on the appropriateness of the questionnaire and that all questions measure points of view about using iPads in the classroom. They agreed that it was suitable for the research sample as it was easy to understand. Minor corrections were suggested and made accordingly.

**Results**

1. **Teachers’ Questionnaire**

Regarding the use of iPad, it was found that 84 teachers (78.5%) owned iPads, while 22 (20.6%) did not, and there was a missing answer. Nearly a half of the teachers used iPads for social networking, and the rest used them for multi-purposes. Only three teachers used educational applications. More details of the use of iPads are shown in Table (4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social networking applications (Twitter - Facebook –Whats app)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications for audio, video and images to write and edit</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational applications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games’ applications</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking, video and image apps and games’ apps</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking, and video and image apps</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video and image apps, and games’ apps</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking, and games’ apps</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing answers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, 67 teachers (62.6%) did not use iPads in teaching, while 39 (36.4%) did. As for the use of iPads in the classroom by teachers, 74 (69.2%) used iPads and 29 (27.1%) of them did not use the devices in the classroom.

Regarding the use of electronic contents, 96 (89.7%) of the teachers supported the idea of transforming hard copy textbooks into soft copy ones, and only 11 (10.3%) rejected it. Moreover, 96 (89.6%) felt that using electronic content would ease carrying textbooks, while only 10 (9.3%) thought it would encourage using textbooks. Most of the participating teachers (98) 91.6% believed that using iPads would enable access to different references and resources, while 8 (7.5%) disagreed. In addition, 96 (89.7%) thought that using iPads would reduce paperwork, while 10 (9.3%) disagreed.

Regarding using iPads in TEFL, teachers were asked to select the basic skills and other aspects of teaching for which they used the iPad. Most
view, attitudes, effects that are being felt and trends that are developed (Cohen et al., 2000).

**Study Sample**

Two kinds of sample participated in the research as follows:

First, 107 English teachers consisting of 62 female teachers and 45 male teachers teaching English as a foreign language in different education stages, as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School stage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second sample consisted of 120 learners, 65 female students and 55 male students, distributed in different stages of education as shown in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School stage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than three quarters of the participants owned iPads, which seems to be a reasonable indication to overcome the potential limitations of the device’s high cost. More details relevant to iPad ownership are shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Own iPads</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing answers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Instruments**

The instruments were prepared and designed based on the literature review and other resources. Consequently, two questionnaires were designed to achieve the aims of the research:

1-A questionnaire directed to TEFL teachers.
2-A questionnaire directed to TEFL learners.

In preparing the questionnaires, reference was made to previous research on iPads’ use in classrooms, its findings and recommendations, benefits and obstacles facing decision makers, possibilities to use electronic contents and iPad educational apps in developing TEFL.

The first questionnaire, addressed to teachers, comprised four axes:

- First: using iPads (4 questions).
- Second: using electronic contents (4 questions).
- Third: using iPads in TEFL (4 questions).
- Fourth: the limitations and benefits of using iPads in the classroom (8 questions).
Marmarelli and Ringle (2011) and Heinrich (2012). This is appearing through four dimensions: prerequisites for successful use of iPads, developing English language and education apps, benefits and limitations and curriculum, as follows:

1- In order to achieve the goals towards enhancement and development in teaching English as a foreign language, it is first necessary to provide the infrastructure for technology use, such as computers, interactive programs, an internal wired network and multiple wireless points, as well as display devices in the classroom and the appropriate speed connection to the Internet. It is also necessary to provide training opportunities for teachers of English, in order to allow them to learn how to use software in the field of English language teaching as confirmed by Pegrum et al. (2013), Huber (2012) and Heinrich (2012).

2- The power to develop innovative pedagogy in teaching and learning the language depends on technology to support instruction and learning in the classroom. It can help in developing language skills and other aspects of the language. According to Al-Jarf (2012), the use of the iPad develops writing ability. Huang (2013) claims that it develops reading proficiency. Wang et al. (2014) reported that it enhances English vocabulary acquisition. Malala (2012) concentrates on the role of the iPad in translation. Moreover, educational applications play a vital role in developing the learning of English language as confirmed by Huang (2013), Heinrich (2012) and Wang et al. (2014).

3- Some studies focused on the benefits of using the iPad and investigated its advantages and limitations, such as Marmarelli and Ringle (2011), Heinrich (2012), Huber (2012) and Pegrum et al. (2013). Benefits include, inter alia, legibility, touch screen, high motivation, an engaging and interactive tool and facilitation of learning.

4- Using iPad is an excellent framework for the curriculum, increases access to information technology and saves paper, can handle pdf, reduces the cost of textbooks and other printed course materials, offers access to e-books and provides a wide collection of free and cheap resources (Burden, 2014; Marmarelli and Ringle, 2011; Al-Jarf, 2012).

Recently, technology has made students' lives easier, inside and outside the classroom. As a result of technology, pedagogy is fundamentally changing. Flexible, blended classrooms are using iPads to engage pupils in more adapted learning experiences and knowledge. There are easy ways to bring the classroom up-to-date, technologically.

Prior to using iPads, there is a need to ensure the presence of Internet access and review school’s policy regarding the use of Internet. Despite the widespread possession and use of the iPad amongst Saudis and its highly advantageous potentials, it is rarely exploited for educational purposes in Madinah schools.

Thelwell (2012) mentions that "there are some innovative apps that are perfect for teachers who are looking to engage pupils in academic interaction. The use of Bamboo Paper, a notebook app for the iPad is being used in the Art department to provide feedback on pupils' projects. Staff are utilizing such resources to illustrate or sketch explanations in a digital notebook form, which is then e-mailed through to the pupil. To support research activity, pupils have access to applications.” Also, BBC Active (2011) adds that "the use of iPads has encouraged greater sharing of resources among teachers. All communication with parents is now done by e-mail. Working as a group in class is much easier as children can share documents. Children who previously did not have access to the internet at home are given the same opportunities as their peers. The whole class can look at one child’s work by attaching the iPad to the interactive whiteboard. If a child has forgotten his/her textbook, the teacher can take a photograph of the relevant page and send it to the student in class".

With regard to foreign languages, it is safe to say that language teaching and learning has gained a “second life.” It is expected that the trend will persist and technology will continue its contribution to effective teaching and learning of languages (Tabatabaei and Gui, 2011).

Methodology

A descriptive study was conducted to examine iPad use for English language teaching in Saudi classrooms. Descriptive methods are appropriate for educational research which examines beliefs, points of
positive impact on learning, as well as changes in pedagogy. Using the devices increases students' motivation and positive attitude towards learning. It also develops the ability to research, communicate and collaborate, while staff increasingly exploit the range of educational apps made available. On the other hand, some technical issues have occurred that need to be addressed; these are dealt with through excellent project management. The outcomes in general demonstrate the value of the iPad as an educational tool.

Marmarelli and Ringle (2011) conducted a study in Reed College in the USA, which started using the iPad. The main goals of the study were to assess the status of multi-purpose tablet technology for curricular use, to identify specific impacts (both positive and negative) of tablet technology on teaching and learning activities, as well as to evaluate how well features of the iPad addressed concerns raised by students and faculty members who participated. All students were selected to participate in the study. They were asked to provide feedback by using an online survey, free-form email about their experiences with the iPad and through group interviews at the end of the semester. The study provided a great deal of valuable feedback, allowing the College to get a clear sense of the advantages and disadvantages of using the first-generation iPad in an academic context. The strengths of the iPad include: legibility, touch screen, form factor, iPad's size and weight, battery life, durability, paper saving, multifunction capabilities, referring to texts in class, highlighting and annotation, PDF handling, reducing the cost of textbooks and other printed course materials, accessibility to e-books and materials and providing students with a wide collection of free or cheap educational applications. The only weaknesses were: the file system and keyboard. In general, based on the results of using iPad, it was expected that the adoption and use of iPads and similar devices will grow rapidly, both at Reed and throughout higher education.

Malala (2012) concentrated on the role of the iPad in translation and discussed the benefit of online applications that translate digital texts into other languages and how these immediate translators facilitate book reading for non-English speakers. The findings revealed significant value of online translators for scholars and students worldwide. Furthermore, the iPad plays a vital role in translation for those who have limited access to physical libraries and books in their native languages. The study indicated that virtual books play a significant role in decreasing the knowledge gap between researchers and scholars, compared to hard copies of the same resources.

Huang (2013) investigated students’ actual use of iPads as a learning tool to develop reading proficiency in an intermediate EFL reading class. Three students with limited experiences of iPad reading were invited to read online materials, to experiment with language learning apps resources and finally to create a video that combined the information they had collected through the semester. Data from weekly journals and interviews showed that the various iPad applications enabled students to read English through games, facilitated access to resources, developed communication skills, encouraged interaction and creativity and provided useful opportunities for new literacy instruction.

Burden (2014), based in the Faculty of Education in Scotland, has completed the first national evaluation of iPad use in a study conducted on eight schools and six local authorities across Scotland which piloted iPad devices as tools for teaching and learning. The study concentrated on four themes: how tablet devices impact on teaching and learning, the management issues with the positioning of mobile devices in schools and local authorities, parental engagement and professional development and learning for teachers introducing personal mobile devices into the curriculum. The findings showed that the iPad facilitates many of the pedagogical objectives set out in Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence framework: it increases access to technology both inside and outside school and promotes greater motivation, engagement, parental involvement and understanding of complex ideas. Furthermore, the device is contributing to significant changes in teachers’ pedagogy.

Previous studies generally support the beneficial role of iPads as a powerful tool for teaching and learning. The impact of technology such as iPads in changing the education in general and learning English in particular, as confirmed by Burden (2014),
program in both the computer and iPad. In addition, there is a "teacherKiT" program which is used to record student attendance and grades as a file, to facilitate the evaluation of student performance.

Another important program is SlideShark, which displays file presentations via iPad without the need for any link, by entering the program http://www.slideshark.com site and downloading the files to be displayed by the personal account and then downloading the software on the iPad, so that the files can be directly opened and viewed. There is also a program called "Noteshelf", which is a way to convert the iPad into a smart blackboard in which users can write notes, pictures, copy, cut and edit.

The Gulf market is an important market for all companies for sale of iPad. Statistics show that the number of Apple Inc. devices in Saudi Arabia before the launch of iPad Air and iPad Mini 2 was more than 1,200,000 devices (Alsabe, 2013). In recent years, it has become common in most Saudi families for children to have an iPad and mobile devices, but they are used for multi purposes, not for learning. An iPad is not a toy, but rather a very powerful tool for effective instruction. Al-Jarf (2012) confirms that the internet is not only a place to chat, read newspapers, shop and gain access to forums. It should not be used only to develop personal pages and create sites for companies, schools and universities. It is an essential learning tool, especially in developed countries.

By using the iPad, teachers can change the face of education, increase students’ learning motivation, enhance interaction in the classroom, develop the creativity of both teachers and learners and have a great impact on the teaching and learning process in the 21st century (Marmarelli and Ringle, 2011).

Al-Jarf (2012) studied the effects of learning with the aid of electronic devices (eLearning) in TEFL on developing writing ability among Saudi college students. Students were divided into two groups. The experimental group was exposed to a combination of online instruction and traditional in-class teaching, while the second group received traditional classroom instruction only. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between groups with enhanced writing ability among students in the experimental group supplied with an e-course.

Wang et al. (2014) examined the use of iPad apps in a Taiwanese classroom to help students’ English vocabulary acquisition. An experimental study was conducted over 18 weeks on a sample of 74 students, divided into 2 groups, the experimental group and the control group. In the experimental group, the teacher used the iPad apps “Learn British English WordPower” to teach English vocabulary, while the teacher used the traditional semantic-map method to teach English vocabulary in the control group. Teachers were asked to fill a questionnaire on students’ attitude toward iPad app teaching in the classroom. The results showed that using iPad apps in language teaching does not only enhance students’ learning outcomes, but also increases students’ learning motivation.

Pegrum et al. (2013) explain how iPads contributed to pre-service teachers' learning. Eight pre-service teachers as a case study participated, based on semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations to determine how they used the iPad 2 in their learning. Also, focus group interviews with a larger cohort were used to support the results. It was found that iPads supported pre-service teachers' learning in relation to four aspects: content, pedagogy, staying connected and organization. Moreover, the study demonstrated the role of iPads in developing a new sense of learning spaces and learning networks. Three obstacles were found to using iPads as learning tools: devices, time and attentual limitations.

Huber (2012) studied the development of using tablets in the Austrian curriculum for foreign languages and provided a general overview of the didactical integration of tablets in schools. Educational apps using Apple’s iPad were tested and evaluated empirically. Results showed the success of tablet computers in supporting teachers in developing objectives, as well as teaching the tasks and concepts of the curriculum. Nevertheless, several prerequisites for successful integration are needed including proper hardware and software, as well as teacher training. Slower text production is also an obstacle.

Heinrich (2012) assessed the impact of iPads on learning and teaching based on the introduction of iPad devices at Longfield Academy, a mixed, non-selective secondary school for students aged 11-18. It was found that with the majority of pupils now having the devices, there has been a significant and very
seem to have a grand potential in education.

With specific reference to current attempts to improve language learning and teaching in Saudi Arabia, it is likely to contribute to the betterment of iPad applications in Saudi schools and institutions.

Limitation of the Study

The current research is limited to students and TEFL teachers in Madinah. The study was conducted to explore the current situation of using the iPad in teaching and learning EFL in Madinah schools in light of four criteria: the ability to use the IPad, views regarding electronic contents, advantages and disadvantages and using educational apps in TEFL.

Terminology

iPad: The iPad is a tablet computer developed by Apple. It is smaller than a typical laptop, but significantly larger than the average smartphone. The iPad does not include a keyboard, but instead has a touchscreen interface, which is used to control the device (Christensson, 2011).

TEFL: TEFL is the common abbreviation for Teaching English as a Foreign Language, which in Saudi Arabia involves teaching students whose first language is Arabic. Students’ age ranges from 12 to 22 years. TEFL can take place in state schools, private schools or special EFL institutions and can be found in almost every country around the world.

Theoretical Framework

According to the basics of educational research, theoretical framework directs the research and provides scientific justification for each element. The following framework is based on three axes:

An Overview: Teaching and Learning English in Saudi Arabia

Experts and specialists in teaching English in Saudi Arabia have expressed their concern about low achievement in English as a foreign language and are investigating the challenges in this area (Salman, 2012). According to the symposium titled "Teaching English in Saudi Arabia: Reality and Challenges", organized by Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University (2012), foreign experts and Arabs, as well as specialists from Saudi Arabia are investigating the reasons and obstacles underpinning poor English language learning outcomes despite the substantial increase in financial resources and number of teaching hours (more than 800 hours of instruction). A number of important topics were discussed, the most prominent being the quality and training of English language teachers, curriculum and teaching methods, as well as students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English in general (primary, intermediate, secondary and higher education). Seminars have been held with the participation of the relevant authorities concerned with teaching English, in addition to holding a number of workshops dealing with English language tests, uses of learning technology, as well as for the training of English language teachers.

Introduction to iPad

The iPad is an easy and distinctive teaching and learning material for both teachers and students. It transforms traditional courses to electronic ones. Among its advantages are its small size and light weight, as Melhuish and Falloon (2010) indicate. "The iPad’s size and weight potentially makes it ideal as a portable learning device, and will be a distinct benefit to those wanting to use a computer in a way that renders technology ‘invisible’ within the learning experience." (p.5)

In addition, it is a new and innovative technique that can increase learners’ motivation. Mockus et al. (2011) found that nearly a half of the respondents claimed that content delivered on their IPad would motivate them to learn. (p.23)

The iPad can be linked to some accessories that increase the effectiveness of its uses, such as a keyboard and Kensington, which not only protects the iPad, but allows it to be linked with a QWERTY keyboard with mobile Bluetooth feature. There is also useful software that can be downloaded on the iPad, such as Keynote, which is used as a substitute for presentations. This program enables the teacher to work any lecture presentation and present it to students using a projector, linked to iPads, and show the date by using the VGA connection. The program provides AirServer (non-free) property dispensing and VGA connection by connecting the iPad to computer wireless internet access. This is done by loading the
The Study Problem

The study problem was identified based on the following rationales:

1. In her experience in teaching English as a foreign language at Taibah University as well as school visits as a supervisor of pre-service teachers, the researcher has observed a number of shortcomings in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. In addition, the literature review confirmed a general weakness in proficiency in English as a foreign language in the Kingdom. As Khan (2011, p.1248) confirms, "Teaching English in Saudi Arabia starts at the school level. Despite good overall planning, purposive curriculum, integrated textbooks and qualified teachers, achievement is below the expectations."

2. English is considered as a global language and is one of the most widely used languages in education, economy and politics. Hence, it is important for Saudi youth to master English.

3. Saudi schools and educational institutions are currently seeking to develop plans to enable teachers and students to use digital technology in the classroom to support English language learning.

4. Smartphones and tablets such as iPad are not just for fun and games; they are excellent tools for learning in general and especially for English language acquisition (Al-Jarf, 2012).

5. Thousands of applications are presently available for free and/or cheap costs, including apps related to learning English for all levels. "A large number of free and low-priced apps can be downloaded from Apple’s App Store which is constantly changing and expanding and even provides an educational category with apps for teachers and students"(Huber, 2012, p.2).

The iPad in particular has recently begun to be adopted in educational settings around the world, although its use is still very much at an experimental stage. As a report of one university's experience puts it: "with their students, [faculty] have become co-learners and pioneers in the classroom as they test out the power of this new technology. With no models to work from, they had to explore, practise and discover -on their own - the iPad's potential for expanding learning" (Gawelek et al., 2011, p.32).

Research Questions

Based on the above reasons, the research concentrates on the following main question:

- What is the role of the iPad as a tool for teaching and learning English as a foreign language (TEFL) in the existing curriculum in Madinah schools and institutions?

1. How do teachers in Madinah schools feel about using iPads in teaching EFL through four dimensions: using iPad devices as a tool for teaching, using electronic contents, benefits and limitations and using iPads and education apps in TEFL?

2. How do students in Madinah schools feel about using iPads for EFL?

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1- explore the current situation of using iPad in teaching and learning EFL in Madinah schools.
2- identify teachers' opinions regarding the ability to use iPad, electronic contents, iPad benefits and limitations and educational apps in TEFL.
3- identify learners' opinions regarding iPad use in learning English.
4- inform decision makers and curriculum developers in their endeavors to enable teachers and students to use iPad apps in their classrooms as supplementary material.

Significance of the Study

This genuine study offers practical solutions to Saudi educationalists and decision makers in an area that has rarely been researched. Indeed, there has been little- if any-research on using iPad for TEFL purposes in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world. There is a particular need for tangible evidence highlighting iPad advantages and practical use. The study will draw attention to the use of the iPad in developing strategies and techniques that teachers use in teaching English as a foreign language, illustrate the strengths and weaknesses and contribute to the continuous improvement of digital learning.

Moreover, the research opens up new vistas for researchers for further studies in using iPad in classroom activities, thereby coping with contemporary changes in teaching and learning, which
iPad Role in Teaching and Learning English As a Foreign Language in Madinah Schools

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ABSTRACT

Technological advancements appear to have revolutionized e-learning worldwide. Saudi experts are interested in exploiting such developments as part of an educational program for the betterment of Saudi curricula in general and TEFL in particular. This paper was conducted to address perceived shortcomings in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). It investigates Saudi teachers’ and learners’ perceptions vis-à-vis iPad educational applications and their efficacy in facilitating TEFL. Two online questionnaires (for teachers and learners) were administered to the study sample of English language teachers (n = 107) and students (n = 120) spanning all stages from primary school to higher education in Madinah. iPad seems to be widely used amongst Saudis, yet findings of the study revealed scarce use of its applications for educational purposes. When used for educational purposes, respondents seem to mainly refer to iPad for listening and translation. Apparently, this rare use of iPad applications can be attributed to schools’ poor infrastructure as well as the absence of tailor-made applications in their curricula. The paper offers a number of recommendations to exploit iPad applications.

Keywords: iPad Applications, TEFL, Pedagogy, Madinah Schools.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely agreed that technology has been very effective and has become a requirement in many aspects of life. Research shows that not only can the use of information technology in education heighten students’ learning motivation, but can also enhance interaction in a classroom (Mooij, 2007). Educational applications are increasingly used in TEFL classrooms and are attracting growing interest. The number of Web pages and applications has multiplied in the language-learning environment (Wang et al., 2014). Applications (Apps) facilitate the extraction and delivery of pertinent information. In light of technological advancements, the iPad appears to be a natural replacement of a regular desktop and/or laptop. Experts and specialists in teaching English in Saudi Arabia complain that students are unable to easily learn English as a foreign language (EFL) and therefore are investigating the reasons and obstacles behind such difficulties (Salman, 2012). Moreover, an attempt to improve the current situation included the training of EFL teachers. This project is intended to improve language teachers’ skills and develop their proficiency while incorporating a variety of teaching materials and approaches to optimize the curriculum.

In this context, this paper focuses on the use of iPad apps in learning and teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi schools. This paper investigates the feasibility of using iPad in EFL classrooms as well as its role in arousing students’ interest and engagement while learning English.