

## Libyan EFL Students' Background on Computer and Internet as Correlates of Their Readiness to Online Learning

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### ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص خلفية طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في استخدام الحاسوب والإنترنت لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. كما تبحث هذه الدراسة أيضاً عن مدى استفادة المتعلمين من الإنترنت لتسهيل تعلم اللغة. تم استخدام المنهج الكمي لتحقيق أهداف هذا البحث. وقد تكونت عينة البحث من 45 طالباً جامعياً يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة النجم الساطع في ليبيا. وقد كشفت النتائج أن جميع الطلاب تقريباً (95.6%) لديهم معرفة جيدة نسبياً باستخدام الحاسوب. كما أن 88.9% من الطلاب لديهم خلفية جيدة فيما يتعلق باستخدام الإنترنت. علاوة على ذلك، أظهرت الدراسة أن ربع طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يستخدمون الإنترنت لتحسين لغتهم الإنجليزية - توصي الدراسة بتدريب الطلاب على استخدام التطبيقات عبر الإنترنت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، حاسوب، الإنترنت، تعلم عبر الإنترنت

### Abstract:

This study aims to examine EFL students' background on using computers and the Internet to learn the English language. Also, this research investigates to what extent learners utilize the Internet to facilitate language learning. The quantitative approach has been used to achieve the objectives of this research. The sample of

this research contains 45 EFL undergraduate students at Bright Star University of Technology in Libya. The results revealed that almost all students (95.6%) have a relatively good knowledge of using computer. Also, 88.9% of students have a good background regarding using the Internet. Furthermore, the research found that about a quarter of EFL students use the Internet to enhance their English language. The study recommends that students need training on using online applications.

**Key Words:** EFL, background, computers, Internet, online learning,

### **1. Introduction**

English has emerged as a key language for communication in the age of globalization and rapid technological development, especially in academic and professional settings. As a result, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has become more significant in nations that do not speak English, like Libya (Abdelaty, 2023). The practice of learning a language remotely is widespread throughout the world and may be done through the internet, multimedia, CDs, DVDs, and a variety of other mediums (Mohammadi, et al., 2011). By using e-learning and remote education, we can cut back on costs and time since learning a language is difficult, time-consuming, and expensive in some situations. E-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that takes place online, on a system, or on a standalone personal computer (PC) (Oye, et al., 2011). Hadullo, et al. (2018) define e-learning as a network enabled expression coupled to qualities that significantly improve teaching and learning. E-learning techniques and procedures include computer-based learning, web-based learning, digital classrooms, and electronic activity (Oduma, et al., 2019). Recent technological advancements have made it possible for students to learn at any time and from any location without having to physically engage with their teacher or lecturer. In light of this, e-learning facilitates simple access to efficient teaching and learning, hence improving students' academic performance. Maatuk, et al. (2022) claim that e-learning makes it possible for many students in higher education to enroll in related courses at once. In the modern day, educational institutions have evolved to include both learning and reasonable instructions, and they must now take place on college campuses. According to research by Benta, et al. (2015), e-learning

platforms provide instruction methods designed to enhance the quality of instruction and the academic accomplishment of students in higher education. Higher education institutions offer instructional programs that use online or internet systems to boost students' academic performance, despite the fact that e-Learning platforms can come in a variety of ways (Castro and Tumibay, 2021). Even at the higher education level in developing nations, many teachers are still unfamiliar with the delivery of content like video and sophisticated programs (Aljawarneh, 2020).

For the sake of excellence and to assess the extent to which using technology in instruction contributes in development of EFL teaching and learning practices in Libya, it is crucial to investigate the current EFL situation in terms of using technology in teaching and learning process.

## **2. Literature review**

Information and communication technology (ICT), which includes desktop and laptop computers (PCs), the internet, and multimedia, improves the capacity to complete tasks quickly and accurately in teaching and learning. According to Garib (2022), these elements alter the roles of the teacher and the student, facilitate learning, and promote interactive learning, learner autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-confidence. ICT fosters major learning and academic success by fusing content and information literacy, frequently in textual and visual formats. In other words, the introduction of ICT into the field of education has transformed the function of teachers from only providing students with instructional resources to overseeing the learning process.

Mothibi (2015) conducted a systematic review study on 15 research articles during four years from 2010 to 2013 to examine the relationship between using technology in learning and for undergraduate students' achievement. The study revealed that using e-learning has a positive impact on overall students' achievement. Beckett and Slater (2018) add that the ubiquity of technology brings Project-Based Language Learning PBL and technology closer. In order to improve language teaching and learning, technology-assisted project-based language learning (TAPBL) can be used. According to Beckett and Slater

(2019), TAPBLL generates dynamic, multimodal learning environments that enable "students to learn and articulate their learning linguistically and visually in collaboration with their regional, national, and global peers,". On the other hand, the "scope, variety, and depth" of their technology-based education has been constrained due to the teacher population's lack of technology understanding (Koehler, et al., 2014). This constraint makes it necessary to design teacher training programs for technology integration (Tanak, 2020).

Ja'ashan (2020) notes that ICT is used in English learning classes, and that E-learning technology plays a crucial part in these courses. E-learning has been increasingly significant with the advent of computer technology, especially in higher education. Undergraduate students now more than ever rely on computers for learning, and many institutions of higher learning employ ICT to create, deliver, and exchange course content. Additionally, ICT supports lectures, presentations, and communication. E-learning has reportedly been the subject of scholarly research (Feeney, 2001). As the adoption of digital courses in a new e-learning environment becomes a global institutional imperative at institutions, it becomes both an organizational goal and a source of data on which to evaluate performance. Nowadays many educational institutions recognize the importance of e-learning as a core part of their curriculum. As a result, more research has been done to comprehend the drawbacks, benefits, and difficulties of e-learning in higher education. These problems could have a negative impact on how well teachers present lesson material (Yengin, et al., 2011). When compared to industrialized nations, it was shown that developing nations face numerous obstacles when implementing e-learning, such as a lackluster internet connection, a lack of familiarity with ICT usage, and inadequate content development (Aung and Khaing, 2016). Even at the higher education level in underdeveloped nations, many educators are still getting used to the idea of providing information like video and cutting-edge applications (de la Peña, et al., 2021).

Van, et al. (2021) studied the usefulness of using technology to learn English on undergraduate EFL students in Southern Vietnam and found that using technology to learn English is getting more and more common and beneficial for students. In addition, knowledge can benefit more readily from technology. Certain forms of

technology, such as educational apps, cell phones, and tablets, are frequently used by students due to their usability. All four of the English language skills are significantly enhanced by using technological tools while studying. The findings demonstrated how crucial it is to use technology when learning English. Fatimah and Santiana (2017) state that the quick development of technology pushes educators, particularly those who teach English as a foreign language, to include it in their lesson plans and instruction. Technology, the most current educational tool developed during this globalization era, fosters a more fun and effective learning environment by enabling students to have distinctive, genuine, and meaningful learning experiences that engage their effort and behavior. Additionally, it gives the students the chance to collaborate and has easy access to the data that might enhance their learning experience. These advantages constitute the core of education for the twenty-first century, which should be enhanced to produce sophisticated learning immersion and increase the caliber of students in the long run. Alshehri and Cumming (2020) suggested that King Abdulaziz University and King Khalid University's Department of Linguistics students and faculty members had favorable opinions about incorporating mobile technologies at these campuses. Mobile technology integration, according to students and teachers, improved academic, student-student, and student-teacher communications as well as the independent, flexible, and participatory learning of EFL learners. Susanti, et al. (2023) conducted a study on twenty-five EFL students in Indonesia's public universities, in Surabaya to examine students' autonomy potential and its influencing factors support student autonomy in online learning. The study concluded that Although students could use self-direction, self-instruction, and self-access, the role of instruction was still necessary since learner autonomy should be fostered via gradual education. Djabborova (2020) studied the effect of EFL listening and reading as receptive skills on productive skills of speaking and writing and concluded that the receptive skills are essential for productive skills and listening is considered as the most crucial skill that enable EFL learners to communicate in English. Therefore, Djabborova (2020) suggests using e-learning to improve EFL students' listening skills in order to enhance the other language skills.

Based on the importance of using technology in learning and despite many researchers studied the readiness of EFL students to integrate technology in the process of teaching and learning worldwide and to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is not any single research has been conducted to examine EFL Libyan students' background towards using computers and e-learning in learning English language. Also, since computers are an enabler as well as an enhancer of learning English, especially in light of the spread of diseases around the world, it is important to examine Libyan EFL learners' ability to use the computer and internet to integrate distance learning into the learning process. Therefore, the significance of this study is that the findings of this research give an understanding of whether Libyan EFL students are ready completely to move to online learning or they need intensive or part-time courses on how to use the computer and internet.

### **3. Research Questions**

1. What experience do Libyan EFL students have with computers and the internet at Bright Star University of Technology?
2. To what extent do learners utilize the Internet to facilitate language learning?

### **4. Research Objectives**

1. To determine students' background in the computer and internet who have already experienced learning English online during COVID-19.
2. To find out how frequently students use the internet to promote their language learning.

### **5. Methodology**

#### ***5.1. Participants and Instrument***

The sample of this study consisted of 45 EFL undergraduate students whose mother tongue is Arabic language at Bright Star University of Technology in Libya. The participants of this research randomly selected from the study's population whose ages range from 18 to 26 years. Mat (2002) questionnaire has been adapted to meet the objectives of this study.

## 5.2 Questionnaire Reliability

The quantitative data analyzed using SPSS to answer research questions. Cronbach's Alpha has been computed to be 0.744 which is more than the accepted value which is according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016) is (0.60).

## 6. Results and Discussion

### 6.1 Participants' Demographic Background

The first part of the questionnaire provides demographic data about the participants. These data include students' gender and age, their favorite spending time and favorite subjects in school, their English language learning skills, and their most interested areas in EFL. Table 1 shows the number of male and female students who participated in this study. The number of male and female are almost the same with a percentage of 51.1 % for males and 48.9 % for females.

Table1: Distribution of subjects based on Gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	23	51.1
Female	22	48.9
Total	45	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of students according to age. The ages of the study participants consist of four categories. Since the participants of this study are undergraduate Engineering students, their age ranges from 18 to 26. Therefore, most of students who participated in this study 37.8 % are between 21 to 23 years old, followed by 26.7 % between 24 to 26 years old. However, the same percentage of the survey respondents their age ranges from 18 to 20 years old and more than 26 years old.

Table 2: Distribution of subjects based on age.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-20 years old	8	17.8
21-23 years old	17	37.8
24-26 years old	12	26.7
>than 26 years old	8	17.8
Total	45	100.0



Table 3 shows how respondents like to spend their leisure time. Forty-six-point seven percent of participants like to spend their free time reading while almost the same percentage 42.2 % like to do sports and play games. In contrast, only 6.7% of the participants **prefer to spend their free time** in surfing the internet. Since the majority of respondents' favorite pastime is both reading and playing sports or games, this may mean that as much as they like to deal with printed materials, they prefer to play electronic games. Because students enjoy using technology as a means of enjoyment in their free time, incorporating online resources in the classroom could be a fun and appealing way to deliver EFL lectures. Using internet sources in teaching EFL is supported by (Van, et al., 2021) who indicates that Internet-based activities might make EFL sessions more engaging. Besides, utilizing ICTs to teach languages is successful and could improve students' four skills and vocabulary and grammar (Fatimah and Santiana, 2017).

Table3: Distribution of subjects based on favorite free time activity.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Reading	21	46.7
Sport/games	19	42.2
Surfing internet	3	6.7
Total	43	95.6

Table 4 shows the respondents' favorite subjects. More than half 60 % of participants' favorite subject is English. This percentage is a good indicator of how students consider English as an essential subject they should master as Engineers. Whereas, to meet global competitiveness in the information technology world, computer science and science had almost the same percentage 17.8 % and 15.6 % respectively to be students' favorite subjects. Based on students' specialization, the students' response to the social science subjects is 2.2 % which is considered reasonable as social science subjects are not expected to be among the favorite subjects for engineering students. These results indicate that students know what they need to be creative learners. This result explains what Alshehri and Cumming (2020) and Susanti, et al. (2023) refer to as learners must assess their requirements and make an effort to be successful and become outstanding individuals.



Table 4: Distribution of subjects based on favorite subjects.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Computer science	7	15.6
English	27	60.0
Science	8	17.8
<b>social sciences subjects</b>	1	2.2
Others (please specify)	1	2.2
Total	44	100.0

Table 5: Distribution of subjects based on English language learning skills and areas most interested in.

Learning skills	Frequency	Percentage
Listening	8	17.8
Speaking	14	31.1
Reading	12	26.7
Writing	5	11.1
Grammar	4	8.9
Vocabulary	1	2.2
Sound system	1	2.2
Total	45	100.0

Table 5 shows the results of the last survey questions on factor 1, in which the respondents were asked to respond to English language learning skills and areas of interest. The results show that more than one-third of students 31.1% are interested in improving their speaking skills, followed by reading 26.7% and listening 17.8%. Then, 11.1% of the respondents show interest in writing and 8.9% in grammar, whereas they show the same percentage 2.2% in their interest in both vocabulary and sound systems. According to these results, and despite **students' concern to improve** their speaking skills, they seemingly are not aware speaking is a result that needs reason to be achieved. Djaborova (2020) asserts that listening and reading are prerequisite processes to improve EFL students' speaking and writing. Besides reading and listening, grammar and vocabulary, which have gotten low percentages are considered the most important cause skills

that could lead to output skills such as speaking and writing if they are carefully improved. Therefore, teachers should play a crucial role in raising awareness among their students of what it takes to improve their English skills as reading and listening are considered important skills that students should improve first to improve their EFL speaking and listening.

Q1. What experience do Libyan EFL students have with computers and the internet at Bright Star University of Technology?

The objective of the first question seeks to determine students' background on computer and Internet.

### **6.2 Students' background on using the computer**

The results from the students' background on the computer in Table 6, indicate that 95.6 % have experienced using the computer. Based on this result, almost all respondents are ready to use online learning to enhance the teaching and learning process.

For how the students learned the computer, the collected data shows about half 46.7 % of respondents have learned how to use the computer through their self-study while 22.2 % of them by trial and error. Having the highest percentage in both own learning and trial and error is considered a logical result because they both require the learner to be a self-instructor.

Table 6 shows the distribution of subjects depending on learners' prior experience on using computer.

Student's Background on the use of computers	Frequency	Percentage
Do you know how to use a computer?		
Yes	43	95.6
No	1	2.2
How did you learn to use the computer?		
Trial and error	10	22.2
Books/ own reading	21	46.7
Computer class	8	17.8
Others (please specify)	2	4.4
How long have you been using the computer?		

< than 6 months	1	2.2
7-12 months	11	24.4
13-18 months	8	17.8
19-24 months	19	42.2
More than 2 years	6	13.3

The results about the experience of computers over time are that 42.2 % of the students have been using the computer for more than two years, followed by 24.4 % for about one year, 17.8 % for about a year and a half, and only one respondent has been using the computer for less than seven months. In the era of information technology, being well-versed in computers allows students to manipulate sources and information as well as enables EFL learners to use online learning as a modern support means of learning the language.

### **6.3 Students' background on using the internet**

Data on respondents' experience using the Internet from Table 7 shows that 88.9% know how to use the Internet. In contrast, it is surprising to discover that there are still 6.7% of the respondents do not know how to use the Internet.

Responding to the question "How long have you been using the Internet?" nearly half 44.4 % of students have been experiencing the Internet for more than two years, and 20.0 % between more than a year and a half and two years, followed by 17.8 % for about one year. On the other hand, 13.3 % of the respondents have been using the Internet for more than one year to a year and a half, and only 4.4% less than six months. It is worth noticing that the students' experience of using a computer for more than two years 42.2 % is almost like theirs for using the internet 44.4 % for the same period of time, which means that as soon as they can use the computer they can use the Internet. Besides, despite the students' period of using the computer varying, generally, the results reflect the students have a quite solid basis on which they could build in terms of using EFL online learning.

Table 7 shows the distribution of subjects depending on learners' prior experience on using Internet.

Students' background on using the internet	Frequency	percentage
Do you know how to use the internet?		
Yes	40	88.9

No	3	6.7
How long have you been using the internet?		
<than 6 months	2	4.4
7-12 months	8	17.8
13-18 months	6	13.3
19-24 months	9	20.0
>than 24 months	20	44.4

**Q2. To what extent do learners utilize the Internet to facilitate language learning?**

The objective of the second question seeks to examine the frequency and patterns of internet usage as a strategy to facilitate English language learning.

As shown in Table 8, most students 68.9 % use the Internet every day, followed by 13.3 % of the students who use the Internet between 4-5 times a week. Whereas 8.9 % of the students surf the Internet weekly from 2 to 3 times, and only 6.7 % use it once a week. Thus, these results indicate that all the respondents have experienced browsing the Internet despite some of them using it less than others

**Table 8: Distribution of items based on how frequently students browse the internet.**

Frequency of using the internet	Frequency	Percentage
Once a week	3	6.7
2-3 times	4	8.9
4-5 times	6	13.3
Everyday	31	68.9

#### **6.4 Types of websites normally surfed**

The data from Table 9 shows that the more websites that students surf are entertainment websites with a percentage of 34.9% at the expense of the academic platforms in which they only spend 14.0 % of their time. This result indicates that students spend relatively much time on online screen entertainment platforms that may negatively affect their academic life. Thus, students should be oriented to

minimize the time they spend playing video games or other types of entertainment and should be advised to allocate more time to academic websites. Students seemingly are not interested in news websites and current issues so much that they respond to these websites with the same percentage 23.3 %. For the financial websites, students show the lowest percentage 4.7 %.

Table 9: Distribution of subjects according to types of websites normally surfed.

Types of websites normally surfed	frequency	percentage
Current issues	10	23.3
Entertainment	15	34.9
New	10	23.3
Financial/ commerce	2	4.7
Academic	6	14.0

### **6.5 Personal reason for surfing the Internet**

Table 10 shows the respondents' reasons for surfing the Internet. Results in Table 10 indicate that the first reason behind the students surfing the Internet is just for browsing, where they respond with the highest percentage amongst the other alternatives 35.7 %. Based on this result, students waste a relatively respectable amount of time from their precious time as students in responding to their pleasure. Also, collected data shows that students browse the Internet 26.2 % due to communication with others, 21.4 for academic reasons, 9.5 % for entertainment reasons, and only 7.1 % for shopping. Therefore, the most common reason behind students surfing the Internet is to pass the time without actual reasons or to talk with others, whereas exploiting this technology for academic purposes has a smaller portion of their time.

Table 10: The distribution of subjects according to personal reasons for surfing the Internet.

Reasons of surfing the Internet	frequency	percentage
Browsing	15	35.7
Entertainment	4	9.5

Academic	9	21.4
Communicating	11	26.2
Shopping	3	7.1

## **7. Conclusion**

The findings reveal that the vast majority of 95.6% of EFL students have used computers, and 88.9 % of them have already experienced the Internet. Besides, all students use the Internet daily, despite some of them use it more than others. Thus, students generally have good experience using computers and the Internet. However, students still need training on using various applications of distance learning such as Zoom, Free Conference Call, Google Classroom, and other online applications. In addition, the findings refer to only about 25 % of students using the Internet for academic purposes to facilitate and enhance their English language learning. Therefore, the study recommends that instructors should raise their students' awareness of the importance of using technology positively to help them in learning EFL.

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### Students' Questionnaire

#### Section A: Student's Personal Background

Please (✓) and / or fill in your answers in the blank spaces provided

1 Gender      a. Male     

b. female     

2 Age

a. 18-20 years old     

b. 21-23 years old     

c. 24-26 years old     

d. >than 26 years old

3. Favorite past time

a. Reading     

b. Sport/games     

c. Music     

d. Surfing internet

e. Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Favorite subjects in school

a. Computer scienc

b. English     

c. Science

d. Art

e. Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. The English language learning skills and areas you are most interested in

a. Listening

b. Speaking

c. Reading

d. Writing

e. Grammar

f. Vocabulary

g. Sound system

**Section B.**

a. Student's Background on the use of computers and the internet

1. Do you know how to use a computer?

a. Yes

b. No

2. If yes, how did you learn to use the computer?

a. Trial and error

b. Books/ own reading

c. Computer class

d. Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long have you been using the computer?

a. < than 6 months

b. 7-12 months

c. 13-18 months

- d. 19-24 months
- e. Others (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you know how to use the internet?

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. How long have you been using the internet?

- a. <than 6 months
- b. 7-12 months
- c. 13-18 months
- d. 19-24 months
- e. >than 24 months

6. How often do you surf the Internet in a week?

- a. Once a week
- b. 2-3 times
- c. 4-5 times
- d. Everyday

### E-mail Usage

7. Do you have own e-mail address?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. In average, how many e-mails do you receive every day?

- a. <than 1 message
- b. 1-4 messages
- c. 5-9 messages
- d. 10-14 messages
- e. > than 15 messages

9. In average, how many e-mails do you sent/reply in a day?

- a. <than 1 message
- b. 5-9 messages
- c. 10-14 messages
- d. > than 15 messages

10. What kind of messages do you normally receive? You may tick (✓) more than once.

- a. Research
- b. Organization
- c. Personal
- d. Others (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

11. Who normally send you e-mails?

- a. Professional colleague
- b. Personal friends
- c. Family members
- d. Others (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

#### **World Wide Web (WWW)**

12. What types of websites/ homepages do you normally surf? You may tick ( ) more than once.

- a. Current issues
- b. Entertainment
- c. News
- d. Financial/ Commerce
- e. Related to my current academic learning

13. What is your personal reason for surfing the internet?

- a. Browsing
- b. Entertainment
- c. Academic
- d. Communicating
- e. Shopping