



ESL Students' Perception on Learning ESL Writing Skill Using the Internet

Abstract: -

The internet is noteworthy element in the English language learning environment that can be bound to enrich the teaching-learning process of the English language in schools. With web applications on the internet like social networks, it would be an easy task to encourage students to use them as a medium of learning and improve their language skills. Students' perceptions on learning writing using the internet should be fully accepted, as it would serve its purpose to regenerate the teaching-learning process in class room. A varied method study investigating how ESL students view the internet and to what magnitude the internet affects the students' ESL skills was conducted. The data was acquired through a questionnaire with close- and open-ended survey questions. It was found that students agreed that the internet was a source of education and a platform for learning ESL skills. A majority of students indicated that the internet affected their formal writing in terms of correct punctuation and the use of short forms in their informal writing.

Key-words: - ESL, ESL Skills, Writing Skills, Internet, Perception, Social Networks

Introduction:-

The world-wide web (www.), or the internet, is sharp and an intellectual technology that was formulated accessible around 25 or 30 years ago in the mid-60s. Through the years, the internet has developed advance into a seeking-platform which offers the users with the chance or opportunity to gain information, data, facts, knowledge, entertaining, entertainment and a place to connect, attach and join socially. Most of the students used the internet to seek information and even search for word meanings, connotations, articulation and pronunciation.

The internet encompasses of web applications that have assisted and facilitated to maintain mutual relationships and individuals specific interests such as business growth, education, and reciprocal improvement. The internet is also a podium or dais to interact with people from abroad overseas. Applications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, Edmodo, Padlet, flipclass and others serve a purpose of communicating with one another, even across distances. These are known as communal or social networks systems.

According to Boyd & Ellison, they define social network sites as web-based services that permit peoples to: 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a restricted system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and terminology of these connections may differ from site to site. The internet is not only a means of communication, but also provides information and knowledge which users can harness for educational purposes.

ICT use improved the teaching - learning process, and now a days online technology have been used effectively in writing instruction such as online writing labs OWLs and writing courses. The online platform also delivers a way for students to share their writing with a wider audience and use the feedback to gain a more accurate understanding of their intended audience. This critically supports the component of effective writing.

The present paper will present the outcomes of a study that discovered the perceptions of English as second language (ESL) students on learning writing skills using the internet. The results

were gained through the responses of Amity B.Ed. students of the Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, surat in a questionnaire with close- and open-ended survey questions.

Rational :- (The Association of the Internet with Writing and Its Values)

The use of technology, precisely the internet, as a learning device has expanded quickly in the world during the last era. ESL teachers all around the world are using the internet as a teaching - learning tool in the language due to its numerous possible potential benefits, some of which include reliable asynchronous communication between students and teachers, up-to-date discussions and library resources.

Mohd. Asri M.N. (2002). In his study, **The use of the internet in ESL Writing Classroom: A Case Study** discovered that the use of internet in the ESL writing classroom was largely positive. Though, practical difficulties proved to be one of the prime obstacles. However, the students stated that they felt their writing ability had improved through the introduction of the internet in their writing class. In other studies Huang, S. (1999). **Internet assisting EFL writing learning: From Learners' perspective**, Richards, C. (1996). **The impact of the internet on teaching and learning in education as perceived by teachers, library media specialists and students**, Shields, M. (1991). **Using computers to improve writing skills and attitudes of middle school students** also supported the introduction of the internet in a writing classroom as positive motivational tools for students. Frizler, K.L. (1995). In his study titled **The Internet as an educational tool in ESOL writing instruction** showed that students were able to improve writing skills because they used natural language on the internet. The internet also provides opportunity for students to practise the language or be exposed to the language in the classroom.

According to previous studies, the incorporation of the internet in writing was an effective and powerful tool to improve ESL students' writing skills. Moreover, as technology becomes more projecting prominent tools, besides, today's children are "more interested in learning by using a computer rather than more old-fashioned methods".

From these studies, it seems that the association between the internet and writing is one that supplements each other. However, the studies do not provide enough support or evidence on exactly how the internet complements the learning of writing, as only the encouragement and motivation for students to practise writing is mentioned. Undoubtedly, using the internet in the ESL classroom has its own pros and cons. Proper guidance, direction and supervision is required if the internet is to be a valuable teaching - learning tool for English Language (ESL).

Method

The research design of the present study was a mixed method approach which comprised quantitative and qualitative features in a survey questionnaire. The quantitative items that the researchers used involved the Likert scale while the qualitative items comprised of three open-ended questions. The quantitative items in the research were the main data and were reinforced by the qualitative data. This study was carried out in the academic year 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. Twenty one item surveys that probed a specific scope of issues were distributed to 49 students of the Amity B. Ed. College, Two year B.Ed. program of the Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat. Forty Nine sets of questionnaires were distributed individually with a reoccurrence rate of 100%. 79.5% of them are female and the other 20.5% are male. All of the respondents are between 20 to 25 years old. All the respondents are Gujarati Medium Student Teacher.

Results

The data collected from the questionnaires on the ESL students' perceptions on learning ESL writing skill using the internet are discussed and presented here in 3 subsets. The first one set will shed light on the students' understanding and involvement of the use of the social networking sites

that are accessible on the internet. The second sets will be on what the students perceive and observe the internet as. This section is then divided further into a sub-category that includes the opinion of the students of the internet as a source of education and as a stage for teaching - learning ESL writing skill. The third one will be an inquiry on what degree of the effects of the internet on their writing skills, which are divided into two sub-sections: formal writing and informal writing.

Students' understanding and involvement of the use of the social networking sites

This segment presents the data collected on the types of social network sites that the students had come in contact with before. The social network sites that were mentioned in this segment are YouTube, Facebook and Whatsapp, Twitter, Blogspot, Wordpress, Tumblr, Edmodo, Padlet, Forum sites and Myspace. Table 1 below shows that a majority of students are familiar with Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Blogspot and Wordpress, but are less familiar with Edmodo, Padlet, Flipclass Myspace, forum sites and Tumblr.

From the data, the most favourite social network site is indisputably Facebook and Whatsapp, with a percentage of 93.3%, followed by the second favourite social network site, YouTube, with a percentage of 90%, subsequently followed by Twitter and Blogspot, both sharing the same percentage of the respondents (70%). Next, 56.7% of the respondents had the experience of using Wordpress, while 40% have used Myspace before. A small number of the respondents had experience using forum sites and Tumblr, with 36.7% and 30% respectively.

Table 1.

Site	Number of students	(%)
YouTube	47	90.0
Facebook and Whatsapp	48	93.3
Twitter	42	70.0
Blogspot	42	70.0
Wordpress	34	56.7
Tumblr, Flip Class	18	30.0
Myspace, Padlet	24	40.0
Forum, Edmodo	22	36.7

Students' experience with certain social network sites available on the internet

Facebook and whatsapp allows users to share messages, not only one-to-one but also in a one-to-many mode of communication. Facebook and whatsapp was widely used by students to communicate. Facebook and whatsapp has become an "integral part of students' daily lives and most people's daily practices". This explains why a large majority of students are well familiarized with Facebook and whatsapp. YouTube is a video-sharing site that allows users to watch videos posted by other users as well as upload videos of their own. This multimedia sharing platform covers a variety of genres, ranging from entertainment to educational. As the second highest used site in this study, students are aware of the presence of YouTube and its benefits. With Facebook and YouTube as the two most used sites to the respondents, we can presume that these two are the ones that are most influential in the writing experience of the students. Websites such as Twitter, Blogspot and Wordpress are perhaps not commonly used by the students because the students may not have a strong interest in such websites. These websites consume time in the manner of its application and writing purposes. The least used websites, such as Myspace, Padlet, Tumblr, Flip Class, and forum sites, Edmodo are rarely used because of its purposes that are not in line with the students' interests.

What Students See the Internet as a Source of Education?

This sub-set presents the items in the questionnaire that causes a response by the students that relates to the internet as a source of education. The respondents were asked to answer the items in the form of a Likert scale to see how they perceive the use of internet in enhancing their knowledge.

Table 2.

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
It helps me to learn new vocabularies.	0.0	2.2	59.8	38.0
It gives me new Information and knowledge.	0.0	0.0	30.5	69.5
It helps me to complete my task easier	0.0	8.9	43.4	47.7

Internet as a Source of Education

1) It helps me to learn new vocabularies

From Table 2 above, it can be seen that the number of respondents who strongly agreed with the item is 38.0%, followed by 59.8% who agreed. Only the remaining 2.2% disagreed with the statement, which indicates that the internet does help the respondents to learn new vocabularies. One of the respondents, in an open-ended question, also stated that, "Yes, the internet improves the vocabulary development." For this item, a significant number of the respondents agreed with the notion that the internet helps expand their vocabularies.

2) It gives me new information and knowledge

For the second item in this sub-subsection, 100% of respondents agreed, with those who strongly agreed at 69.5%, and 30.5% who agreed. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement, thus supporting the idea that the internet does help the respondents to gain new information and knowledge. One of the respondents stated in the open-ended section, that "I want to be socially updated, through these websites, I can also get information", thus the internet allows her to be up-to-moment with the latest news and events.

3) It helps me to complete my task easier

91.1% of respondents agreed with this statement. Only 8.9% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, which suggests that the internet helps the respondents in completing their work easier. One of the responses received through the open-ended section was that he spends "almost 4-5 hours per day to surf the internet in order to complete my assignment." This reveals that the respondent spent most of his time on the internet, relying on it as a database for knowledge and information to help in his studies and tasks.

A Platform for Learning Writing

This sub-set comprises items in the questionnaire that pursues a response from the respondents relating to the internet as a platform for learning writing. The respondents were asked to answer the items on a Likert scale to see how the respondents perceived the internet as a source in learning writing.

Table 3.

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
A medium for me to improve my writing skills.	0.0	0.0	81.7	18.3
It does not help me in my writing	25.3	63.2	11.5	0.0

skills at all.				
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Internet as a platform for learning writing

1) A medium for me to improve my writing skills

From Table 3, 100% of respondents agreed with the notion, with 18.3% strongly agreeing and 81.7% agreeing. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This indicates that the internet does improve their writing skills. The responses received through the open-ended survey show that students are more exposed to writing and practise it more when using these sites. Some stated that: "Yes, because I write a lot. In a way, it helps me to use it as training for my writing skills." "Yes, because there more exposure I've on writing skills, the better I can write." "Yes, because I am constantly constructing words and sentences." From the responses and data above, the internet is a good source for students and even individuals who seek guidance in improving their writing skills.

2) It does not help me in my writing skills at all

From Table 3, 88.5% of respondents disagreed that the internet did not help them in their writing skills at all, while 11.5% of the respondents agreed with the statement. Though some agreed that the internet does not help in their writing, there is a significant portion who agreed that the internet is a place for them to learn writing skills. Those who agreed seem to think that using the internet to learn writing even improves their writing style. He said, "Yes, I do think it works like a charm. I've improved my style of writing better than ever." However, is merely using the internet enough? One respondent does not think so. She said, "No, because until you write things then we can improve. We cannot improve by reading only." The contradicting views on whether the internet does or does not help in improving one's writing skills makes it clear that an awareness on the benefits of the internet is clearly needed to further strengthen the fact that the internet can be a medium to help one in their writing, if used wisely and appropriately.

The Extent to Which the Internet Affects Students' Way of Writing

Formal Writing

Respondents were asked whether the internet affects their way of writing based on a four-point Likert scale. An exploration of the students' perceptions was done to know whether the internet affects their formal writing.

Table 4

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
I like to use correct punctuation.	5.7	18.5	48.5	27.3
I bring my style of writing on the internet in my formal writing.	12.4	39.3	32.5	15.8

Internet affects students' formal writing

Referring to Table 4, the first item presents 75.8% who agreed with the statement of them having the tendency to use correct punctuation in their writing on the internet. For the second item which seeks insight on whether the respondents are inclined to bring their style of writing on the internet to their purposeful writings, 39.3% and 12.4% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. Slightly less than half 48.3% agreed, with only 15.8% who strongly agreed. Based on the responses from the study on this aspect, many prefer to use correct punctuation when they are writing on the internet and more than half of them did not believe that their formal writing was influenced by their style of writing on the internet. Using and practising accurate punctuation in writing is extremely vital and can go a long way for one to improve their writing skills.

Informal Writing

Respondents were asked on their views on whether the internet affects their informal writing.

Table 5

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
I like to blog about my life, important events and etc.	7.9	33.5	43.2	15.4
It influenced me to compose my own lyrics.	13.6	41.6	26.4	18.4
I use short forms when writing on the internet.	10.3	13.8	53.3	22.6

Internet affects students' informal writing

1) I like to blog about my life, important events and etc.

For item 1, 43.2% and 15.4% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement respectively, whereas 33.5% of the respondents disagreed with 7.9% who strongly disagreed. From the table above, we can say that the internet generally encourages continuous writing by respondents although it is informal. This shows that the majority of respondents practise their writing when they are on the net.

2) It influenced me to compose my own lyrics

For item 2, 41.6% and 13.6% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively, while 26.4% of the respondents agreed, followed by 18.4% who strongly agreed. More than half disagreed with the statement and did not feel that the internet influenced them to compose their own lyrics. This could be because song or poem composition is a specific style of writing that not everyone is interested in. However, almost half, 44.8% of respondents do agree that it helps them to do so in some way. This is interesting as a channel for creative writing and expression.

3) I use short forms when writing on the internet

Following that, the third item in this sub-set showed that 53.3% and 22.6% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they used short forms when writing on the internet. However, 13.8% disagreed and 10.3% strongly disagreed. This means that 75.8% of students used short forms when writing on the internet. Although writing is practised frequently by the respondents on the internet, the use of short forms might deteriorate their quality in writing as they may unconsciously apply them in their formal writing. The items highlighted in this segment point to the effects of the internet on the respondents' informal writing.

Item 1, which implies the respondents' interest in the activity of blogging, showcased an encouraging response from the students. Blogging, which promotes free writing, can be a good platform for the respondents to apply and practise writing, thus improving their writing skills.

Item 2, which suggests respondents composing their own lyrics, is also beneficial as it stimulates creativity in their writing.

The 3rd item, on the other hand, which depicted a large number of respondents who used short forms when they write on the internet, showed what is commonly done by students as a time-saving effort.

On the bright side, by them having the ability to do so, it can be helpful for them to efficiently write down important notes.

Conclusion

Through the study on learning writing with the internet with ESL learners as respondents, the results have shown a significantly positive outcome for the further development of this area.

The internet, as confirmed from the responses by the students, is seen as a hub of information when it comes to language learning. It is proven that internet does act as a catalyst in learning, which a teacher can exploit when it comes to the teaching and learning process. With the positive findings, it is also evident that most of the respondents agreed that, in certain ways, the internet provides assistance for them to improve their writing. The amalgamation of the internet in the teaching and learning process can also be significant to teachers, whereby it allows the students to learn writing in an alternative method. It also advocates the students to further develop their writing skills with the various opportunities for writing presented to them on the internet.

Knowing that the internet arouses active interaction from the students to connect with others, and that the students of today are constantly spending more time on their computers, taking an approach that uses a medium that is interesting to them as a method for them to acquire and learn writing could be constructive and favourable. With adequate guidance from their educators, this effort could be a successful progression for the students to cultivate competent and excellent writing skills.

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