

***Evaluating the Usefulness of the Internet in
EFL Classrooms at the Secondary Stage.***

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Abstract:

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has recently made its way into the foreign language classroom. It is an innovative way to increase students' foreign language use. Therefore, the objectives of this research were to determine whether the Internet could indeed contribute anything to modern language teaching, particularly to the instruction of English as a foreign language (EFL) at the secondary stage, and in what way it could be used best to achieve this. As such, it aimed to be not only a theoretical discussion, but also a practical starting point for teachers and schools that are seeking to integrate the Internet into the foreign language curricula. The research was also an attempt to investigate the attitudes of the EFL secondary school teachers in Egypt towards the use of the Internet at this stage. The results showed that the Internet had many advantages. It is true of course that some of these, such as more learner autonomy, can also be realised without the aid of the Internet. Nevertheless, the nature of the Net itself makes it an outstanding tool for further emphasis on student-centredness and communication. The latter in combination with the ample availability of authentic language materials are among the most important features of the Internet that make it an excellent language learning tool. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that the Internet can best be used as a complement rather than a replacement to traditional teaching methods, since there are also drawbacks to using the Net in an educational context. Many of these drawbacks, however, are of a practical nature and once removed, the Internet is a powerful tool for communicating, accessing authentic language

materials, motivating students, and preparing them for the tasks they will be expected to accomplish not only in the work place, but across all aspects of their lives. Teachers' attitudes questionnaire demonstrated that the Internet seems to be an excellent tool for teaching foreign language and culture. The results point out that it is important, however, to integrate the use of the Internet into ordinary classroom activities, so that students perceive the Internet as an integral part of the class instead of as an add-on .

Preamble:

"Computers are coming! Computers are coming!" is the cry heard around the world as the technology revolution slowly and insidiously works its way into the classroom from kindergarten through higher education.

Over the past few years, the Internet has emerged as a prominent new technology. The influence of such a powerful technological tool has pervaded all aspects of the educational, business, and economic sectors of our world. As the Internet affects our lives across all disciplines, those who can write and think quickly and critically will be the ones who are ultimately successful in what is the goal for most human beings--to communicate (Anderson, 1995). However, those who do not possess fluency in the use of computers and writing will be considered by academic standards to be uneducated, and will likely fall behind not only on college campuses, but in their work places as well. In fact, technology will not replace teachers... teachers who use technology will probably replace those who do not. Regardless of whether one uses the Internet or not, one must be clear about the fact that we have entered a new information age and the Internet is here to stay.

The lure of the World Wide Web is novelty and a sense of empowerment (Maddux, 1996). The power associated with the WWW is, in part, derived from having access to what has been touted as the world's largest library. Integrating the WWW in formal learning environments is also potentially advantageous to

traditional classroom delivery because it can effectively facilitate EFL learning (Flannery Silc, 1998; Hoffman, 1996; Joo, 1999; Lee, 1997; Maddux, 1996; Meloni, 1998; Sussex & White, 1996; Widerman et al, 1999; and Warschauer, 1995, 1996, 1997) while simultaneously facilitating the development of basic computer and information skills necessary to meet the exigencies of an increasingly computer-literate workforce. Working with the WWW necessitates the ability to select and use a browser to search for, locate, retrieve, and store information; download information and products; navigate using hyperlinks; and send and retrieve email (Li & Hart, 1996). Using the WWW therefore involves both computer and information literacy.

Over the past thirty years language teachers have witnessed dramatic changes in the ways that languages are taught. The focus of instruction has broadened from the teaching of discrete grammatical structures to the fostering of communicative ability. Creative self-expression has come to be valued over recitation of memorized dialogues. Negotiation of meaning has come to take precedence over structural drill practice. Comprehension has taken on new importance, and providing comprehensible input has become a common pedagogical imperative. Culture has received renewed interest and emphasis, even if many teachers remain unsure how best to teach it. Language textbooks have begun to distinguish spoken and written language forms, and commonly incorporate authentic texts (such as advertisements and realia) alongside literary texts. It is in the context of these multifarious changes that one of the most significant areas of innovation in language education computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has come of age. Nowadays, audiotape-based language labs are gradually being replaced by language media centers, where language learners can use multimedia CD-ROMs and laserdiscs, access foreign language documents on the World Wide Web, and communicate with their teachers, fellow classmates, and native speakers by electronic mail. If language

teaching . has become more exciting, it has also become considerably more complex.

The researcher came into contact with the Internet when he was in a scientific mission to the U.S.A. The researcher was amazed by the sheer volume of resources available on the World Wide Web. Moreover, e-mail allowed him to consult experts, either directly or by means of newsgroups. It soon became clear to him that the Internet could be a useful tool in many fields and that it would have an increasing impact on society. The Internet is one of the most powerful tools an EFL teacher can use to help students collaborate, interact and participate actively in the learning process. However, the wealth of available resources may cause confusion among students and discourage them from participating, if they are not given the necessary guidelines. When students are faced with thousands of Internet sources they cannot handle such a big amount of information. One of the most important tasks for EFL teachers is to assist their students so that they can discover what they enjoy most according to their level of linguistic competence. Teachers are also responsible for the evaluation of all the web tools offered.

Because the WWW is a mere decade old, the study of teaching and learning EFL with the Web is very new. Technology is developing so rapidly that it can often be difficult or even overwhelming to harness, somewhat like trying to get a drink of water from a gushing fire hydrant. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to determine whether the Internet can indeed contribute anything to modern language teaching, particularly to the instruction of English as a foreign language (EFL) at secondary schools in Egypt, and in what way it can be used best to achieve this. As such, it aims to be not only a theoretical discussion, but also a practical starting point for teachers and schools that are seeking to integrate the Internet into the foreign language curricula. The research was also an attempt to investigate the attitudes of the EFL secondary schools teachers in Egypt towards the use of the Internet at this stage.

The WWW is a new technology and, as such, scholarly research suggesting theory and practical implications for integrating the WWW as a pedagogical tool in EFL programs is limited. Therefore, this research is a starting point that will enable teachers to find their own way on the Internet.

Background of the study:

Because the use of the Internet is widespread in numerous fields and domains, without a doubt, it also carries great potential for educational use, specifically second and foreign language education. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has recently made its way into the foreign language classroom. It is an innovative way to increase students' foreign language use. There are many claims and expectations with regard to CMC. Some researchers have tried to identify specific features of foreign language generated through the electronic medium (e.g. Warschauer, 1997); others have described particular cases where CMC was used successfully in the FL classroom and attempted to explain this (e.g. St. John & Cash, 1995). Nevertheless, CMC is still a very young field and it suffers from a lack of extensive theoretical and empirical research.

1) What is the Internet?

Networked computers have been in existence since the late 1960s (Meadow, 1998). The term Internet, however, was only first introduced in 1982 (PBS Online, 2000). In short, the Internet is a set of smaller interconnected networks. This set of interconnected networks consists of personal computers, which are connected to larger computers - servers. Personal computers and servers can connect to other servers through an agreed upon set of standards. In this way, individuals on personal computers can connect to information stored on computers around the world. For this reason, the Internet can be seen as the world's largest library.

The Internet enables users to exchange information stored on computers through different schemes. These schemes include HTTP (Hypertext Transfer

Protocol), for Web pages; HTTPS, for secure Web pages; FTP, (File Transfer Protocol) for downloading files from the Net; News, for sending and reading messages posted to a Usenet newsgroup; Mailto, for sending electronic mail; and File, for accessing files on a local hard disk (Castro, 1998). With these many possibilities for the exchange of information, the number of individuals connected to the Internet has increased exponentially over the past five years. In 1996, 40 million people were connected to the Internet in almost 150 countries (PBS Online, 2000). Four years later, there were an estimated 242 million Internet users worldwide (Commerce Net, 2000).

2) *Why use the Internet in TEFL?*

There are several possible reasons for using the Internet in language teaching. One rationale is found in the belief that the linguistic nature of online communication is desirable for promoting language learning. It has been found, for example, that electronic discourse tends to be more lexically and syntactically more complex than oral discourse (Warschauer, 1996a) and features a broad range of linguistic functions beneficial for language learning (Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995; Wang, 1993). Another possible reason for using the Internet is that it creates optimal conditions for learning to write, since it provides an authentic audience for written communication (see, for example Janda, 1995). A third possible reason is that it can increase students' motivation (Warschauer, 1996c). A fourth possible reason is the belief that learning computer skills is essential to students' future success; this reason suggests that it is not only a matter of using the Internet to learn English but also of learning English to be able to function well on the Internet.

None of these reasons are more or less legitimate than any of the others. However, since there are so many ways to integrate the Internet into classroom instruction, it is important for the teacher to clarify his or her goals. If, for example, one of the teacher's goals is to teach students new computer skills, the teacher may want to choose Internet applications which will be most useful to

them outside of the classroom, with activities structured so that students steadily gain mastery of more skills. If the immediate goal is to create a certain kind of linguistic environment for students, once again, the teacher should consider what types of language experiences would be beneficial and structure computer activities accordingly. If the goal is to teach writing, Internet activities should be structured so that they steadily bring about an increase in the types of writing processes and relationships essential to becoming a better writer (see, for example, seven activities by Janda in Warschauer, 1995b).

3) On-line applications for use in the foreign language class.

There is a wide range of on-line applications which are already available for use in the foreign language class. These include dictionaries and encyclopedias, links for teachers, chat-rooms, pronunciation tutors, grammar and vocabulary quizzes, games and puzzles, literary extracts. The World Wide Web (WWW) is a virtual library of information that can be accessed by any user round the clock. If someone wants to read or listen to the news, for example, there are a number of sources offering the latest news either printed or recorded. The most important newspapers and magazines in the world are available on-line and the same is the case with radio and TV channels. Another example is communicating with electronic pen friends, something that most students would enjoy. Teachers should explain how it all works and help students find their keypals. Two EFL classes from different countries can arrange to send E-mail regularly to one another. This can be done quite easily thanks to the web sites providing lists of students looking for communication. It is also possible for two or more students to join a chat-room and talk on-line through E-mail.

Another network-based EFL activity could be project writing. By working for a project a pupil can construct knowledge rather than only receive it. Students can work on their own, in groups of two or in larger teams, in order to write an assignment, the size of which may vary according to the objectives set by the instructor. A variety of sources can be used besides the Internet such as school

libraries, encyclopedias, reference books etc. The Internet itself can provide a lot of food for thought. The final outcome of their research can be typed using a word processor. A word processor can be used in writing compositions, in preparing a class newsletter or in producing a school home page. In such a Web page students can publish their project work so that it can reach a wider audience. That makes them feel more responsible for the final product and consequently makes them work more laboriously.

4)The Internet and Electronic Mail.

Although the Internet has been available to most people, only recently have educators been realizing the potential the Internet can have in second and foreign language classrooms. The following section will therefore consider some of these potential benefits and advantages of incorporating such technology in language courses. The Internet has been used by some language instructors in creative ways - one of these innovations being use of electronic mail (e-mail), a specific feature of the Internet. Overall, e-mail can encourage students to use computers in realistic, authentic situations in order to develop communicative, and thinking skills. E-mail is easy to use and even teachers intimidated by computers can quickly become adept at using e-mail with their students. Furthermore, even timid or inhibited students can benefit from the meaningful interaction and communication e-mail makes possible (Kroonenberg ,1995; Cononelos and Oliva ,1993).

E-mail can also be used to communicate long-distance with language learners in other schools, or other countries for that matter (Cheung,1998; Davis & Chang,1994).While the above examples illustrate a few uses of e-mail in the second and foreign language classroom, without a doubt e-mail can provide authentic communication and can foster awareness of both the language learner and the languages they are learning.

5) EFL teachers' attitudes towards technology:

Today's schools have heavily invested in computers and related technologies over the past decade. These technologies are playing important roles in education and training at many levels, such as multimedia, internet, world wide web, intranet, etc., are used to a greater extent. Future plans include networking computer technologies for whole- class viewing of computer information technologies. Resulting in most of the expenditure going to purchasing computers.

The way teachers view using computers in their classes is an important issue as a positive approach can help them to be more effective while teaching in a computer lab. There might be teachers who have negative attitudes towards using computers in their classes. According to Mc Meniman and Evans (1986) one of the obstacles to integrating computers into schools is related to teachers' beliefs about teaching, beliefs about computers, their established classroom practices and unwillingness to change. Language teachers do not change their beliefs by decree but by practicing and when they are presented with the evidence that technology has positive effects on learning. Another possible reason for this kind of attitude might be because they do not feel confident enough and feel a need to be trained about the use of computers in classes.

One very important thing that shouldn't be forgotten is that the presence of computer itself will not increase student motivation or enhance success in learning and CALL has an enormous potential in the hands of skillful teachers (Mc Meniman and Evans 1998). Although the integration of all types of technology into the classroom is viewed as an effective instructional strategy for improving the students, many teachers often do not have favorable attitudes towards the effectiveness of technology (Huan, Compley, Williams, and Waxman, 1992; Padron, 1992).

Speaking of the integration of technology into classroom, we can think how teachers are reoriented the terms of skills on technology. This is important since

teachers are able to use all types of technology as an instructional instrument, and to feel comfortable with them before integrating into their daily teaching-learning activities.

Teachers' attitudes about technological innovation can significantly change the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and the roles between teachers and students. So, their attitudes should be improved positively toward the use of technology. If teachers are indeed to embrace technology and make it a part of their teaching culture, such as feelings, beliefs, values, etc., of their classrooms. In sum, if we know teachers' vision about technology we can learn their feelings about technology.

One problem is that the growth of technology as an instructional tool is influenced by teachers' attitudes towards these technologies and their ability to use them successfully. While bombarded with promises of tomorrow's technology, many teachers are struggling to make efficient and effective use of today's technologies (Planow, Bauder, Carr, and Sarner, 1993).

Teachers' attitudes toward computers and related technologies can also influence students' attitudes toward technology. A number of studies have investigated teachers' attitude toward use of technology and anxiety about technology (Kay, 1989; Koohang, 1987).

Mc Meniman and Evans (1998) mention a study which was undertaken in 1994 and 1995 by teachers of Asian languages at Griffith University in Brisbane. They aimed to deal with the problem of low proficiency outcomes and getting benefit from technology to assist in the self management of student learning. The interest was in technology as communicative acts can be simulated and interaction can occur by it. The results indicated that the attitudes of teachers towards using computers in language teaching ranged widely. There are some positive comments such as they believed that language teaching through the computer can be developed in many ways and that computer facilities will help

although they cannot teach everything. The negative answers included comments such as there is the danger that some students might only use computers for having fun. They added that too much time is wasted in order to develop software and/or getting used to using software (both for students and teachers). At the end of 1995 teachers were again interviewed and it was found that there are significant changes (positive) in teachers' attitudes towards using computers. This was of course due to the training they got within the year.

Pilus (1995) mentions a study which aims to investigate the interest in CALL and level of computer literacy of English teachers at International Islamic University, Malaysia. 441 ESL teachers were required to answer the questionnaires which mainly aimed to find the general level of computer literacy of the ESL teachers and whether they would be interested in attending courses related to CALL (or computer use in classes). The results showed that they are interested in integrating computers in teaching. 43 teachers (97.73%) indicated that they are keen to learn or improve their skills in computing. There are also 33 teachers (75%) who stated that they are willing to learn programming. Favorable attitudes were found. The level of computer literacy among the teachers ranged widely. Majority of the teachers are quite interested and motivated to participate in CALL.

6) The existing situation of the Internet at the secondary stage in Egypt:

When examining the goals of EFL teaching at secondary schools in Egypt, one will soon discover that the use of the Internet can be a useful aid in attaining these objectives. There is a focus on language, communication, and culture that makes the application of authentic materials increasingly important. Moreover, in this context teachers are looking for better ways of providing experiences that will improve their students' knowledge and skills in these target areas.

So far the actual influence of the Internet on EFL education has been marginal. Integration of the Internet into foreign language curricula has not yet been achieved and many secondary schools in Egypt do not yet have Internet access.

Where there is access, it is often limited to only a few connections, which makes using the Net on a broad scale virtually impossible.

While the Internet and its various facets offer a great deal to the language learner, it is not without its problems. Lines are often busy due to many users, it may take time to access information or browse the Net and technical glitches themselves can lead to frustration. There are also the telephone costs that will have to be budgeted for. It is noteworthy that the teachers at the secondary stage are responsible for paying the telephone costs of the Net. In addition, there is the question of how long Internet access will remain free. Lack of training and familiarity on part of the EFL teachers make it difficult to implement the Internet at the secondary school in Egypt. It is crucial that staff development activities focus on helping teachers master the technology, giving them time to familiarize themselves with a variety of software packages. Further, along with staff development, adequate technical support is essential. This requires that the Ministry of Education budgets for training in this area. Foreign language teachers are especially anxiety prone to computers since they often have little experience with computers. Costs related to training, as well as on-line costs of using a provider are issues that may interfere with implementing such a technology in schools. Censorship may also be a concern to language programs and instructors. The Internet offers access to all types of issues and topics, some of which are unsuitable for students, and this in itself may result in various problems. While some precautions can be taken at the present time, they are not full proof by any means. Equity issues may also present difficulties when attempting to implement such technology in the classroom. As the commercial sector begins to assume a more prominent role in the Internet's infrastructure, rural and inner-city schools, already hard-pressed to provide Internet access, may find it less affordable. This is certainly discouraging for both language teachers and students in such educational settings (Mike, 1996). Many

institutions such as these may also not have the computers or computing facilities necessary to implement such type of technology.

7) What the future holds:

The explosive growth of the Internet during the last few years has made it a magic window into knowledge. As far as TEFL is concerned, besides engaging foreign language students in linguistic tasks of reading English, developing vocabulary, and interpreting language structures (Kasper, p.8), the Internet seems to be changing not only the way we work and live but also the way we think and learn. As Belisle has written: "Through this increased electronic access to the world around them, students' social awareness and confidence increases" (Belisle, p.1)

It may be difficult to foresee how the Internet will be integrated into the language classroom in the future but it seems likely that it will be a significant part of the EFL curriculum. The integration of the Internet into TEFL may bring about important changes to:

- The human relationships in the class
- The classroom environment
- The curriculum structure and orientation
- The teachers' role
- The system of evaluation
- The school management

It is noteworthy that technology as such is not the answer to all our problems. What really matters is how we use technology. Computers can/will never substitute teachers but they offer new opportunities for better language practice. They may actually make the process of language learning significantly richer and play a key role in the reform of a country's educational system. The next generation of students will feel a lot more confident with information

technology than we do. As a result, they will also be able to use the Internet to communicate more effectively, practise language skills more thoroughly and solve learning problems more easily.

8) Language learning in the future:

A language learner at the end of the century, who has an Internet access from home via a modem, and who spends most of his working hour with the computer owing to his profession, is literally considered a learner, and he is not to be taught but instructed and assisted. He might as well be able to find sources for his studies by himself, he can contact his language teacher via e-mail, he can share his language learning experience with his fellow learners in newsgroups.

The Internet offers the advantages of computer assisted language learning and facilities provided by the information highway. The greatest benefit is that learners will meet the English language as it is spoken at present, and they can pick up vocabulary as it is used today. Textbooks, and especially dictionaries are a bit delayed, and the latest expressions and words coined by a language community of professionals cannot be found. WWW pages are frequently revised and refreshed on the hosts.

The application of the Internet in the language class at present can be summarised as follows:

- collecting information, getting familiar with programs and facilities, showing how students can explore them
- collecting data on professional subjects, as well as informatics, finding materials to be consulted
- teaching computer together with the English language
- finding and making use of materials suitable for a direct usage in the language class (software's, texts, literature)

- introducing starting off sites for students, from where they can continue searching the Web.

Purpose and research questions:

The purpose of this research was to determine whether the Internet could indeed contribute anything to modern language teaching, particularly to the instruction of English as a foreign language (EFL) at the secondary stage, and in what way it could be used best to achieve this. As such, it aimed to be not only a theoretical discussion, but also a practical starting point for teachers and schools that are seeking to integrate the Internet into the foreign language curricula. The research was also an attempt to investigate the attitudes of the EFL secondary school teachers in Egypt towards the use of the Internet at this stage. To guide the study, the following research questions were developed:

- 1) Is the Internet a true asset to EFL students at the secondary stage in Egypt ?
- 2) What are EFL teachers' attitudes at the secondary stage in Egypt towards the use of the Internet ?
- 3) How can a suggested framework be designed to integrate the Internet into EFL curriculum at the secondary stage ?

Method of the study:

Producers:

In order to find answers to the above questions, the researcher adopted the following procedures:

- (1) Indicating the importance of the Internet to EFL students at the secondary stage in Egypt through the review of literature.
- (2) Investigating the EFL teachers' attitudes at the secondary stage in Egypt towards the use of the Internet.
- (3) Designing a suggested framework to integrate the Internet into EFL curriculum at the secondary stage (See Appendix 2).

Subjects:

The population for this study was a group of 70 EFL secondary schools teachers from Sharkia Governorate. This study aimed to identify and examine their specific computer attitudes. It also analyzed their attitudes towards the Internet. The researcher hypothesized that, since the Internet is a useful tool for teaching languages, EFL secondary schools teachers who are computer literate, feel comfortable using the Internet, and believe that language-based interactions with computers are meaningful and productive.

Instruments:

1- EFL secondary school teachers' attitudes questionnaire.

Description of the instrument:

The questionnaire aimed at revealing the attitudes of the secondary school teachers in Egypt towards the use of the Internet to find out the accessibility of integrating this new technology into EFL teaching at secondary schools in Egypt. The questions in section one investigate the teachers' computer literacy in general. Section two consists of 35 items which aim at revealing the attitudes of those teachers towards the Internet in general and integrating it into EFL teaching in particular. The questionnaire was handed to teachers at their schools, then the results were analysed.

The questionnaire consists of two sections. The two constructs are: affect (feeling towards the Internet); behavioural (behavioural intentions and actions with respect to the Internet); perceived behaviour control (perceived ease, or difficulty, of using computers) and perceived usefulness (the degree to which an individual believes using the Internet will enhance his job performance). As shown in Table 1 (See Appendix 1), items in the perceived usefulness construct

refer to the application of the Internet in helping the respondent to improve the quality of his/ her teaching .

The two constructs made up a total of 43 items. The scale was labeled yes, no(39 items); very, not at all(2 questions); and two multiple choice questions.

Validity of the instrument:

To determine the validity of the instrument. It was submitted to a group of EFL teaching specialists. Some items were modified until it took its final shape.

Definitions of technical terms used in this study:

Computer mediated communication (CMC):

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is any communication using computers. This broad definition has been commonly refined to mean those communications that occur with the use of electronic media, such as

- Electronic mail
- Bulletin boards
- Discussion Lists
- Multi-user Domains (MUDs, MOOs)
- Offline Mail Readers
- Conferencing Software
- World Wide Web (WWW)
- using a dialogue software, especially HyperNews

Teaching using CMC includes some or all of these methods. The computer mediates part or all the communication of the classroom, which may be a face-

to-face classroom, an asynchronous discussion that takes place electronically via computers, a synchronous discussion that takes place using Inter Relay Chat, a form of distance tutoring, a world-wide conference conducted entirely "on-line," multi-user domains or any combination.

Most theory and practice about computer mediated communication refers, however, to the use of a conferencing system, such as CoSy, PARTicipate, FIRSTCLASS, VIRTUALUniversity, OFFLINE, or HyperNews among many others. The students and the instructor communication in "cyberspace," the imaginary space created when telephone lines and computers are used to send and receive messages .

Discussion List/Listserv:

Through e-mail, participants form groups to discuss (asynchronously) topics related to particular themes. Users send to one address an e-mail message which is distributed to all subscribers of that list.

Electronic Mail (e-mail):

Users send and receive individual written messages. It is the online equivalent of sending a letter through the regular mail (though much faster). This type of communication is asynchronous, as the writer and reader do not need to be online at the same time. In fact, it takes several minutes (at least) for an e-mail message to be delivered.

MOO (MUD--multi-user dimension, object-oriented):

Text-based virtual reality environment through which participants communicate synchronously, in real time, using text to describe their characters and surroundings, plus navigate through their environment.

World Wide Web (WWW):

A worldwide 'library' of pages of text, graphics, audio and video connected through keyword links. Through WWW, users can view documents, and then connect to other related documents anywhere in the world by clicking the mouse on a word or phrase.

Results:

In order to answer the questions pertaining to the study; the previous literature proved that the Internet is a true asset to EFL teaching at the secondary stage. As for the second question, the teachers' attitudes towards the use of the Internet in EFL teaching at the secondary stage in Egypt will be discussed in detail in the following section. Concerning the third question, a suggested framework to integrate the Internet into EFL curriculum at the secondary stage was designed (See Appendix 2).

-Teachers' Attitudes Towards the use of the Internet in EFL Teaching at Secondary Schools in Egypt.

Figure (1) demonstrates that the Internet seems to be an excellent tool for teaching foreign language and culture (See Appendix 1). The results point out that it is important, however, to integrate the use of the Internet into ordinary classroom activities, so that students perceive the Internet as an integral part of the class instead of as an add-on.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were summarized in table(1) . Computer ownership was low (7%), whereas Internet access at home amounts to 3% of the population .

Since the sample size is rather small for this pilot survey, the researcher could not draw very definite conclusion from the findings. The researcher could only say that teachers have positive attitudes towards the use of the Internet at

secondary school in the affective, behavioural and perceived usefulness components with.

On analyzing the data in table (1);it was found that the teachers had positive attitudes towards the Internet.(7%) only of the teachers stated that they had personal computers. This response is closely related to the response in item No.(9)in section (2);(83%) of the participants stated that the use of such new technology costs a lot of money. Froke (1994b) said, "concerning the money, the challenge was unique because of the nature of the technology." (96%) of the participants thought that the Internet saves time.items No.(11,25,26,28,31,32 and 33)indicated that the participants(80%,96%,91%,96%,96%,88%, 95%) believed that the Internet helps the students gain higher achievement. Lewis (1994) indicates three conditions under which Computer-assisted Learning and other technologies can be cost-effectiveness: Computer-assisted Learning costs the same as conventional instruction but ends up with producing higher achievement in the same amount of instructional time, it results in students achieving the same level but in less time. (70%) of the participants were afraid of losing their jobs due to the use of such new technology. Herschbach (1994) argues firmly that new technologies are add-on expenses and will not, in many cases, lower the cost of providing educational services. He stated that that the new technologies probably will not replace the teachers, but will supplement their efforts, as has been the pattern with other technologies.

A lack of technical and theoretical knowledge is another barrier to the use of Computer-assisted Language Learning technology. Not only is there a shortage of knowledge about developing software to promote learning, but also many instructors do not understand how to use the new technologies. Items No.(1,5,and 8) in section 1 showed that the subjects had little knowledge concerning the use of the computer and the Internet. Furthermore, little is known about integrating these new means of learning into an overall plan. Improper use of technologies can affect both the teacher and learner

negatively(Herschbach,1994; Miller, 1997; Office of Technology Assessment, 1995) .

We live in a time change. Gelatt (1995) stated that change itself has changed. Change has become so rapid, so turbulent, and so unpredictable that is now called "white water" change (p.10). Murphy & Terry (1998a) indicated the current of change move so quickly that they destroy what was considered the norm in the past, and by doing so, create new opportunities. But, there is a natural tendency for organizations to resist change. Item No.(17) indicated that (96%) of the subjects stated that they are too old to learn such new technology. Wrong conceptions about the use of technology limit innovation and threaten teachers' job and security. Instructors are tend not to use technologies that require substantially more preparation time, and it is tough to provide instructors and learners access to technologies that are easy to use (Herschbach, 1994).As for section two, most of the teachers' responses showed that they had positive attitudes towards the use of the Internet in general and integrating it into EFL teaching in particular; this was clear from the teachers' responses to items,(1,2,3,6,7,10,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,20,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,&34) which were more than (80%).The responses of the teachers to items (4,5,8,9,11,19,21,22,23&28) indicated that there was a kind of relation among them as in item (4),(45%) stated that they need not to learn the Internet; in fact , this is a high percentage.The responses of the teachers to items (5,8,9,11,19,21,22,23&28) were less than (70%) compared to the responses of the other items. These responses reflected what is called computer anxiety. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education announced that reading, writing and arithmetic would be joined by computing as a basic skill for all students (in Rosen & Weil, 1994). If teachers possess negative attitudes towards technology, that could serve as a deterrent to the utilization of computers as a tool for learning (Koochang, 1989). "Positive teacher attitudes towards computing, therefore, are critical if computers are to be effectively integrated into the elementary and secondary curriculum" (Mueller, Husband,

Christou, & Sun, 1991, p 23). One component of teacher attitudes towards technology is anxiety. "Anxiety can be caused by exposure to new material, new teachers, or new technologies.."(Reed & Overbaugh, 1993, p 75.)

Computer anxiety is prevalent amongst pre-service and practicing teachers, and many suffer at substantially high levels (Ayersman, 1996). If computer anxiety is a factor in the lack of technology integration in the Egyptian classrooms, then what can teacher education programs do to alleviate the situation? How can computer anxiety of in service teachers be reduced ? (42%) of the participants stated that the use of such new technology creates uncertainty due to unknown results (item No. 22) .Teacher education programs need to address these concerns. For reducing computer anxiety and thus improving the chance of technology integration into the practice of in-service teachers encompass designing separate courses for elementary and secondary education majors (Mueller et al ,1991; Reed et al., 1995), building a strong experiential background with technology (Koochang, 1989), and concentrating on changes in students' enjoyment, motivation and attitudes about teaching with technology (Laffey et al., 1998)

Discussion of results :

In order to answer not only the question whether or not the Internet is a true asset to the FL classroom ,but also how it can be used in the most effective way, a number of strengths and weaknesses of using the Internet in an educational context will be presented. Although the Internet changes rapidly and specific predictions are almost certainly misplaced, the influence of the Internet on society and thus on EFL instruction will only increase .

One of the main objectives of this research was to answer the question whether the Internet could be a useful tool in the EFL classroom. There is, however, no straightforward answer to this question. The Internet can indeed be a beneficial supplement to the traditional classroom, but there are also clear disadvantages to the Net as a language learning tool. The following subsections

will deal with the strengths and weaknesses of the use of the Internet in an educational context. In summary, however, it can be concluded that notwithstanding the drawbacks the Internet is a true asset to the foreign language classroom. Finally, it should be noted that most of the points made in the following subsections are valid ones with respect to the instruction of any foreign language .

Teachers' attitudes questionnaire demonstrated that the Internet seems to be an excellent tool for teaching foreign language and culture. The results point out that it is important, however, to integrate the use of the Internet into ordinary classroom activities, so that students perceive the Internet as an integral part of the class instead of as an add-on .

Teachers' attitudes about technological innovation can significantly change the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and the roles between teachers and students. So, their attitudes should be improved positively toward the use of technology. If teachers are indeed to embrace technology and make it a part of their teaching culture, such as feelings, beliefs, values, etc., of their classrooms. In sum, if we know teachers' vision about technology we can learn their feelings about technology.

Teachers' attitudes toward computers and related technologies can also influence students' attitudes toward technology.

Speaking of the integration of technology into classroom, we can think how teachers are reoriented the terms of skills on technology. This is important since teachers are able to use all types of technology as an instructional instrument, and to feel comfortable with them before integrating into their daily teaching-learning activities.

The strengths :

Schools are facing a major challenge in the 21st century. In addition to their traditional task, they will also have to prepare their students for a life and career in the information age. The Web offers a variety of authentic target-language

resources: a virtual trip to Peru, a guided bicycle trip to Santiago de Compostela, or images of the murals of Orozco, to name only a few examples for Spanish. Materials for French, Italian, German, Japanese, and Russian also abound, along with an ever-increasingly sophisticated array of Web-based courses and self-tests. Non-English Web pages account for 45% of the postings on the Web. More importantly, the Web gives all peoples of the world a channel to express their own voice and promote their own notions of self, which is reason alone for why language students should be reading these Web pages. This sense of authenticity on the Web provides endless topics for cross-cultural analysis and discussions in a content-based classroom.

Teachers are beginning to use Web pages, both original and adapted, to serve as the students' primary-source materials, especially in content-based language courses. In this type of course, students work through the tasks and activities presented them and only gradually have recourse to learn the grammar (for a technologically supported, content-based approach, see Barson 1991 and Debski 1997). The Web pages serve to provide content stimulation and a means for further inquiry. Given the richness of non-English Web materials, the class can move in new directions at any point or deepen their knowledge of any particular topic. For the experienced teacher who knows how to take advantage of these obvious communicative opportunities, a Web-based, content-driven, approach is a dream come true--and the students respond in kind. Something like this type of Web-based course might eventually displace the notion of a static textbook, Web copyright problems notwithstanding.

CD-ROMs offer an ideal medium for the delivery of specific applications that take advantage of large audio, graphics, and video files. The publishing industry is increasingly involved in producing high-quality CD-ROMs because the marketplace is demanding it. One of the jobs of today's language faculty and lab personnel is to keep track of this new generation of language CD-ROMs being produced and to know how to review them: language professionals need to know something about interface design in order to be able to review software

in the first place. Teachers must be educated in recognizing well-grounded pedagogy when they see it, hear it, and read it on the screen. Many of today's CD-ROMs have sophisticated visual interfaces, but care must be exercised so that the medium doesn't overshadow the message, to borrow a metaphor from Marshall McLuhan (1964).

Finally, computer mediated communication (CMC) provides a third platform where FL students can transcend the spatial and temporal confines of the classroom via the Internet. E-mail or asynchronous ('deferred time') communication and chat or synchronous ('real time') communication offer students the highest level of interactivity because they permit one-on-one, personal exchanges. SLA research has clearly demonstrated the importance of learning language through personal exchanges that require the learners to negotiate meaning with other learners and/or native speakers (Pica 1994, Long 1981 and 1991, Gass 1997, Gass & Varonis 1994, Doughty 1998). This negotiation of meaning appears to be one of the principled ways in which students gradually liberate themselves from the seemingly interminable stages of interlanguage and achieve higher proficiency in the target language.

The weaknesses:

Up to this point in time, the above discussion has described some of the potential benefits of the Internet and how it can be used in the second or foreign language classroom. However, such a discussion would be incomplete without addressing the disadvantages or obstacles related to the use of the Internet in the language classroom. While the Internet and its various facets offer a great deal to the language learner, it is not without its problems. The nature of the Internet itself can be a disadvantage at times. When lines are busy due to many users, it may take time to access information or browse the Net and technical glitches themselves can lead to frustration. Lack of training and familiarity on part of the teachers can make it difficult to implement the Internet in the language classroom. It is crucial that staff development activities focus on helping teachers master the technology, giving them time to familiarize themselves with

a variety of software packages. Further, along with staff development, adequate technical support is essential. This requires that the Ministry of Education budgets for training in this area. Foreign language teachers are especially anxiety prone to computers since they often have little experience with computers. Costs related to training, as well as on-line costs of using a provider are issues that may interfere with implementing such a technology in schools. Censorship may also be a concern to language programs and instructors. The Internet offers access to all types of issues and topics, some of which are unsuitable for students, and this in itself may result in various problems. While some precautions can be taken at the present time, they are not full proof by any means. Equity issues may also present difficulties when attempting to implement such technology in the classroom. As the commercial sector begins to assume a more prominent role in the Internet's infrastructure, rural and inner-city schools, already hard-pressed to provide Internet access, may find it less affordable. This is certainly discouraging for both language teachers and students in such educational settings (Mike, 1996). Many institutions such as these may also not have the computers or computing facilities necessary to implement such type of technology.

Recommendations:

Despite these limitations and obstacles, it must be realized that the Internet's educational potential is immense. Although electronic, the Internet is an entity related to literacy - people still interact with it entirely through reading and writing. For this reason alone, the Internet is a technology that will, without a doubt, have significant implications for both teaching and learning. So what does this imply for language teachers and learners? Teachers must become familiar with using the Internet and its various functions such as e-mail. They must also learn how to use specific search tools in order to access information, search for lesson plans, or material and ideas to supplement their lessons. Language teachers must learn now to transfer files from Internet sites to their own computer and vice versa. Obtaining information or literature on the

Internet, either through the Net itself, through books, or by attending workshops and courses will further assist this process. To avoid facing the same difficulties or problems associated with use of the Internet, teachers can ask students to keep track of problems that arise during use. In essence, language teachers must take the plunge and approach the Internet as a learning experience themselves. The more enthusiastic and more knowledgeable language teachers are, the more successfully they can implement Internet in the language classroom. For the language learner, the Internet offers a world of information available to students at the touch of a button. While it must be recognized that the Internet cannot replace the language classroom or the interaction between the language teacher and student, it offers a vast amount of information and lends itself to communication possibilities that can greatly enhance the language learning experience.

Certainly at this point in time, several questions need to be asked to guide future research in this area. How can use of the Internet correspond to the communicative or pedagogical goals of language teaching? How will the Internet and its related facets assist language learners in functioning in the global community? What will the real impact of the Internet in foreign language classrooms be? How can the Internet be used more effectively along side the present language curriculum? While these questions have been examined to some degree, researchers and language educators must further investigate and implement this technology to provide others with guidelines in this area.

Without a doubt we are in the center of a "monumental technological paradigm shift, one which will eventually change the way that all instructors teach and the way students learn". While technology should not take over the language classroom, it must be embraced in order to allow educators to do those things which they are unable to do themselves, or those which will improve what is currently being done in the classroom. It is essential that we make informed decisions about how the Internet can be successfully integrated into

the language classroom. If we as educators do not rise to the challenge - who will?

One of the major concerns of EFL instructors is the time required to train some students in basic keyboarding and computer skills in order to be able to participate in online activities. Future research will be helpful in determining the ideal role of EFL teachers in this area (Should we be expected to teach computer language, too?), and making recommendations on who should be facilitating our students' learning of how to use a computer. This is an area, which warrants research in not only EFL, but across the curriculum, as computer skills will benefit students in all university-level courses, and not just English.

Another consideration is that of establishing Internet access for language learners in rural, remote or impoverished locations. Is practical to think that the Internet will provide education to people who currently do not have the means or money to attend traditional colleges or universities? Though it is possible, is it likely? Research would be highly valued which examines the potential costs and time required for establishing technical connections in this area. Also worthy of consideration are the time and resources necessary for training teachers and students how to use the technology, not only technically, but pedagogically as well.

Lastly, and perhaps most important to our field, is the exigency for EFL instructors in various settings throughout the field to begin integrating suggestions based on this research and that of others .

Indeed, as EFL teachers around the world experiment with the Internet as a teaching and learning tool, and share their results on discussion lists, or in trade journals, magazines and books, we will all benefit and become empowered as instructors working to best prepare our students for a future of lifelong learning and success in the real world.

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- a formal letter: <http://www.amnesty.org/> (human rights abuse, sending a formal letter in defence of prisoners of conscience); <http://www.panda.org/home.cfm> (the site with the information about endangered species)
- a biography: <http://www.imdb.com/> (the Internet Movie Database), <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/bio/biomaker.htm> (biography maker homepage, with links to biographical sites all over the world, sample biographies of famous people); <http://www.gms.ocps.k12.fl.us/biophage/bio.html> (biographies of famous Americans, written by eighth grade students)
- listening activities: <http://www.esl-lab.com/cook/kookrdl.htm>
- a story to remember: <http://www.esl-lab.com/story1/story.scl.htm>.
- The Donkey and the Grasshopper [http:// iteslj. Org/](http://iteslj.org/)
- six games for the EFL/ESL Classroom: : [TTFSLJArticle=tr? Subject.edu.gazi.gef.aerso@service:mail](http://www.subject.edu/gazi.gef.aerso@service.mail)