

THE PURPOSES OF ELT STUDENTS' USE OF THE INTERNET

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ABSTRACT

By offering and providing new opportunities, nowadays the internet is being used widespread. The internet is also important for university students. It has been an increase on research involved the internet. The aim of this study, therefore, is to identify the purposes of using the internet among university students. The research was conducted on students who were attending at Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University, ELT Dept. Students were asked to respond to a questionnaire and their answers were put into three categories: demographic information, the purposes, preferences and reasons of using the internet and some suggestions regarding their internet usage. In addition to the questionnaire, 15 volunteer students were invited to answer two questions prepared by the researchers. Results showed that students' purposes were generally about sharing an information, social relationship, education and teaching facilities, and communication.

Key Words: Internet use, ELT, purpose, education

INTRODUCTION

Internet is a nice medium to connect with the entire World. People use it as a medium to connect with other people, sharing files, entertainment, information and lots of other activities in many terms. Therefore, Internet use is spreading rapidly into daily life, and directly affecting people's ideas and behavior. Internet has an impact in many areas including the all education systems. Internet heralded the development and implementation of new and innovative teaching strategies in higher education institutions. Educators who advocate technology integration in the learning process believe it will improve learning and prepare students to effectively participate in the 21st century workplace. Internet use has become a way of life for the majority of the students all around the world.

Nowadays, it is obvious that the Internet plays a major role in the lives of young people. They generally engage in online activities both inside and outside the classroom (Sefton-Green 2004). In the school, young people usually use the Internet for searching for information and completing tests. In their free times, they chat with friends, play online computer games and are involved in fan fiction, such as using published material to create pictures and films, etc. (Olin-Scheller & Wikström, 2010).

For the survey, the NSBA (2007) teamed up with Grunwald Associates to poll 1,277 9- to 17-year-olds, 1,039 parents, and 250 school district leaders who "make decisions on Internet policy." It found that a full 50 % of students who are online spend time discussing schoolwork, and 59 % spend time talking about education-related topics, "including college or college planning; learning outside of school; news; careers or jobs; politics, ideas, religion, or morals; and schoolwork." (<https://thejournal.com/articles/2007/08/14/research-students-actually-use-the-internet-for-education.aspx>) . Another survey shows the daily internet usage rate of online users in Turkey in 2016, sorted by age group. During the survey period, it was found that 95 % of internet users between the ages of 16-24; 91% of internet users between the ages of 25 and 34 were accessing the internet every day (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/348230/daily-internet-usage-age-group-turkey/>).

So, this present study was guided by mainly three reasons: First, it seems significant to investigate the reasons and purposes of EFL learners towards the use of the Internet. Second, to

investigate their preferences and reasons about how they connect to the Internet. Additionally, to state their preferred web 2.0 technologies and social media tools that are closely and directly related to attitudes of learners. Depending on these concerns, the study has four research questions that have been mentioned at methodology section.

Literature Review

Internationally, there are many surveys on the use of the Internet, and nearly all find that Internet use is most prevalent amongst younger, more educated people (Hoffman, Novak & Schlosser, 2000). Korgen, Odell, and Schumacher (2001) investigated Internet use among students, focusing on whether or not there are differences by race/ethnicity. They reported that use is affected by presence or absence of a computer in the home of origin. According to a survey on the Internet use at Seton Hall University, Bao (1998) reported that 40.2% of respondents used the Web on a daily basis, 38.3% weekly, and 10.7% on a monthly basis. About 10% respondents said they seldom or never used the Internet. It was also discovered that students and faculty searched the Internet for information related to both their academic (83.2%) and nonacademic studies (73.8%). Stern's (2002) study, on the other hand, was on the information competence of incoming students into universities and why they use the Internet. Findings put forwarded that a great majority of the students use the Internet for general and academic research. Foster (2000) surveyed at an Australian university and revealed that 88% students used Internet for course related research. Eighty percent students used Internet at their homes followed by computer labs at the campus.

406 graduate and undergraduate students from Shippensburg University were surveyed by Laite (2000). The survey revealed that 57.6% of the undergraduate students used the Internet 1-2 times per week and another 37.1% used it 1-2 times daily. 54.7% of the graduate students used Internet 1-2 times per week and 37.7% used it 1-2 times daily. The survey showed that the most used Internet service was e-mail. 100% of the graduates and undergraduate students used e-mail services. Mishra, Yadav and Bisht (2005) conducted a study to investigate the Internet utilization patterns of undergraduate students at the G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar. The findings of the study indicated that 85.7% of the students used the Internet. The findings of the study also showed that 61.5% of the males and 51.6% of the females used the Internet for preparing assignments. A majority of the respondents (83.1% male and 61.3% female) indicated that they faced the problem of slow functioning of Internet connections.

Cheung and Huang (2005) emphasized the effects of the Internet as an effective teaching tool in university education since many university teachers published their course materials via the internet. They suggested that it is insufficient for university lecturers and administrators to use the Internet as a good teaching tool, and that students' internet use should also be investigated. Additionally, Brophy & Bawden (2005) compared Google as an internet search engine with academic library resources in their study and their finding showed that while Google is superior for coverage and accessibility, library systems are superior for quality of results. Finally, the findings of the studies mentioned here generally stated that use of the internet is a useful tool for education and it can supply many beneficial opportunities for the users. But, it should be considered that the resources should be properly accessed by the students. Furthermore, the students must be disciplined in keeping themselves away from trap sites and entertainment in order to obtain the best achievements in their studies.

The purpose of the study

In the shed of the explanations, the aim of this paper was to explore Turkish ELT students' reasons and purposes on the internet use. Depending upon this, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the purposes and reasons of ELT students' use of the internet?
2. What are the preferred web2.0 technologies and social media tools for students?
3. Are there any differences among the students graduated from different schools in terms of using of the internet?

METHOD

Since the essential focus of this study was placed on Turkish ELT students' purposes about using the Internet and resources to enhance their English learning and future teaching, quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed in this study for collecting data. A questionnaire which created by Onyebuchi (2009) about determining the effects of social media on the process of learning and teaching was used. Only the social media and internet usage parts of the related questionnaire were used. It was administered to participants to investigate their purposes toward the Internet use. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: 1. a demographic section to get participants' background information; 2. a section to check the reasons for using the Internet 3. a section to learn the ways of using the internet. Later, 15 students were interviewed by researchers and their answers were recorded and evaluated. Cronbach alpha value was 0.88 during the pilot testing of the questionnaire.

Participants

For the concern of the present study 121 university students from Samsun 19 May University, ELT department were selected. They involved 33 (26.4%) males and 88 (72.7%) females aged from 20 to 24. The selection of the participants was done on the basis of the following criteria: a) they were all ELT department students at 3rd grade (67) and 4th grade (54) b) they could actively speak and write in English and c) they agreed to be chosen as voluntarily participants of the study. The following table shows the graduated schools of the participants.

Table 1

School	Frequency	Percent
Anatolian High School	73	60.3
High School	18	14.9
Anatolian Teachers' High School	27	22.3
Others	3	2.5
Total	121	100.0

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Purposes and reasons for using the internet

The students were asked to mention the reasons and purposes for using Internet. Surprisingly, all of the participants (100 %) mentioned that they were using Internet for "making research and

doing their homework” and “reading and checking their e-mails”; 120 students (99.2%) were using it for “chatting and sending e-mails”; 117 students (96.7%) pointed out that they were using it to “read news/newspapers”. Additionally, while 24 students (19.8%) indicated that they were using the internet to “join competitions”, only 17 students (14%) mentioned that they were using it for “responding the ads of the web sites”. Other responds of the students and their frequency distribution have presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Responds of the students and the frequency distribution

	YES	NO	YES/F	NO/F	YES/M	NO/M	F(%)
1. To connect with my friends	113	8	82	6	31	2	93.4% Y
2. To make new friendship with unknown people	32	88	23	64	9	24	26.4% Y
3. To get more information about people	100	21	73	16	27	5	82.6% Y
4. To share my ideas and news at forum sites	60	61	40	49	20	12	49.6% Y
5. To respond the ads of the web sites	17	104	13	75	4	29	14.0% Y
6. To make a date with anyone else	48	73	35	55	13	18	39.7% Y
7. To organize events or invite my friends	92	29	64	25	28	4	76.0% Y
8. To connect with my teachers about courses	72	49	56	33	16	16	59.5% Y
9. To connect with my friends about course handouts	114	7	84	4	30	3	94.2% Y
10. To do my homework and projects	114	7	83	5	31	2	94.2% Y
11. To share pictures, photos, videos or other works	112	9	83	5	28	5	92.6% Y
12. To prepare related course plans, worksheets, activities for my profession	107	14	77	11	30	3	88.4% Y
13. To join private hobby groups	79	42	62	26	19	14	65.3% Y
14. To read and check my e-mails	121	0	88	0	33	0	100% Y
15. To chat or send e-mails	120	1	87	1	33	0	99.2% Y
16. To read news/newspapers	117	4	85	3	31	2	96.7% Y
17. To play games	66	55	45	43	22	11	54.5% Y
18. To improve my foreign language	110	9	80	6	29	3	90.9% Y
19. To listen to music	111	8	82	6	29	2	91.7% Y
20. To do banking affairs	44	76	32	56	12	19	36.4% Y
21. To join competitions	24	97	18	72	8	24	19.8% Y
22. To make research and do my homework	121	0	88	0	33	0	100% Y
23. To entertain	106	15	80	8	25	7	87.6% Y
24. Others	63	57	50	37	13	20	43.0% Y

2. Comparison of the responds of the students

The following table (Table 3) compares the responds of the students in terms of their graduated schools. When the results are compared, it can easily be observed that there is no significant difference among the answers of the students according to their graduated schools. Most of the participants (70) were the graduates of Anatolian High School. 18 students were from High School, 27 students from Anatolian Teachers' High School and the rest 3 were from other schools. There were no students from Vocational High School. When the Table 3 examines, it can be observed that there is very determined relation among the answers of all students. For example, 73 students from Anatolian High school, 18 students from High School, 27 students from Anatolian Teachers' High school and 3 students from other schools gave the same responds for the Q7, Q8 and Q9.

Table 3 Comparison of the responds of the students in terms of their graduated schools

School	To connect internet I use my personal computer		To connect internet I use my mobile phone	I generally use internet at home(dormitory)	I generally use internet at the university	When I use internet at the university, I face some connection problems	When I use internet at the dormitory(home) I face some connection problems	I use internet to chat or send sms	I use internet to check my emails	I use internet to make research and do my homework	I use internet ot read news	I use internet to play game	I use internet to listen to music	I use internet to improve my foreign language	I use internet for banking issues	I use internet to join competitions	I use internet for entertaining	I use internet for other reasons
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	
Anatolian High School	Y	70	72	68	23	9	45	73	73	73	71	42	66	66	26	17	65	37
	N	13	1	3	45	61	25	0	0	0	2	31	6	6	47	56	8	35
High School	Y	17	18	18	5	2	7	18	18	18	16	8	17	15	8	4	13	6
	N	1	0	0	13	15	11	0	0	0	2	10	1	2	9	14	5	12
Anatolian Teachers' High School	Y	27	27	27	3	1	17	27	27	27	26	14	26	26	8	2	26	9
	N	0	0	0	24	26	10	0	0	0	1	13	1	1	19	25	1	18
Others	Y	3	3	3	0	0	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	2	0
	N	0	0	0	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	3

3. Preferences of the students for internet use

In this part of the research, the participants were asked to mention their preferences about using the internet and which search engines, mailing servers and the frequency of internet use. To get required information they were asked to answers the given questions. Of these 1st and 2nd questions were open-ended ones while the other 4 questions were multiple choice type. For

questions 4 and 6 they were asked to give more than one answers while the other had to be given only one respond. The most significant are as follow:

1. 102 students have chat groups, especially “what’s up”.
2. 109 students have been using internet to send files or course notes to their friends.
3. 87 students prefer Gmail for e-mailing system.
4. 37 students use internet between 3 or 5 hours.
5. Google Chrome is the most preferred searching engine for 69 students.

Total results were given at Table 4.

Table 4

	YES	NO
1. I have a mail group	98	23
2. I have a chat group	102	19
3. I use e-mails		
a. Only to check my mails		86
b. Only to send e-mails		46
c. To send files or course notes to my friends		109
d. To share interesting events or news with other people		74
e. To send electronic cards, to celebrate, to meet, etc.		26
f. Other reasons		11
4. For electronic e-mailing I use		
a. Yahoo		76
b. Hotmail(Outlook)		67
c. Gmail		87
d. Others		5
5. I use internet		
a. Less than an hour		5
b. 1 or 2 hours		28
c. 3 or 5 hours		37
d. 6 or 10 hours		24
e. 10 or 14 hours		18
f. Whole day		6
g. others		3
6. I always prefer while using the internet.		
a. Google chrome		69

b. Yahoo	7
c. Yandex	10
d. Internet explorer	26
e. Mozilla (Firefox)	6
f. Opera	3
g. MSN	-----
h. Others	-----

4. *Semi-structured*

interview

Fifteen volunteer students were invited to be interviewed. They were acknowledged that their answers would only be used for this research and would not be shared by anybody and anywhere. They were asked to meet at the Department Library of the Faculty on Wednesday at noon. The following questions were asked and they were given five minutes to write their answers. No recording system was used because it was thought that it would be demotivating and distracting for them. Some selected answers of the students were given here.

Question 1: What should be done to increase the internet use at the university?

S4 (F): Internet infrastructure should be renewed.

S8 (F): We have to access the internet wherever we are at the campus.

S11 (M): Our teachers should encourage us to use internet.

S 12(M): Our school can provide us free digital libraries.

S 14 (F): Free laptops may be delivered to the students.

Question2. What about your future expectations on using internet?

S (1) M: Some assignments may be given via internet and our teachers may give us feedback on internet.

S (7) F: Our lessons should be learned and controlled on internet.

S (13) F: Use of virtual classrooms should be encouraged for future learning.

S (15) M: Real learning environments will be more preferable learning and teaching settings rather than traditional classes.

CONCLUSION

In general, it is clear that all of the students (100%) use the Internet “to read and check their e-mails” and “to make research and do their homework”. Additionally, there are some certain areas that students do not prefer while using the Internet such as “ to make a date with anybody else”, “to respond the ads of the web sites”, “ to do banking affairs” ,etc. When responses of the students in terms of their graduated schools are compared, it is observed that there is a very close relation among their answers for the Q7, Q8 and Q9. This shows us that there is a significant similarity and coherence about the purposes of using the internet. In terms of their preferences on using search engines, Google Chrome is the most preferred one. For mailing server. 87 students out of 121 state that they use Gmail.

Based on the results of this study some suggestions may be produced for teachers and administrators. For example, students may be given more chance to deal with internet and internet based activities. In addition, more computer based and technological activities or courses may be put in teacher education programs in the Faculty of Education. As a further study, it could be a good idea

to conduct a study to compare the reasons for using the internet of the students from different faculties of education.

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