

# **EFL Students' Perception towards the Effect of Using Technology in Improving their Reading Comprehension Skills**

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## **Abstract**

The use of technology has become an important educational and auxiliary tool in teaching English nowadays. The present study was conducted to investigate the perception of EFL students towards the effect of using technology in improving their reading comprehension skills. To achieve this objective, 25 third semester EFL students studying at the Department of English, University of Zawia were recruited to participate in this study. The student participants were asked to answer a questionnaire of 25 items about the usefulness of using technology in their reading classrooms and the effectiveness of this technology in improving their reading comprehension skill. The results manifest clear advantages and usefulness of using technology in reading classrooms. They also indicate that technology assists students not only to increase their vocabulary and understand grammar but also to improve their spelling and pronunciation. This proves that using technology in reading classrooms affects positively in enhancing EFL learners' reading comprehension skill.

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**Keywords:** Reading comprehension, technology, Reading skills.

انطباع طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه استخدام التكنولوجيا لتعلم الاستيعاب  
القرائي

**المخلص:**

أصبح استخدام التكنولوجيا أداة تعليمية مهمة، وأداة تعليمية مساعدة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في الوقت الحاضر، أجريت الدراسة الحالية لمعرفة تصور طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تأثير استخدام التكنولوجيا في تحسين مهاراتهم في الاستيعاب القرائي، ولتحقيق هذا الهدف عين 25 طالبًا من طلاب الفصل الدراسي الثالث في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الزاوية للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة. طُلب من المشاركين الإجابة على استبيان مكون من 25 عنصرًا حول فائدة استخدام التكنولوجيا في القراءة، وفعالية هذه التقنية في تحسين مهارة استيعاب القراءة لديهم.

أظهرت النتائج مزايا واضحة وفائدة لاستخدام التكنولوجيا في تعلم القراءة، وتبين أيضًا أن التكنولوجيا تساعد الطلاب ليس فقط على زيادة مفرداتهم وفهم القواعد اللغوية، ولكن أيضًا لتحسين التهجئة والنطق، وهذا يبرهن أن استخدام التكنولوجيا في فصول القراءة يؤثر بشكل إيجابي في تعزيز مهارة فهم القراءة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستيعاب القرائي، التكنولوجيا، مهارات القراءة.

## Introduction

Technology is an indispensable tool used worldwide nowadays for numerous practical purposes. It is a useful tool enabling individuals to share effective information, and this would assist them to organize, create, learn, and produce. IGI-Global (2022) defined Technology as “The equipment and technological means that are used in the teaching process. It is also its study and ethical practice facilitating learning and improving performance through the use and the proper management of technological processes and resources.”

(P1) When it is used for educational purposes, technology-based teaching and learning processes can provide various benefits that people seek in learning. Moreover, it can be of great advantage to the students since they have access to a huge number of opportunities. This can accelerate the process of learning by encouraging active participation. By using modern devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones, the traditional boring subjects may turn into exciting, interacting and fun activities. Technology can also be helpful to the teachers since it eases their teaching and their lessons more valuable and interesting. For example, the tools and the facilities provided by the technology can be of much profit to the instructors who may improve their lesson plan just by writing on their keyboard or using their smartphones. Thus, integrating technology into the learning process is becoming indispensable for both learners and teachers.

Reading is defined as an activity to get knowledge and information from written language like words, symbols, and pictures. It helps students to get meaning from printed words and make sense for different purposes like for getting new knowledge, for pleasure, and for interest (Linse & Nunan, 2005). It is considered as a fundamental component of learning, particularly in language courses. It increases the student's level of understanding of the target language and assists them acquire and learn new vocabulary. Moreover, it strengthens the students' brain and improves their memories. This suggests that reading is a significant skill for students to develop.

There are several methods and techniques to improve students' reading comprehension skills and technology is one of them. Nowadays technology brings many opportunities for students to learn. It enables them to have access to hyperlinked-texts, digital texts, visual learning software, such as mind maps and others. This can assist students to better understand the text, increase their vocabulary, acquire the grammatical rules of the target language, improve their spelling and pronunciations and many other components of the target language. This motivates many researchers to conduct research studies

investigating the effect of technology in improving the learners' reading skills, the teachers' perceptions about the use of technology in reading classes and the students' perceptions and attitudes towards the using of technology in their reading classrooms.

There are few studies investigating students' perception towards using technology in reading comprehension classes. One of these studies was conducted by Preston et.al (2010). 70% of the student participants in this study stated that they learn equally well from online lectures as in-class lectures. This means that students need an effective blended online learning strategy to pursue blended courses. Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2017) also undertook a study to analyze the teachers' perceptions on effectiveness of ICT (Integration of Information, Communication, and Technology) in their language classrooms. They found that to support the process of teaching and learning in the classroom, the Integration of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) will assist teachers with the global requirement to replace the traditional teaching methods with technology-based teaching and learning tools and facilities. They also maintained that technology can be used in EFL classrooms to assist students improve language skills. When students "read to learn", visual learning software helps to reduce the burden on working memory and to display the ideas in a different way to better draw connections between elements of the text by categorizing them or by linking supporting evidence to key concepts.

Additionally, [Korkmaz](#), and Hüseyin (2021) carried out a study on the use of Kahoot to Improve Reading Comprehension of English as a Foreign Language. The learners who participated in this study revealed that Kahoot can be an effective way to motivate EFL learners, thereby enhancing their ability to comprehend various reading materials. [Hamiyet](#) and [Yilmaz](#). (2019) also investigate the effect of augmented reality applications on secondary school students' reading comprehension and learning permanency. They found that augmented reality applications can be used effectively as educational

aids for reading-related courses. They concluded that the use of audio-visual content has strong potential for enhancing and promoting interactive language classes. However, the success of the program depends on how the technology is designed and implemented and how the teachers are trained to use it.

Furthermore, Parvin & Salam (2015) and Hennessy (2005) stated that the introduction of ICTs could act as an instrument in stimulating teachers and learners to work in new ways, such as instructor-learner and peer discussion, exploration, analysis and reflection, studying, assistance, and feedback describe these. Hennessy (2005) added that as students become more independent, teachers should encourage and support them in acting and thinking independently. From what these researchers said, one can understand that technology has a significant role in the learning and teaching processes.

Research in the field of mobile learning has found that online learners are using mobile education. They revealed that integrating online learning through learning communities affects positively on their learning. Litchfield et al, (2007) stated that the usefulness and ease of use of mobile technology are the principal factors influencing students' participation and adoption of online interaction. In addition, the social presence of students in online communities is a pertinent factor that influences students' participation in online communities. Additionally, Barhoumi (2015, P.5) stated, "WhatsApp is a good tool for mobile learning when it is used in a blended course strategy. In a blended mobile lecture, mobile applications such as WhatsApp are preferred over face-to-face, in-class discussion in regard to completing course activities." Martina & Indra (2020) also examined the use of WhatsApp as a learning media in teaching reading. They found that WhatsApp messenger could be used as a learning media besides as a communication tool. They also found that WhatsApp assists teachers and students to communicate and discuss the reading material before

going to the class. This helps students to improve their reading comprehension skills.

In short, using the technology application can boost reading comprehension and has much potential as an instructional tool in literacy education. The technology-based tool gives many advantages to the students. One of them is increasing students' reading skill (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012). Thus, technology should be used in reading comprehension classrooms because it is helpful for teachers and students to proceed the teaching and learning. In addition, it is easy and cheap to apply in teaching reading comprehension because most students become familiar with it.

As there are few studies investigating the students' perceptions towards using technology for improving their reading skills in the EFL context and particularly in the Libyan context, this study intends to investigate Libyan EFL students' perception towards using technology in learning reading comprehension. To achieve this aim, the main research questions of this study are

1. What is the students' perception towards using technology in improving their reading comprehension skill?
2. What are the advantages that students gain from using technology in their reading classes?

## Methodology

The study employs quantitative methods to collect and analyze the data of this study. It is believed that this method would help to answer the research questions thoroughly.

## Participants

The student participants of this study are 25 Libyan EFL students studying at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Zawia. Their age is between 19 and 22. All of them have completed the third semester and are studying three courses of reading comprehension. During these courses, they used some technological applications, such as WhatsApp in their reading classes.

## Data Collection and Data Analysis Tools

To understand the students' perceptions and attitudes towards using technology to learn reading comprehension, a questionnaire of 25 items was constructed. This questionnaire consists of two parts and employs likert scale type of questions. (8 personal and 17. The first part of the questionnaire asks students to provide some personal information, and the second part is devoted to learning how using technology in their reading skills affects their learning of English language in general and on developing their reading skill in specific. The questionnaire was sent to the students via WhatsApp application. After collecting the answers of the students to the questionnaire, the data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics (percentage/numbers). The data obtained from this analysis is presented in the following section.

## Results and discussion

To find out the students' perceptions about using technology in their reading comprehension classes, the third semester Zawia university students were asked to answer the questionnaire items using the Likert scale of four points (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and neutral). This scale is employed to measure the students' perceptions and attitudes towards using technology for improving their reading skill. The results demonstrated the students used several applications to improve their reading skills. The most used applications by the students were YouTube, Google and WhatsApp. The results also showed that 13 of the student participants affirmed that it was not easy for them to use technology, whereas the rest of the students stated that it was easy for them to use technology such as WhatsApp application for improving their reading skills. Concerning the students' experience in using technology to learn, the learners' answers diverged. Some were more experienced than the others. Eight students answered that they were new in the domain, and 17 of the students stated that they have used technology for their learning for a long time (from 4 to 8

years). Additionally, all of them said that they used mobile technology for learning reading comprehension and only 2 of them used computers and tablets. Moreover, most of the students preferred online lectures to class one, and they believed that online lectures assisted them to understand their lessons. These results indicate that most of the students have positive attitudes towards using technology in their learning and they think that technology could assist them to develop their learning and improve their language skills.

Regarding the usefulness of using technology in reading classes, Table one below shows that the majority of the students (90.5%) believed that the use of technology in learning reading made their reading more enjoyable. only 12.5% disagreed with the idea. Moreover, all the students confirmed that the use of technology while doing the reading activities or assignments saved their time. 75% of the students agreed to the idea that using technology helped them communicate with their teacher and classmates easily. Most of the student participants (73%) also added that using technology in reading classes had positive impacts not only on improving their pronunciation, spelling and grammar but also to expand their vocabulary, improved their writing skills and increased their creativity. In addition, 75% of the students stated that technology in reading classes eased their communication with their teachers. However, only half of the students believed that using technology to improve their reading skills was more convenient than learning reading in their classrooms (face-face learning).

**Table 1: Students Perceptions and Attitudes towards Using Technology in their Reading Classes**

	Questionnaire Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
1	I enjoy learning reading when I use technology	65.5%	24%	10.5%	0%
2	Making use of technology while doing the reading activities or assignments saves time.	25%	75%	0%	0%
3	Using technology in learning reading helps me communicate with my teacher and classmates easily.	25%	50%	12%	13%

	Questionnaire Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
4	Using technology helps me to improve my reading skill.	25%	75%	0%	0%
5	I face technical problems when I use technology to learn.	0%	50%	50%	0%
6	I feel more confident when I learn reading online than when I use it in the class.	50%	12.5%	12.5%	25%
7	Using technology to learn reading helps me to improve my pronunciation.	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%
8	Using technology to acquire the reading skill helps me to improve my vocabulary.	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%
9	By utilizing technology to gain knowledge of reading improves communication between students and teachers.	25%	50%	0%	25%
10	Making use of technology to comprehend the reading skill is more convenient for me than face-to-face learning.	0%	50%	50%	0%
11	Utilizing the technology in learning increases my creativity.	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	0%
12	Using the technology in learning reading helps me update my course information.	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%	0%
13	Making use of technology to learn reading helps me to improve my spelling	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%
14	Utilizing technology to acquire reading helps me to improve my grammar.	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%
15	using technology to learn reading comprehension helps me to improve my writing skills	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%
16	Making use of technology for learning reading comprehension makes me feel independent	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	37.5%
17	When using technology to discuss reading materials before going to class improves my reading skill	37.5%	50%	0%	12.5%

These results indicate the EFL students in Libyan context have positive perception towards using technology for improving their reading skills. They noted that using technology in their reading comprehension classes assists them to improve not only their reading skills but also their pronunciation, spelling and grammar. These

results are similar to those found by (Al Zumor et. al (2013), Parvin & Salam (2015) and Hennessy (2005) who examined the effectiveness of using technology to teach different language skills. This suggests that using technology becomes an essential tool that can be employed in language classrooms to improve the students' language skills.

### **Conclusion**

The study demonstrated that technology provided a great assistance to the students for improving their language skills. It strengthens not only their reading comprehension but also many other areas of language such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Moreover, it helps them to correct their spelling and improve their writing skills. Additionally, it enables students to have access to a variety of programs and information sources that fit their interest by a simple click of a button. It also boosts their confidence and makes their learning process more enjoyable. It can also enhance their creativity. This means that using technology in reading comprehension classes involve students in the learning process. Thus, incorporating technology in languages classes is important for improving both the learning and teaching processes

This study has some limitations and the most silent ones are the data of this study was collected only by using a questionnaire, and a small number of students have participated in this study. Thus, it is recommended that future research should be conducted with a large number of participants and with employing other data collection tools, such as interviews and focus groups. However, the findings of this study give a hint about EFL students' perceptions towards using technology in reading classes.

Based on the results obtained from this study, it is recommended that technology should be integrated in teaching all language skills and teachers should encourage their students to use technology for improving their language skills. The educational authority has also a great responsibility for integrating technology in

the teaching and learning processes. It should offer all the facilities, such as smart boards, computer laptops, high-speed internet, educational software, e-books and others that assist teachers and students to use technology.

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