

The Relationship between Students' Prior Experience of the Internet and their Attitudes to E-learning: A case study at Danang University

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***Abstract:** Internet has been an increasing popular means that facilitates different aspects of education, which can possibly improve learners' language skills (Molchanova, 2015). On that ground, this study looks at the relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' prior experience of the Internet and their attitudes towards E-learning courses. The study takes place at the English Department, Danang University with the population of all students who took DynEd Supported courses. Following quantitative approach, the researchers use questionnaires to elicit participants' demographic information as well as their attitudes of E-learning. This research is expected to shed light on EFL students' experience of the Internet as well as how their experiences influence their attitudes. Findings from this research can signify stakeholders, policy makers and school administrators of students' background regarding E-learning.*

Introduction

In recent decades, education reform has been taking place in many countries throughout the world and Viet Nam is not an exception. Despite being a latecomer, Viet Nam education is seeing some positive outcomes. Stockwell (2013) said that advances in technology lead to improvement in the use of ICT in classrooms thereby enhanced the motivation of English language learning. Technology has changed the way people access knowledge. Computer-assisted classrooms help elevate the academic environment and enrich lessons' content. The trend in education has switched to student-centered approach to fully boost their abilities. Therefore, ICT has become the most efficient tool in teaching and learning.

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Viet Nam took the academic year of 2008-2009 as the *Year of ICT* in education. Since then, there have been many practices to promote using ICT in classroom. Moreover, the Master plan, which was announced by the MOET in 2000 for the period of 2001-2005, considered building IT infrastructure for education and training as its priority. In the light of this, nation-wide schools, colleges and universities have to be equipped with Internet connection; higher education institutions have to set up their own network and use EduNet as

educational portal (MOET, 2000). In response to the “Year of ICT”, in the period 2015-2016, MOET has issued a detailed plan for ICT in education. Teachers are encouraged to use Internet-based applications such as Adobe Presenter, iSpring, Articulate and the like to design lessons (MOET, 2015). With the help of ICT, preparation for classes is becoming easier as teachers have the access to an enormous digital library such as *www.google.com* or *www.violet.vn*. ICT has formed a learner-friendly environment that provides learner with the access to Open Online Education (MOET, 2015). E-education and e-school are developed on the basis of ICT that provide virtual educational management for teachers and/or trainers and students and their families.

History of Internet development in Vietnam

The history of the Internet in Vietnam has spanned for about two decades. Since its introduction, the Internet has made significant changes to the physical and spiritual lives of human beings, which acts as intermediary to enable people to connect with the world in an effective and convenient way.

Concerning the establishment of the Internet in Vietnam, it is entirely the non-stop effort of the members of Hanoi Institute of Information Technology (IOIT), part of the National Center of Natural Sciences. In the first years of the 1990s, the Institute took a crack at discussing the possibility of setting up the Internet in Vietnam with European Universities but failed to succeed. Nevertheless, it was in 1992 that witnessed the first establishment of international connection, thanks to the cooperation of the Coombs Computing Unit of Australian National University and the IOIT (Dang, 1999). In 1994, the Vietnamese Ministry of Science Technology and the Environment and IOIT came to an agreement on the registration of the ‘.vn’ domain name with the international Internet authorities (Dang, 1999). In March 1997 the Government Decree 21/CP was promulgated in order to legally introduce the Internet in Vietnam as well as manage and control the Internet usage nationwide. On November 19th, 1997, Vietnam officially enabled the Internet for a public

connection, “marking the start of an impressive development period of the Internet in Vietnam”(Vietnam Internet network information center VNNIC, 2002, p.3).

In the period from 1997 until now, there records a rapid growth of Internet usage nationwide. According to the Ministry of Information and Communication MIC (2012),from 1997 to 2003, about 1,8 million people used the Internet. This number accounted for only 4% of the population, which revealed that the opportunities to access the Internet were quite low. Thanks to the birth of Asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL) in 2003, the number of Internet users has increased dramatically. Since then, the proportion of Internet users has risen ten times as much as that in 2003, from about 3,1 million people in 2003 to above 31,1 million people in 2012.

Since 2012, Vietnam has been in top countries with the most Internet users not only in Asia but also in the world. The number of Internet users in 2012 reached 31 million , representing 35.40 % of the population. From that, Vietnam ranked 18thin the world’s top 20 countries and 8th place in Asia (VNNIC,2012). With such rapid development of the Internet usage, Vietnam has named itself to the largest online population in Southeast Asia, with 16,1 million Internet connectors every month (Comscore,2013). Also, Comscore (2013) stated that “Internet users in Vietnam and Thailand, driven in part by their younger populations, spend the greatest amount of time online in the region”.

After 2 decades, the Internet has a comprehensive impact on all aspects of life and become the motivation for socio-economic promotion and development in Vietnam. In the integration trend, Internet is a useful tool for Vietnam to connect with the world, to widen opportunities and to access information and technology development.

The Role of ICT in Education

ICT enables both teachers and learners to adopt the knowledge in a more vivid and convenient way. It is undeniable that ICT has produced such great impact on technologic pedagogy. However, according to Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2010), the positive impact of ICT partly depends on how teachers manage to use ICT in classrooms.

Possible influence of ICT on Viet Nam education can be seen in changes in teachers' roles and in students' roles (Anderson, 2010, pp.15). As a result of the use of ICT, while teachers are no longer the primary source of knowledge in classrooms, students are now introduced to active learning which will activate their ability. With the basis of student-centered classroom, teachers play the role of a guide rather than a controller. In a similar vein, the learning process aims to actively produce knowledge. Moreover, research has been carried out to investigate changes of the proportion that the Internet is used among young people. According to series of studies into how young people are using ICT's in Zambia, South Africa and Vietnam from UNICEF, results showed that 40% of students in rural areas and 62% students in urban areas used ICT for educational purposes (Kelly, 2013). It can be clearly seen that the trend in education has changed to Internet-based tasks. ICT is the means for students to self-study by researching online or interacting and collaborating with other students.

The Relationship between E-learning and Students Learning

Along with changes in education brought about by ICT, there is a vast increase in the number of online courses and students who prefer attending these courses. This can be explained by the fact that young people are adaptive to changes of technology and are willing to try.

The performance of students using e-learning partly depends of the level of their IT ability (Youssef & Dahmani, 2008). Due to the assist of Internet-based tools, students, nowadays, address problems differently from the conventional process of self-study. Online instruction provides students with the ability to promote reflective thought and deep learning by applying what they have learned in a practical way(Smart &Cappel, 2006) .Students using ICT for learning purposes find themselves

immersing in the learning process as computers have become their information sources and cognitive tools (Reeves & Jonassen, 1996). The more experience in the use of Internet tool students possess, the more effectively they construct their work in virtual environment with less time and less online research. (Shih, Muñoz & Sánchez, 2006).

The relationship between student's experience of online courses and their attitudes took many forms. There are many reasons for students to choose online courses but some of the most common must be that they wanted independence and self-regulation (Armstrong, 2011). Students would prefer to have a clear instruction on how to successfully use the online courses before they invest their effort and time in it. Students who supported the use of IT in their courses held a positive view in their attitude towards engaging IT in their learning process and in their assessment (Buzzetto-More, 2008).

According to the finding of Loh, Wong, Quazi and Kingshott (2016), "it is evident from the analysis of students' e-learning experiences that flexibility and better learning outcomes are the most striking perceived benefits of e-learning and teaching" (p.135).

Dyned English Classes

With the growing use of the Internet and recognition of ICT in education, the English department of Danang University of Foreign Language studies adopts DynEd courseware as a replacement for the Integrated skill course. The courses in DynEd are Let's go, English for success, First English, New dynamic English, Dynamic business English, Dynamic classics, The lost secret, English by the number, Functioning in business, Hospitality English, Clear speech works, Test mountain, Advanced listening. The curriculum of each class will be decided by their teachers. There is an assisting program that helps teachers supervise student's learning progress. This program will keep a record of what students are learning and how they are doing it.

DynEd provides knowledge using auditorial input which is different from other text books. The basic learning sequence is listening, speaking, reading and writing. Of all the 13 courses of DynEd, New

Dynamic English is core one. There are 8 modules with presentation lessons in this course with an increase in level. Students will take a placement test before entering the course. This test determines students' level and places them appropriately so that students could study at the optimum level. On the other hand, at the end of each lesson, there will be a mastery test that will check how successfully students have achieved. In order to have a good result, student should study at least 30 minutes everyday along with repeating and recording the lines as much as possible. At the end of the semester, each module should be 80% to 100% completed and the total learning hours should be at least 21 hours.

With the increasing use of the Internet among students and the highly recognized role of ICT in education, it is necessary to understand whether students' experience with the Internet could play a role in their attitudes towards ICT in education or E-learning in particular. This study is conducted to find the relationship between students' prior experience with the Internet and their attitudes towards an E-learning course - Dyned.

Research Questions

The following research questions are developed to find the relationship between students' prior experience with the Internet and their attitudes towards E-learning.

1. What are EFL students' prior experiences with the Internet?
2. What are EFL students' attitudes of online learning?
3. How does students' prior experience with the Internet influence their attitudes toward online learning?

Methodology

This is a *non-experimental* correlational research which employs a quantitative approach to find the relationship between students' experience of the Internet and their attitudes as well as performances in E-learning classes.

Population and Sampling

The target population of this research includes all students studying DynEd in the International Studies and English Department of the University of Foreign Language Studies, Danang University. Of all 104 students in 5 classes studying DynEd courses, 45 responded, achieving the response rate of 43%

The researchers use random sampling by sending emails inviting all students in the population to do an online survey through Google doc, which is a free online tool retrieved at www.google.com/doc.

Instrument

The researcher used questionnaires to find students' experience of the Internet as well as their attitudes towards E-learning. The questionnaire includes three parts; the first part includes demographic questions to find students' background information; the second is comprised of 15 questions to identify students' experience of E-learning and the last part is used to elicit students' attitudes toward E-learning with 13 Likert-type statements scored on a scale from 1 to 4 (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree). The last part was designed to find students' attitudes towards E-learning.

Data Analysis

The participants include 4 first year students, 26 second year students, 5 third year and 10 fourth year students, accounting for 8,9 %, 57.8 %, 11.1%, and 22.2% respectively.

	Number N=28	Rate
1st year	4	8,9%
2nd Year	26	57,8%
3rd Year	5	11,1%
4th Year	10	22,2%

Table 1. Distribution of Students Academic Year

Among the participants, 64 percent of participants report to use Internet on a daily basic, 88 percent of which say that they go online several times a day. About a quarter of participating students have never used email before, 40 percent sometimes use emails, 31,1 % use email frequently and only 2,2 percent use it daily. 22,2% percent of students use 1 type of social network to connect with people, 28,9% has two, and the same number goes to students who has three type of social network. 13,3 percent has 4 and 6,7 percent has 5 types of online social network.

Number of social network	Number of students	N	Rate
1	10	45	22.2
2	13	45	28.9
3	13	45	28.9
4	6	45	13.3
5	3	45	6.7

Table 2. Percentage of Network Students Use

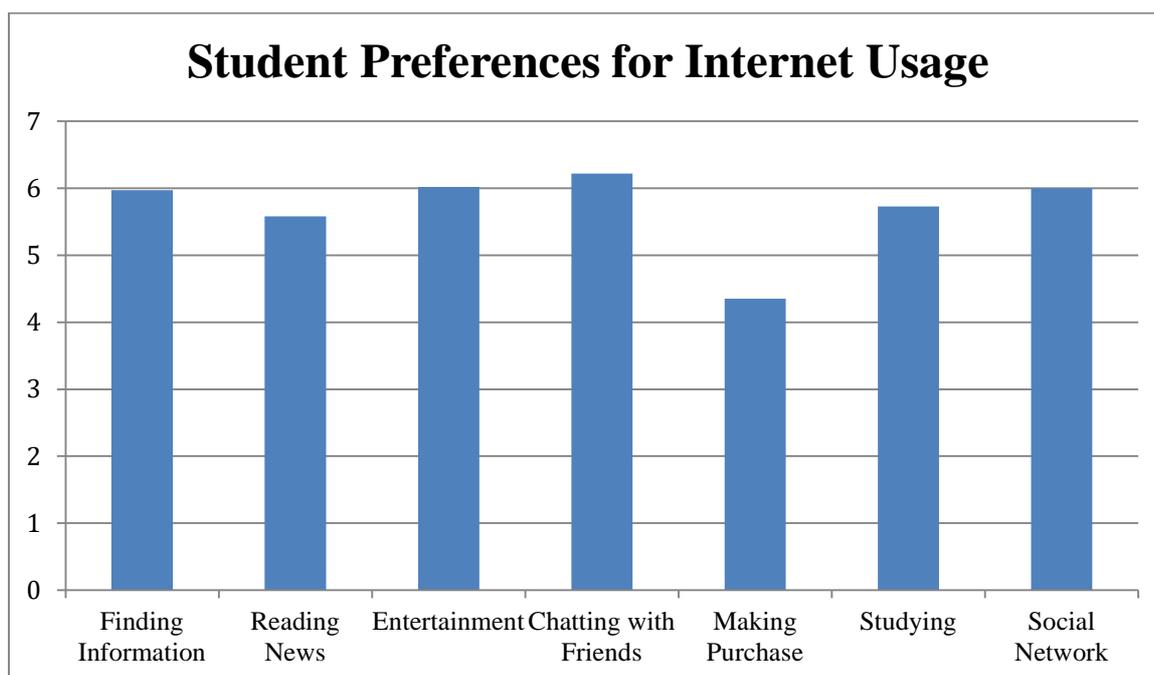


Chart 1. Students Preferences for Internet Usage

On a rating scale from 1 to 7, asking students to rate their the frequencies of their usage of the Internet for different purposes, chatting with friends was found to be the most popular while making purchases was the least. However, there are only slight differences among different preferences for Internet Usage ranging around the 6th level on a 7 point rating scale.

Social Networks	N	Rate
Facebook	44/45	97,78%
Instagram	33/45	73,33%
Google+	18	40%
Twitter	8	17,78%
LinkedIn	4	8,89%
Tumblr	4	8,89%
Others	3	6,67%

Table 3. Students Participation in Common Social Networks

97.79% of the participants report to use social network to connect with other people. Facebook is the most popular network with 44 out of 45 students joint, Instagram is the next most popular network with 73.33 % of the student; only 4 students have LinkedIn or Tumblr account to open their professional network.

Tools	N	Rate
Zalo	34/41	82,92%
Viber	25/41	60,98%
Snapchat	10	24,39%
Line	8	19,51%
Whatsapp	7	17,07%
Others	7	17,07%
Tango	2	4,87%

Table 4. Students Participation in Common Online Communication Applications

About 82% of participants report to use Internet based apps to connect with other people. Among the 7 most popular means of Internet based applications, Zalo is the most popular to the participants; next in the list is Viber, then Snapchat. Tango, a video call tool, is the least preferable tool.

	Items	N	Mean	Std.Dev
1	Using e-learning will improve my performance	45	2.84	.601
2	Using e-learning system can enable me to accomplish tasks more quickly	45	2.87	.457
3	Using e-learning system can improve teaching	45	2.76	.570
4	I find e-learning useful	45	2.87	.457
5	Using e-learning make it easier to do my tasks	45	2.71	.506
6	I prefer e-learning to traditional learning	45	2.67	.640
7	I was satisfied with the overall experience using DynEd	45	2.58	.866
8	I enjoyed the portion of the course on DynEd	45	2.64	.802
9	The DynEd portion stimulated my desire to learn	45	2.62	.806
10	I was satisfied with DynEd in regards to the quantity of my learning experience	45	2.67	.769
11	I was satisfied with DynEd in regards to the quality of my learning experience	45	2.67	.739
12	DynEd portion allowed for social interaction	45	2.38	.747

13	DynEd proved a reliable means of communication	45	2.40	.837
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Table 5. Students Attitudes towards Elearning

In general, students have a positive towards e-learning indicating by the means of all answer to each of the 13 items ranging from 2.38 to 2.87. It means that students agree with the statements, however, none of the statements has a strong agreement. The strongest agreement is on the statement that “I find e-learning useful” with the smallest standard deviation of 0.437 and the lowest agreement in on statement “Dyned portion allowed for social interaction.”

	Attitudes	The length of time using Internet
Student Attitude		
Pearson Correlation	1	.211
Sig. (1 tailed)		0.82
The length of time using the Internet		
Pearson Correlation	.211	1
Sig. (1 tailed)	0.82	

Table 6. The Relationship between Students Attitude towards Elearning and their Experience with the Internet.

Although there is a positive relationship between students’ attitudes towards the Internet and the time they use it, .211 does not indicate a strong correlation.

Conclusions

Findings from the research show that Internet use is popular to a very large extent to students at Danang University. It has become a popular tool for students to connect and contact with other people. Generally, students hold positive attitude toward Elearning and they agree that it helps them do task faster than traditional learning.

However, students experience with the Internet does not have strong influence on their attitudes towards e-learning. One way to raise students attitude to elearning is to provide students more opportunities to use their favorite Internet activities in their ICT class. For example: providing more opportunities to interact with other students, making more use of Internet-based tools such as Youtube, Skype and the like to keep students more engaged and motivated.

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