teaching/learning outcomes. It should be noted that the successful implementation of online learning materials largely depends on whether or not the students are willing to adopt and accept the technology. Thus, it is an imperative for teachers and policy makers to understand the factors affecting user acceptance of web-based learning systems in order to enhance the students' learning experience (Tarhini, 2014). The feedback received from the participants also revealed that they found the experience enjoyable with a dynamic ambiance.

Conclusion

Applying online learning websites could supply the classroom with various authentic materials for reading practices. It is can concluded that e-learning tools in EFL classrooms can contribute to students' knowledge of different language skills, namely their reading comprehension, by combining text with visual presentation features that might not be available in conventional textbooks. Computer assisted language learning which was practiced through the integration of online learning websites and e-learning tools provided the researcher with an opportunity to use different kinds of media, including graphic images, colored pictures, sound files, animation and texts to enhance learners' reading comprehension skill.

The findings of the present study entail pedagogical implications for language education profession and the practitioners of the field. Pedagogical implications are applicable to classroom practices including teaching, learning, and curriculum development. The conclusions of this study may assist teachers, learners, and course designers to consider the

potential of online learning materials for improving the learning outcome. For teachers, e-books, screencasts, online learning websites and other CALL tools can be productive for making instruction and conveying the topics and concepts more simple compared to the conventional teaching strategies. For the learners, using online and E-learning tools could increase the reading comprehension ability and make the learning process more interesting, interactive, meaningful, and stimulating. Course designers can also take the advantages of these tools in planning for and preparing suitable materials.

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reading activities, the teacher helped the students and commented on their works if needed. During every session, a quiz was administered and students received the score.

Observation and Evaluation

A posttest was administered to the students in the three groups at the end of the courses to explore the effectiveness of the treatments. After ten weeks of instruction (90 minutes per week), the participants in each of the three groups had read ten passages. Of these, for experimental group II, four passages were played in the form of screencasts and the remaining six were in e-book format. The posttests were scored and compared with the pretest results. The pretest was administered at the onset of the study and aimed at assessing participants' reading comprehension proficiency to ensure the homogeneity of the students in these groups. The pretest and posttests comprised a reading passage each which was followed by 35 multiple choice items. One point was allotted to each question. Forty five minutes were dedicated to the administration of the pre and posttests each. The readability index of these passages was calculated by Fog's readability formula. The reading texts were selected from taught online materials.

Students' improvement in terms of reading skill was also investigated through observation made throughout the courses. The weekly quizzes provided a good criterion for comparing the students' performance across the three classes.

Findings and Discussion

The results of data analysis determined that online learning websites had a significant effect on reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners as the experimental group members who received the online instructional materials significantly outperformed the control group in the posttest. The findings also revealed that e-books and screencasts had a significant effect on reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL Learners given that the experimental group II significantly outperformed the control group in the posttest. However, there was no statistically significant difference in the performance of the two experimental groups in the posttests. The same results are reported in Busch's (2003) research on the effective role of online learning websites and e-learning tools in developing the reading skill.

That the application of online materials contributed to students' reading comprehension skills can be attributed to the presence of visual features such as images, audio-files, and graphics in the online passages compared to the conventional course books. The same observation has been made by different scholars who have explored the potential of hypermedia features or links to text, data, graphics, audio, or video on student learning (e.g., Anderson-Inman & Horney, 2008; Anderson-Inman, Horney, Chin, & Lewis, 2004; Hillinger, 2002; Hillinger & Leu, 2004; Leu & Hillinger, 2004). Additionally, students have access to online glossaries when using such content.

It is suggested that the application of online language learning websites and e-learning tools can enhance learners' reading comprehension skill. The findings offer support for the combining effect of face-to-face instruction and technology-enhanced learning to reinforce the
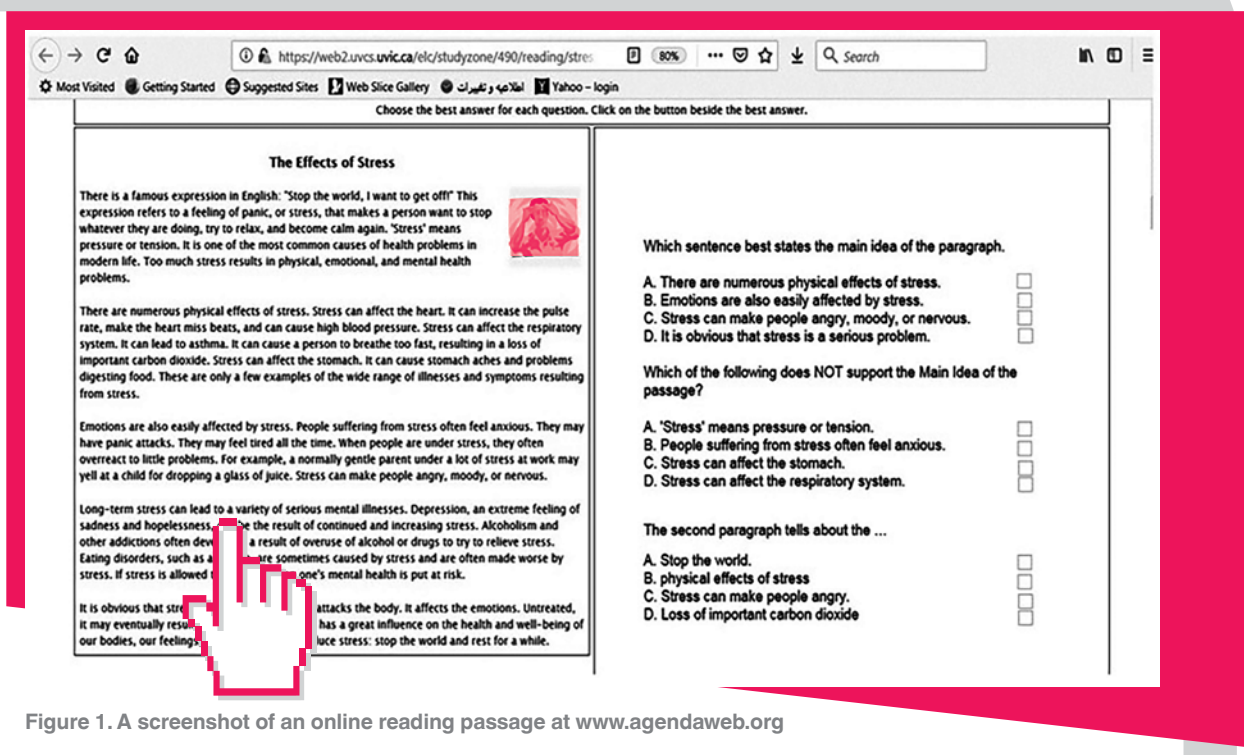
Figure 1. A screenshot of an online reading passage at www.agendaweb.org

The students in the experimental group I were exposed to the online websites consisting of reading materials and texts retrieved from www.agendaweb.org, www.myenglishpages.com, and www. readtheory.org. Generating immediate feedback was one of the most important features of these websites. The researcher created e-books and screencasts with similar reading texts and quizzes for the experimental group II. The students in this group were provided with relevant e-books or screencasts based on the lesson plans and topics already specified for each session. They could read the passages two or three times, based on their difficulty, and also had the chance to repeatedly play the screencasts. After reading or playing each reading passage, the students completed a task or quiz in order to assess their comprehension of the material presented in the e-books or screencasts. In the control group, the students received printed forms of the online texts.

Figure 2. A screenshot of a one of the screencasts

The students in the experimental groups had access to the reading texts only during the class time. As a result, they had to pay their utmost attention while reading the texts and working on the activities (see Figure 1 & 2). The experimental groups attended a classroom well-equipped by computers and a video projector. They worked individually on their personal computers. Doing the exercises and working on their

Abstract

Technological developments and computer assisted language learning (CALL) have significantly affected education in general and language education in particular. One of the language skills which can benefit from the use of educational technology is reading. The goal of this study was to investigate the effect of integrating online learning websites and e-learning tools in EFL classrooms on reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate level learners. A group of 96 homogenized third-grader students (64 females and 32 males) were observed during thirteen weeks courses at three schools in Tehran. The classes were randomly assigned to two experimental (online learning websites and e-learning) and one control groups. The results of statistical analyses revealed that applying both online learning websites and e-learning tools in the classes significantly affected the reading comprehension of the learners.

Keywords: online learning websites, e-learning tools, reading comprehension, technology, language learners

Introduction

Reading is one of the four necessary important language skills for English as a second and/or foreign language (ESL/EFL) learners to achieve both academic success and professional development (Anderson, 1999; Carrell, 1993; Sims, 1996). Similarly, Iranian EFL students have become overwhelmingly concerned about the necessity of being able to read English textbooks, articles, or journals so that they could gather information required for both their academic and occupational purposes.

Asynchronous e-learning tools allow learners to learn at their own pace, without live interaction with the instructor. E-Books, smartboards, blogs, video conferencing, screencasts and podcasts are some of the successful e-learning tools that have changed the way a language is taught. According to Khan (2001), e-learning encompasses web-based learning (WBL), Internet-based training (IBT), advanced distributing learning (ADL), and online learning. E-learning can be realized by integrating a computer-based educational tool to enable students to learn anywhere and at any time. Nowadays, many teachers are finding that using e-learning tools in the classroom are extremely beneficial for their students in as much as they make learning more interesting, interactive, meaningful, and stimulating for the learners. The present action research illustrates how online and e-learning tools could assist both teachers and learners improve their performance. The main purpose is to explore and compare the effectiveness of various kinds of online learning websites, e-learning tools, and conventional teaching methods in supporting and improving the reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

Action

In order to conduct the present study, 96 Iranian intermediate level EFL students were chosen as the participants. The study was conducted at three high schools in Tehran. Students were of both genders within an age range of 16 to 17. Participants were assigned to two experimental groups, one with 32 students (working with online learning websites) and the other with 30 students (using e-learning tools). The control group comprised 34 participants who received conventional instruction. The study lasted for thirteen weeks during the summer semester. The duration of each session was 90 minutes half of which was devoted to reading comprehension.

The Comparative Effect of Integrating Online Learning Websites Versus E-Learning Tools in EFL Classrooms on Reading Comprehension of Iranian Intermediate Learners

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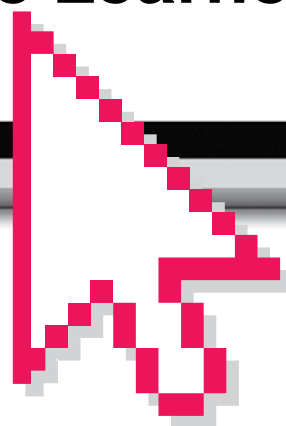
چکیده

پیشرفت‌های فناوری و «یادگیری زبان به کمک رایانه» (CALL) به‌طور کلی در آموزش و به‌طور ویژه در آموزش زبان مؤثر بوده‌اند. یکی از مهارت‌های زبانی که به‌طور مؤثری می‌تواند از فناوری بهره ببرد، مهارت خواندن است. هدف پژوهش حاضر بررسی تأثیر استفاده از وبسایت‌های یادگیری برخط و ابزار یادگیری الکترونیکی در کلاس‌های آموزش زبان انگلیسی روی درک مطلب خواندن زبان‌آموزان سطح متوسط ایرانی است. یک گروه ۹۶ نفری از دانش‌آموزان همگن (۶۴ زن و ۳۲ مرد) سه کلاس سوم دبیرستان در سه مدرسه در تهران، در دورۀ آموزشی سیزده هفته‌ای شرکت کردند. این کلاس‌ها به‌صورت تصادفی به دو گروه تجربی (وبسایت‌های یادگیری برخط و یادگیری الکترونیکی) و یک گروه کنترل تقسیم شدند. نتایج تجزیه و تحلیل آماری نشان داد که استفاده از وبسایت‌های یادگیری برخط و ابزار یادگیری الکترونیکی در کلاس‌های درسی، تأثیر چشمگیری روی درک مطلب خواندن زبان‌آموزان داشتند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: وبسایت‌های یادگیری برخط، ابزار یادگیری الکترونیک، درک مطلب خواندن، فناوری، زبان‌آموزان