Assessing the Effects of Digital Technologies on Learning Behavior and Reading Motivation Among Moroccan EFL University Students

Maryem Larhmaid, University of Maryland, USA

Taibi Nour, Faculty of Education, Mohammed V University in Rabat, Rabat, Morocco

Peter Afflerbach, College of Education, University of Maryland, College Park, USA

ABSTRACT

The introduction of digital technologies and the emergence of electronic reading devices have expanded the concept of literacy and shaped how readers consume information from texts, as well as how they perceive and interact with digital materials vs. print materials in academic settings. Several years ago, reading was merely a characteristic of print. However, with today’s advances in technology, the vast majority of people are reading blogs, journals, newspapers, and other materials on digital screens. This study reports the findings of a survey on the effects of digital technologies on learning behavior and reading motivation among Moroccan EFL university students. Results showed that the majority of students reported using digital materials for studying, research, and recreational purposes. The majority of students also reported using desktop/laptop computers or smartphones to access digital materials and claimed that they frequently consult PDF documents and Google books for coursework materials. Additional findings suggest that print reading is favored when the reading task includes lengthy texts and demands more learning engagement activities such as highlighting and notetaking; and that digital reading is preferred when the reading task demands less effortful engagement activities, and includes short texts and accessible materials via the Internet at a preferential cost. Students reported that their motivation to read online is driven by the need to keep up with recent information as well as the need to use usability features embedded with e-texts such as the ‘Find’ function and built-in annotation tools. A great number of students rated their overall online reading experience as satisfactory or enjoyable. In contrast, students reported that eyestrain, discomfort with online reading, as well as the credibility and quality of texts encountered online are major challenges and barriers to digital reading. Results revealed that students’ satisfaction with online reading is positively correlated with the frequency of using digital texts. Additional implications and directions for future research are considered.

KEYWORDS

Digital Technologies, E-texts, Eyestrain, Learning Behavior, Motivation, Online Reading

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1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a digital era, where technology influences new types of literacy, i.e. digital literacy, and reading online has become a common practice among students of different educational levels. New forms of reading and new ways of writing have entered students’ life as technology continues to evolve and expand at an unprecedented rate. Digital reading platforms such as Kindles, iPads, tablets, smartphones, and laptops have recently gained acceptance among students of higher education. The introduction of these digital technologies has shaped not only the way readers consume content from texts, but also how they perceive, and interact with digital texts vs. print texts in their academic studies.

To secure a digital future and position itself among emerging countries in the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), Morocco has launched several programs as part of the Maroc Numeric 2013 plan and Maroc Digital 2020 strategy for the benefit of the administrative staff, faculty, and students. Among these programs are INJAZ, MARWAN, and GENIE. To begin with, INJAZ (INJAZ Al Maghreb) is a program for the acquisition of computers and handheld devices at preferential prices. MARWAN (Moroccan Wide Area Network) is a project aimed to interconnect all Moroccan universities and education institutions. GENIE (Generalization of ICT in Education 2009-2013) is a project set for generalizing access to broadband Internet in all rooms, halls, and classes in all Moroccan universities (Riyami et al., 2016). These programs and networks are intended to enhance student learning and literacy, in relation to digital technology.

The Maroc Numeric 2013 plan has had an immense impact on all areas of Information Technologies (IT) usage. According to a 2012 report by the National Telecommunication Regulatory Agency (ANRT), 39% of Moroccan homes had a computer in 2011. Internet access has also jumped from 2% in Moroccan homes in 2004 to 35% in 2011, and 62% in January 2019. In light of these results, this study seeks to examine the effects of the use of digital technologies on Moroccan university students’ learning behavior and reading motivation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides a critical synthesis of research and the theoretical foundations related to differences in students’ reading media and preferences, their reading motivation, and the concept of novelty effect.

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

2.1.1. Differences in Reading Media and Users’ Preferences

Reading is the backbone of much learning; and any innovation, tool, or teaching method that improves and supports the reading motivation of students should be encouraged. With the arrival of digital technology, reading and literacy change as reflected in shifts from print-based reading to digital-based reading and the use of electronic devices
India’s Dalits Search for a Democratic Opening in the Digital Divide
www.igi-global.com/chapter/india-dalits-search-democratic-opening/68485?camid=4v1a

Gaming Literacies and Learning
www.igi-global.com/chapter/gaming-literacies-and-learning/192421?camid=4v1a